

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY:

1 KINGS

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PREFACE

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Duncan Heaster

1 KINGS CHAPTER 1

1Ki 1:1 Now king David was old and advanced in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he couldn't keep warm-

This is a legitimate translation but "keep warm" is a Hebrew term also used about procreation. There appeared to be some great desire that he should produce yet another child. Even if we understand his condition as simply being cold, losing body heat, we are given the impression of David at the end of his life as cold. He is never recorded as having loved anyone in his life, although many loved him... all Israel, Jonathan, Michal... Now he can no longer seek a lover, the womanizer can no longer pull a woman; this is not the classic parting scene of a hero with his children and admirers from old times around his bedside. Those around his bedside are full of intrigue as to who shall get the throne. There is no love for David apparent from anyone, neither is there any mention of him being mourned. Hypothermia in old age is a result of chronically poor blood circulation, and related to this would therefore have been erectile dysfunction. The picture is of the impotent David at the end, a man whose life had been largely wrecked by his sexual activities, all performed in a culture of sex as power. He ends his days powerless and isolated- in order surely to bring him to God and thoughts of his future seed the Lord Jesus.

1Ki 1:2 Therefore his servants said to him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin. Let her stand before the king, and cherish him; and let her lie on your chest, so that my lord the king may keep warm-

If indeed there were genuine health reasons for this (although see on :1), it seems morally questionable. Despite David's undoubted faith and spirituality, his life leaves many abiding questions about his basic ethics and those of his immediate circle. The idea of a king was that he produced sons and heirs. If he was no longer capable of doing so, then he was not fit to remain on the throne- that was the thinking of the surrounding world. This explains why David's failure to be aroused by Abishag, his being confirmed as impotent, meant that immediately Adonijah started to reach for the throne. We see how David had failed to explain to his family the wonder of the promises to him- that the only seed worth having was the future Son of God, the Lord Jesus.

1Ki 1:3 So they sought for a beautiful young lady throughout all the borders of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king-

"Abishag" is literally father / mother of the erring / astray. The language is so similar to Esther 2:2 that it indeed seems that a wife, of sorts, was being found for David. Some read "Shulamite", the word of Song 6:13 for Solomon's lover, a female version of the name "Solomon". In this case we can see some kind of manipulation going on to try to ensure that David's final wife and possible child were within Solomon and Bathsheba's camp.

1Ki 1:4 The young lady was very beautiful; and she cherished the king, and ministered to him; but the king didn't know her intimately-

This could be read as meaning that she failed to bring him to heat in a sexual sense (see on :1), and so the comment here is to the effect that the plan didn't work. Before David's repentance he appears to have suffered with some kind of serious disease soon after it: "My loins are filled with a loathsome (venereal?) disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh" (Ps. 38:7). It is even possible that David became impotent as a result of this; for we get the impression that from this point onwards he took no other wives, he had no more children, and even the fail safe cure for hypothermia didn't seem to mean much to David (1 Kings 1:1-4). Therefore "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore" (Ps. 38:11) must refer to some kind of venereal disease. The Hebrew word translated "lovers" definitely refers to carnal love rather than that of friendship. It may be that an intensive plural is being used here- in which case it means 'my one great lover', i.e. Bathsheba.

"Cherished" is literally to lay in the bosom, and is used of how Bathsheba lay in the bosom of Uriah (2 Sam. 12). And Bathsheba is present at the bedside scene later. We can read the term as implying there was an attempted sexual relationship, for the idea was that sexual arousal would cure David's hypothermia. But he was unable to achieve it. Adonijah's later request to marry Abishag was seen as a claim to the throne exactly because Abishag was now counted as some kind of wife or woman of David. It is quite likely that there was an agenda to this. It was a test of David's potency. If David was unable to produce children, he was incapable of being king; for a king was supposed to produce many children, and there is historical evidence for other kings being removed from the throne if in old age they were impotent. It's as if God was giving David another chance to resign the kingship, and to trust that his seed shall indeed be great- but not in his strength, but through God begetting a Son through one of his female descendants. All David was interested in was his male descendants forming an eternal lineage of kings after him. And so his deathbed impotence, demonstrated so publically to all as well as to himself, was to try to refocus him upon the promises to him in Christ. God tries with man right up to the end. David appears to have failed to get it- but still will be saved by grace.

David's words and actions in :28-35 reflect a man who is lucid, aware and rational. This could contrast with his apparently senile, end of life position apparently presented in the opening verses. And chronologically, he will go on to make the plans for the temple and make speeches about Solomon as recorded in 1 Chron. 22-29. I suggest therefore that although he did have bad blood circulation, and probably did suffer from hypothermia related thereto, with the associated erectile dysfunction... this was all rather used by those around him. They wanted to prove that he was impotent and therefore incapable of continuing as king. Even his inner circle wanted him off the throne; whilst Israel were eager for Adonijah to become king. We recall how Jacob is presented as being at the end of his life when he goes on to live some years. Isaac likewise lived many years after his apparent death bed scene when he blesses Esau and Jacob. David goes on living through the maximum of 12 months covered in 1 Chron. 22-29.

1Ki 1:5 Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king- He was the oldest surviving son of David and therefore considered in line for the throne. "I will be king" is a future statement. We could read as him declaring his intention to become king after David's death, which at that point appeared imminent. As the next in line to the throne (see on :7) it could be argued that this was reasonable. In this case, it could be that Nathan and Bathsheba are exaggerating the situation in order to get David to declare Solomon as king. In which case we see a decline in the moral fibre in Nathan along with about everyone else present in these sad scenes.

Then he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him- "Prepared" or "established" is a major theme in the promises of the eternal establishment of David's throne (2 Sam. 7:12,13,16 etc.), and Solomon wrongly assumed that the conditional nature of the promises concerning the seed were just irrelevant to him as he had wisdom. Therefore he uses the word of how his kingdom has been "established" (1 Kings 2:24 s.w.). Solomon's contenders for the throne were all stopped by God, they tried to prepare or establish themselves but it never worked out (2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Kings 1:5); and so surely Solomon has the idea in mind that he has been established as the promised Messianic seed of David with an eternally "established" throne and kingdom. This leads him to the conclusion that the outcome of wisdom and folly is in this life, and he has no perspective of a final day of judgment and eternal establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. This is why the simplistic dichotomies he presents in Proverbs between the blessed and wise, and the cursed and foolish, are not always true to observed experiences in this life. For it is the future Kingdom which puts them in ultimate perspective.

Absalom did the same (2 Sam. 15:1 "After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run ahead of him"), and the similarities in the rebellions mean that David was intended to learn from them. Having horses and chariots was contrary to the command for the king of Israel not to have horses and chariots (Dt. 17:16). Solomon had even more, and so we are not to think that Adonijah was any worse than Solomon.

1Ki 1:6 His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why have you done so? And he was also a very handsome man; and he was born after Absalom-

We are immediately given the hint that he was of the same character and appearance of Absalom, and also similar to Saul (1 Sam. 9:2). Perhaps we are to understand that David had never disciplined him, unlike Solomon who in his Proverbs reflects upon David's discipline of him. Or maybe the idea is more specifically that David had never forbidden his clear pretensions to the throne, despite his stated desire for Solomon to succeed him.

Possibly David later bitterly resented the rebuke of Nathan. And this was why he refused to rebuke his son Adonijah: "His father had never rebuked him by asking, 'Why do you

behave as you do?' He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom" (1 Kings 1:6). The usual line of interpretation is of course that David felt unable to rebuke anyone because of his sin, and he became willfully naive and deaf to political intrigue against him, and generally uncritical of others: "I am as a man who doesn't hear, in whose mouth are no reproofs" (Ps. 38:14). That would be an understandable psychological reaction to his sin and the consequences. But in this case, David's refusal to discipline others because of his having been disciplined by Nathan is a reflection that he had not really repented and experienced total forgiveness. He says he has, in the penitential Psalms. But if this were so in a lasting sense, he would have felt able to discipline his sons.

The parallels with the spoilt, handsome Absalom are clear. As Absalom stole the hearts of Israel, so Adonijah claims "all Israel fully expected me to reign" (1 Kings 2:15), and implies David had once agreed for him to replace him ("You know that the kingdom was mine"). Adonijah had a fair chance of success- he had Joab, the head of the army, and the chief priest on his team- and the support of "all Israel". If indeed "all Israel fully expected me to reign" (1 Kings 2:15), then David would not have at this point declared Solomon as his successor. I suggest therefore that Bathsheba's rushing in to the king 'reminding' him that Solomon was to be the next king... was manipulation and probably untrue, at least there had been no public announcement to that effect. His repeated statements in 1 Chron. 22-29 that God had chosen Solomon may therefore have been made immediately after this time of Adonijah's rebellion. His claims there that God had specifically chosen Solomon by name are all reported speech, and I suggest in commentary on those chapters that this was merely David's narrative. He makes the claim that God had chosen and named Solomon so many times in the last months of his life. If this was, as he claimed, at the time of 2 Sam. 7, then we enquire why David had not previously stated this. He only makes these claims after Bathsheba's manipulation and claiming David had promised her [and not God promising David] that Solomon would be king. It's clear to me that he is 'protesting too much'. His claim that God had promised this and named Solomon as the seed is repeated so often and so suddenly that we are immediately suspicious as to the veracity of the claim David is making. It sounds like his wife and one time lover had manipulated him and he justifies his agreement by [falsely] claiming God had earlier said this. His last directly prophetic words are in 2 Sam. 23, and the rest of his reported speech is therefore not from God. Although he wrongly claims it is. I suggest that 2 Samuel is entirely chronological. After Adonijah's rebellion and Bathsheba's manipulation of David to pronounce Solomon as the next king, there is then the incident of numbering Israel. This is followed by David's final months spent numbering Israel in other ways, preparing for the temple and falsely claiming God has chosen Solomon by name; all in 1 Chron. 22-29. And then there is the final deathbed scene. A miserable end for David, who presents as weak and manipulated and obsessed with his own narrative about Solomon, egged on by Bathsheba. Who likewise possibly encouraged him to sleep with her at the start of his disastrous adultery with her.

David therefore presents as compromised, weak, manipulated and fickle, having promised Adonijah the throne but also promised it to Bathsheba's son Solomon. We note the continuing dislike of David amongst his people, right to the end, and the lack of lamentation for him when he dies. In both the cases of Adonijah and Solomon, David set up his sons for spiritual failure. As he did all Israel by focusing them upon a physical temple and removing their focus upon God's future Son and onto his own immediate descendants. We note an alternative textual reading [and LXX] of 2 Sam. 13:21, that David would not punish Amnon because he was his beloved firstborn: "he grieved not the spirit of Amnon his son, because he loved him, because he was his firstborn". This is very similar to what we read here about Adonijah. David was a poor father, and he for a moment recognizes this when faced with the prophetic word that Messiah was to be Israel's eternal, glorious king- and not he and his

immediate sons. He responds that "[indeed] my house is not so with God". And yet despite being a poor father, he is clearly obsessed with the idea of his sons forming an eternal dynasty and his "house" being of eternal immediate fame in this life. He actually is typical of many fathers today...

"He was born next after Absalom" (Heb.) suggests Adonijah was next in line as the oldest surviving son of David. Solomon tacitly accepts this when he chides his mother: "Ask for him the kingdom as well! For he is my elder brother..." (1 Kings 2:22). This is acknowledging that Adonijah's status as elder brother gave him right to the throne. 2 Chron. 21:3 says of Jehoshaphat

that "the kingdom he gave to Jehoram, for he was the firstborn". Primogeniture was therefore assumed at the time, although the kingdom of Israel itself was in its infancy.

1Ki 1:7 He conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest: they followed Adonijah and helped him-

That Joab David's cousin, should turn away from David after a lifetime of loyalty is hard to understand. But we sense a personality conflict between the two of them, and indeed it seems that originally Joab had supported Absalom's idea of seizing power, but then fell out with him. David held Joab as too hard a man, not understanding grace; whereas Joab held David to be far too soft, and increasingly lacking strong leadership skills in his old age. The support for Adonijah was perhaps more because of disillusion with David than because Adonijah personally had much to offer.

Joab's backing of Adonijah may have been because like Ahithophel, he feared David would kill him. He had said after David's poor behaviour on Absalom's death that David wasn't really fit to be Israel's military leader, and he himself had been the one who had led Israel to battle- against Abner at Gibeon, against the Syrians, against Edom (Ps. 60:1 Joab killed 12000 Edomites in the valley of Salt), against Absalom, and notably against the Ammonites whilst David sat in Jerusalem having an affair with his soldier Uriah's wife. David's later claim that he couldn't build the temple because he had been fighting Yahweh's battles is a subtle hint that that he saw himself as Israel's military leader, when in reality that had been Joab's role. David simply basked in the victories of his earlier life. As Israel made clear when they first requested a king, Israel's king was to lead them into battle (1 Sam. 8:20). By word and example, Joab had shown David's disqualification for this post Bathsheba. Indeed on the basis of military leadership, Joab and not David was the logical replacement of David. So David's jealousy and fear of Joab as a rival was apparent. David had made clear his dislike of Joab on several occasions ["What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah?" 2 Sam. 16:5-10; 19:21,22. Bear in mind Joab was David's nephew. Joab is also missing in the lists of David's mighty men and their exploits, despite promising that whoever took Jebus would "come chief and commander"]. David thus comes to his end ungrateful, disloyal and with a reputation for graceless bloodthirstiness, jealousy, strong dislike of being shown weak and wrong and fear of any possible rival for his throne. Had he believed the promises of 2 Sam. 7, he need not have feared losing his throne in this life. The future promises more than compensated.

Abiathar's father and family had all been slain as a result of loyalty to David, and maybe decades later this remained as a source of bitterness to him. Or perhaps he was simply in a jealousy complex against Zadok, as it is unclear which of them was the high priest.

Abiathar's defection may seem even more surprising than Joab's. Possibly he had grown jealous of Zadok, the other High Priest at the time, and feared being supplanted by him. Fear is repeatedly presented in the record as the reason for otherwise out of character behaviour and that remains the same to this day. Yet faith in many ways is the counterpart to fear.

1Ki 1:8 But Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei and the mighty men who belonged to David, were not with Adonijah-

We see here the division between the two priests, Abiathar and Zadok, who had been so united in helping David survive Absalom's putsch. Perhaps there was jealousy between them because Abiathar was the priest in Jerusalem, whilst Zadok cared for the tabernacle at Gibeon, which was "the great high place" (1 Chron. 16:39; 1 Kings 3:4). "The mighty men" are those listed in 2 Sam. 23. If "Shimei" is the Shimei who cursed David, then we see his loyalty to David now; and that David should later order his murder is the more reprehensible.

1Ki 1:9 Adonijah killed sheep and cattle and fatlings by the stone of Zoheleth, which is beside En Rogel; and he called all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants-

This is another similarity with Absalom's revolt (see on :5), who began his revolt with a religious festival. It is alluded to by Solomon in Prov. 21:27: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he brings it with a wicked mind!". Solomon may have in view Saul's rejection from the kingship for his wrong attitude to sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:21,22). Likewise the attempts of Absalom and Adonijah to take the throne from David and Solomon involved the offering of sacrifices (2 Sam. 15:12; 1 Kings 1:9). What Solomon says in the Proverbs is true on one level, but he harnesses Divine truth to justify himself and his own agendas; just as we can.

1Ki 1:10 but Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he didn't call-

As with Absalom's rebellion, sympathizers were invited to a religious feast, and this was used to declare the new king.

1Ki 1:11 Then Nathan spoke to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon saying, Haven't you heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith reigns, and David our lord doesn't know it?-

"Adonijah" means 'Yah is lord', although clearly he wasn't a spiritual man. Nathan refers to David as their 'Lord'. Perhaps this is intended to be another example of how faithful women like Sarah called their husbands "lord" (1 Pet. 3:6).

1Ki 1:12 Now therefore come, please let me give you advice, that you may save your own life, and the life of your son Solomon-

Nathan is in fact giving Bathsheba his advice, knowing that the usurper would typically slay the family of his rivals. But Nathan frames his approach as asking for her advice. Bathsheba was it seems the favoured queen. We wonder why Abigail had fallen out of favour; although mortality for women being so low in those times, she may well have died by this stage.

1Ki 1:13 Go in to king David and tell him, 'Didn't you, my lord, king, swear to your handmaid saying, Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then does Adonijah reign?'-

"Didn't you say this...?" can be a way of saying "Will you not do what I suggest". But quite possibly David at some point had made such a verbal promise to Bathsheba. It was God who had sworn to David that his "son" would reign on his throne, and Nathan was the prophet through whom he had been told this. But David seems to have assumed that he had some choice to make in directing God's purpose, and had in turn sworn that Solomon should reign on his throne. The similarity of the wording suggests that he assumed Solomon was going to be the fulfilment of the promises to him of 2 Sam. 7. But this was in fact setting Solomon up

for spiritual failure, as do many such parental assumptions. For those promises were conditional. And just as David refused to take full note of that, therefore neither did Solomon. He assumed he was the Messianic son of David and ignored the conditions, leading to his own spiritual shipwreck.

1Ki 1:14 Whilst you are talking there with the king, I also will come in after you, and confirm your words-

Literally, 'fulfil the words'. As discussed on :13, we sense that the words in view are those of the promises to David about his seed, which David had too quickly assumed must refer to Solomon. We note that Nathan too had too quickly assumed he knew God's will and word in 2 Sam. 7:3-5.

1Ki 1:15 Bathsheba went in to the king into the room. The king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite was ministering to the king-

We are naturally reminded of how she had first come in to the king when they committed adultery. And now she enters his bedroom uninvited, and finds a far younger woman trying to sexually arouse him (see on :1). The whole situation is indeed tragic, and the outcome of not going God's way in moral matters.

1Ki 1:16 Bathsheba bowed, and showed respect to the king. The king said, What would you like?-

The single Hebrew word "what?" could suggest he was indeed so frail he could hardly speak beyond single words.

1Ki 1:17 She said to him, My lord, you swore by Yahweh your God to your handmaid, 'Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne'-

See on :13. She obediently repeats verbatim the words Nathan had put in her mouth. This continues the theme of David being manipulated by people and people being used as puppets by others.

1Ki 1:18 Now, look, Adonijah reigns; and you, my lord the king, don't know it-

She calls David "lord" many times. We get the impression of deep and rightful respect for him, despite his failures. Perhaps this is intended to be another example of how faithful women like Sarah called their husbands "lord" (1 Pet. 3:6).

1Ki 1:19 He has killed cattle, fatlings and sheep in abundance, and has called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the army; but he hasn't called Solomon your servant-

David's heart must have slumped as he heard these words. He died with the pain of betrayal by Adonijah, Joab and Abiathar. It would be wrong to imagine him dying a happy man at peace. His life indeed had been full of such traumas ever since his sin of passion with Bathsheba. How bitterly he must have regretted it.

1Ki 1:20 You, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, that you should tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him-

David apparently had not made any public pronouncement about his intentions for Solomon, although he had done so privately to Bathsheba and Nathan, the prophet who had first given him the promises about his "son". The lack of public pronouncement about his successor rather suggests that David had not at all decided Solomon should be king at this point. We

therefore circumstantially have to disbelieve his subsequent claims in 1 Chron. 22-29 that God had specifically told him this at the time of the promises to him in 2 Sam. 7.

1Ki 1:21 Otherwise it will happen, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders-

Heb. "sinners". The idea may be that Bathsheba's marriage would be declared void because of David's sin with her, and therefore Solomon pronounced an illegitimate son. David died with this reminder of that sin of passion which would have seemed so long ago, and, to the human mind, dealt with by the passage of time and the grief over Absalom. She fears that her sin with David may be raised against her as a reason why her son should not be king. The narrative is all about fear of possible consequences; Joab's support of the rebellion was likewise because he feared David may well kill him. And fear of possible futures accounts for so many sins.

1Ki 1:22 Behold, while she still talked with the king, Nathan the prophet came in-

Again, without invitation; David would have guessed this had all been set up. David makes no recorded response to Bathsheba's words, possibly because he was so frail (see on :16). But probably more likely because he had not in fact made such a promise at least not on a serious, public level. Which gives the lie to his later claims in 1 Chron. 22-29 that God had told him that Solomon was to succeed him, and had even named Solomon as the promised seed at the time of the promises in 2 Sam. 7.

1Ki 1:23 They told the king, saying, Here is Nathan the prophet! When he had come in before the king, he bowed down before the king with his face to the ground-

Whilst this may have been mere formality, we do have the overall impression of deep respect towards David by his inner circle. They were mature enough to realize he had indeed been a man after God's own heart, despite major failings which they accepted as out of character with him; and they did not focus upon those failures, but upon his overall life and character. And therefore respected him still very deeply. This is a good pattern for us in our attitudes to others. See on :26.

1Ki 1:24 Nathan said, My lord, king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne?' -

Perhaps Adonijah was falsely claiming this, abusing his father's frail state. Or maybe this was a device by Nathan to get the king to mutter some response, to provoke him to mental awareness in his weak state; see on :16,22. Or quite possibly David had said this to Adonijah at some point, just as he apparently had made such a verbal promise to Bathsheba about Solomon. In which case we see his fickle ways, and his lack of integrity even to those nearest to him. And he dies with the consequences of it clearly before him. If only he had resigned as king and focused upon his future Messianic seed, all this argument about immediate succession would have been stillborn.

1Ki 1:25 For he is gone down this day, and has killed cattle and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and has called all the king's sons, and the captains of the army, and Abiathar the priest. Even now they are eating and drinking before him and saying, 'Long live king Adonijah!' -

To eat and drink before a king was a sign of support for him and his acceptance; and there is something of this in the meaning of the breaking of bread service.

1Ki 1:26 But he hasn't called me, even me your servant, nor Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah

the son of Jehoiada, nor your servant Solomon-

Nathan's respect of David comes out strongly- "me, even me your servant". See on :23.

1Ki 1:27 Is this thing done by my lord the king, and you haven't shown to your servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?-

Again this may be a device by Nathan to provoke the frail minded king to speak forth. Or perhaps indeed he had not openly stated his desire for Solomon to be king. "After him" again alludes to the promises about the "son" which Nathan had given David, and it seems he is again implying that David is to state now who is going to fulfil them. Again, as discussed on :13, their conditional nature is being ignored by everyone. And it led Solomon to do the same. The One who was promised to sit on David's throne "after him" was God's begotten Son, Messiah. But David has ceased perceiving those things about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

This can also be read as a genuine question: "Has this thing been brought about by my lord the king and you have not told your servants? Who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?". Surely if David had publically stated that Solomon should reign after him, now would be the time for Nathan to remind him of that. But he doesn't. We can read it as a statement or question that implies David hadn't shown at that point who should sit on his throne. He had not at that point chosen the heir- even on his deathbed. This reflects a lack of real care for his family. Because it was all about him, David.

According to 1 Chron. 22-29, David subsequently claims God told him that Solomon should be the next king, and that God made this clear to him, even naming Solomon, at the time of the promises given in 2 Sam. 7. The record is totally silent about this, and promises a future seed to reign on David's throne at a point after David's death and at his resurrection. If indeed David had declared Solomon as king previously, we would not expect Nathan's question or statement here [depending how we translate]. This is all tacit evidence that David was lying in his subsequent oft repeated claims (in 1 Chron. 22-29) that in fact God had told him that Solomon would be king after him, naming him by name before his birth. Rather is David fabricating God's word in order to go along with the manipulation of him by Bathsheba, who wanted her son Solomon to be the next king. This is a serious sin. David dies with it on his lips; yet by grace will still be saved.

1Ki 1:28 Then king David answered, Call to me Bathsheba. She came into the king's presence, and stood before the king-

Perhaps Nathan left the room at this point (:32). "Call me Bathsheba" would have inevitably recalled to his mind how he had said those fateful words to his servants decades previously, and now he was still suffering the result of that sin.

1Ki 1:29 The king swore and said, As Yahweh lives, who has redeemed my soul out of all adversity-

Earlier, David in the Psalms had so often asked God to redeem him, e.g. in Ps. 69:18: "Draw near to my soul, and redeem it. Ransom me because of my enemies". God had already forgiven David, ransoming and redeeming him. But he was left to suffer the consequences of those sins, and because of that, in crisis he starts to wonder whether he has indeed been forgiven. And we can do the same so easily. The consequence of sin is death, and we can squirm against this when we or others face it... forgetting the wonder of the fact that we are indeed redeemed and ransomed from the power of the grave, although we must still take the consequences. At the very end of his life, David realized that he had in fact been redeemed (s.w. 1 Kings 1:29). He could give up his spirit to God in death, knowing that He was

redeemed from the power of the grave (s.w. Ps. 31:5; 49:15). His sure hope in the resurrection of the body looked ahead to the attitude with which the Lord Jesus died.

These are the words of Jacob in Gen. 48:16 and also of David earlier, at 2 Sam. 4:9. What Jacob only learnt at the *end* of his life, David learnt and applied during his life. And we should likewise not be experiential learners, but learn instead from Jacob. David stresses that Yahweh had redeemed him, and he had not needed to take vengeance himself. He repeats this in now; he was deeply aware of Yahweh's redemption of him by grace right to his last days.

1Ki 1:30 most certainly as I swore to you by Yahweh the God of Israel, saying, 'Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place;' most certainly so will I do this day-

As discussed on :13, he wrongly assumes that he can pronounce Solomon as the fulfilment of the promises made to him. For he speaks in the language of the promises of 2 Sam. 7; and this refusal to accept their conditionality, and fulfilment by grace rather than his pronouncement, was what led Solomon to spiritual disaster in the longer term.

There is a tantalizing unclarity in the Hebrew behind "most certainly as I swore to you". It could as well be translated "If I indeed swore to you [that Solomon shall reign]... then so will I do". David's memory is functional, as he recalls the behaviour of Joab, Shimei etc. Yet David would appear unaware of promising Bathsheba that Solomon would reign. And it is never recorded in the Biblical record. This translation suggests Bathsheba in David's bedroom is manipulating him from her stronger position, just as he had done to her in the same bedroom years before. David dies powerless and being yet again deceived and manipulated, just as he did to Bathsheba and Uriah long ago. He hardly dies a glorious death, loved and adored by his family and people [in fact few of God's children died such a death, we think of Paul]. It was perhaps God's last ditch effort to lead him to fuller repentance even on his death bed. Truly God works with every man right up to his last breath.

1Ki 1:31 Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and showed respect to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live forever!-

To say this to a man on his deathbed is perhaps consciously intended to show the meaningless nature of this common phrase. Bathsheba presents as giving David meaningless respect. Likewise we note how Nathan and others bow to him and call him their "lord" when they were clearly manipulating him. Their respect was only on a surface level.

1Ki 1:32 King David said, Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. They came before the king-

Perhaps Nathan had left the bedroom when Bathsheba was summoned back (:28). Or perhaps this is yet another indication of the very weak mental state of David.

1Ki 1:33 The king said to them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon-

The first mention of mules in the Bible is associated with Absalom's murder of Amnon his brother (2 Sam. 13:29). They were cross bred in disobedience to Lev. 19:19. We get the impression that a generally slack attitude to what might have been considered minor matters of the law was associated with the major sin of murder. This is the problem when we start to think that some parts of God's laws can just be ignored. David was fond of them, having his own mule (1 Kings 1:33), and Solomon was willing to receive them as tribute (1 Kings 10:25). Yet David boasts in Psalm 119 of how he studies God's law all the day and loves obedience to it...

Anointing as king by a spring was in order to declare that the king and his line would reign eternally just as water keeps spouting from a spring. In this we see David's lack of faith and willful misunderstanding of the promises to him. His kingship and line would only be eternal through the Lord Jesus and not in terms of an eternal line of Kings in unbroken succession from David.

1Ki 1:34 Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel. Blow the trumpet, and say, 'Long live king Solomon!'-

This anointing ought to have been done earlier, as it was with David. We wonder whether David had some slight doubts about Solomon's suitability, hence his lack of public pronouncement about Solomon being his chosen successor. Or perhaps David just wanted to hold on to personal power to the bitter end, and hadn't wanted to appoint anyone in his place through a public proclamation. There had not yet been any anointing or trumpet blowing for Adonijah, so this was in order to upstage that happening.

Saul and David were anointed on God's command. David had Solomon anointed at his own initiative, in a mistaken attempt to make Solomon the Christ. "Long live Solomon" may be an attempt to apply the promise of David's eternal seed to Solomon.

1Ki 1:35 Then you shall come up after him-
Just as men had followed after Adonijah (:7).

And he shall come and sit on my throne; for he shall be king in my place. I have appointed him to be prince over Israel and over Judah-

On one hand we could read the usage of the word "prince" as reflecting how Yahweh was the ultimate king of Israel. Or we could read it as reflecting David's dogged desire, typical of an old man, to hold on to his own kingly power until his last breath. Or we could see it as a Messianic term, as it is in Dan. 9:25, again showing that David thought he could make Solomon the fulfilment of the promises of a Messianic seed just by pronouncing it from his deathbed- ignoring all the conditional clauses which accompanied those promises.

Sitting upon David's throne is another allusion to the promises of 2 Sam. 7 which David is trying to force into a fulfilment in Solomon.

1Ki 1:36 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, Amen. May Yahweh, the God of my lord the king, say so too-

This is a clear example of the meaning of the word "Amen". It is a statement that we believe in faith that God also wills to be so what we have said Amen to. His "Amen" is therefore our "Amen". There is a similar example in Jer. 28:6. Benaiah is effectively asking that God confirm David's attempt to force fulfilment of God's will in terms of Solomon. The way he says "May Yahweh..." suggests perhaps that he is not aware of any Divine word about this, but he wishes that it "may" be so.

1Ki 1:37 As Yahweh has been with my lord the king, even so may He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David-

Benaiah too is alluding to the promises to David, and stating his belief that they are to be fulfilled through Solomon- again ignoring all the conditional clauses which accompanied those promises. "So may He be" is Heb. "so shall He be". Having a throne greater than David again alludes to the promises of 2 Sam. 7 which Benaiah wanted to see coming true in Solomon.

1Ki 1:38 So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and caused Solomon to ride on king David's mule,

and brought him to Gihon-

"Pelethite" is arguably a form of the word "Philistine". There is a theme in David's life of his former enemies, even Gentiles against whom he had fought and slain their families, became his most loyal supporters and servants, right to the end of his days. This loyalty is a reflection not only of their respect of his personal integrity, despite some out of character failures; but especially of their conversion to Yahweh, David's God.

1Ki 1:39 Zadok the priest took the horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. They blew the trumpet; and all the people said, Long live king Solomon!-

The horn of oil refers to the specific horn from which the holy anointing oil was poured upon the priests. Zadok cared for the tabernacle at Gibeon, which was "the great high place" (1 Chron. 16:39; 1 Kings 3:4), and so it is another example of correlation within the inspired records that he had access to that horn and the oil with which to anoint Solomon (1 Kings 1:39). Using this oil to anoint a king would therefore have presented Solomon as a king-priest.

The oil was from the tent of meeting, which was only used to anoint priests. This is an attempt to declare Solomon a king-priest. But this was done totally of human initiative and proved a failure because Solomon turned to idols.

1Ki 1:40 All the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth shook with their sound-

We can assume that there was mass popular support for Solomon, far greater than for Adonijah. And yet Adonijah says that all Israel were looking for him to be king: "the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign" (1 Kings 2:15). We see again the fickleness of the people, reflective of their dissatisfaction with the leadership options before them.

1Ki 1:41 Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished eating. When Joab heard the sound of the trumpet he said, Why is this noise of the city being in an uproar?-

The feast would have taken some days; for the horn of priestly anointing oil had to be fetched from Gibeon (:39).

1Ki 1:42 While he yet spoke, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came: and Adonijah said, Come in; for you are a worthy man, and bring good news-

The record here repeats the coming in of messengers to David earlier in this chapter. Despite his revolt against his father David, he perhaps unconsciously repeats his father's very words as he awaited news of the battle with Absalom. He could not ultimately throw off the ties that bind. We note that Jonathan had earlier run messages for David in the time of Absalom's revolt (2 Sam. 17:17); now he does so for Adonijah, and was perceived as a "worthy man", on Adonijah's side. All these things have the ring of psychological credibility to them. This is how life goes.

1Ki 1:43 Jonathan answered Adonijah, Most certainly our lord king David has made Solomon king-

The hint could be that "most certainly" he did carry good news, that Solomon had been made king. Already even the messenger was seeking to cover himself against the inevitable repercussions of a failed power grab. Hence he calls David "our lord king David".

1Ki 1:44 The king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of

Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and they have caused him to ride on the king's mule-

Jonathan is careful to report things exactly as they were and as he had observed them in Jerusalem. He is bravely giving no intimation of continued loyalty to Adonijah and his own father Abiathar who was his main support.

1Ki 1:45 Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon. They have come up from there rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that you have heard-

Again we see that there was mass popular support for David's choice of Solomon, and not so much for Adonijah.

1Ki 1:46 Also, Solomon sits on the throne of the kingdom-

Solomon had literally been sat upon David's throne, and Jonathan had seen it.

1Ki 1:47 Moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David saying, 'May your God make the name of Solomon better than your name, and make his throne greater than your throne'; and the king bowed himself on the bed-

Again "our lord king David" shows that Jonathan's loyalties were now with David and Solomon again. The fickleness of human loyalty is a great theme of the records of David's life.

1Ki 1:48 Also thus said the king, 'Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who has given one to sit on my throne this day, my eyes even seeing it'-

These words of David aren't recorded but there is no reason to doubt Jonathan's account of them. Those words are clearly allusive to the promises in 2 Sam. 7 that David's eyes would see his Messianic son / seed enthroned, implying David's resurrection. LXX adds "one of my seed", confirming this. But David instead assumed that they were true in his lifetime, and that Solomon was indeed the Messianic seed promised. David has strayed far from the things of God's Kingdom and the Lord Jesus; he clearly wishes to present Solomon as the fulfilment of the Divine seed, rather than accepting this was to be a Divinely begotten seed who would come after he had slept with his fathers. David became wedded to his own obsessive narrative rather than to what God's word had plainly said. A warning to us all. By this wrong assumption, David was ignoring the conditional aspects to the promises- that Solomon had to prove himself obedient to Yahweh. By doing so, David set Solomon up for spiritual failure, through merely assuming his acceptability to God regardless of his lifestyle; see on :13.

1Ki 1:49 All the guests of Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and each man went his way-

Again we see the fickleness of human loyalty, which is such a great theme of the records of David's life.

1Ki 1:50 Adonijah feared because of Solomon; and he arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar-

He must have somehow smuggled himself into the sanctuary, otherwise he would have been arrested and charged with treason well beforehand. He was treating the altar as a kind of talisman, just as the surrounding religions did. The horns of the altar were smeared with the blood of atonement (Ex. 29:12; 30:10), so he may have been assuming that he would somehow get forgiveness by doing this. The allusion is clearly to Ex. 21:12-14: "One who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death, but not if it is unintentional, but God allows it to happen: then I will appoint you a place where he shall flee. If a man schemes and

comes presumptuously on his neighbour to kill him, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die". Adonijah hadn't killed anyone, although Nathan and Bathsheba claim he was scheming to kill Solomon and Bathsheba (:12,21). To use the horns of the altar in this way was therefore somewhat out of context, almost defying Solomon to desecrate the altar with the blood of a slain man.

However we could read the allusion to Ex. 21:12-14 as Adonijah claiming his innocence, as if he had been falsely accused of murder- and I have suggested that quite possibly Bathsheba and Nathan did this, or at least accused him of intending to murder Solomon and Bathsheba. They did this in order to manipulate David to put Solomon on the throne. He had truly assumed that he would be king as he was next in line (see on :5, he asserts that he will in future be king but doesn't usurp David). There is no record of David ever having told him that he would not succeed to the throne. And I have argued that there had been no Divine word about Solomon being king or at least it had never been publicized. All Israel expected Adonijah to be king. And Solomon tacitly accepts this when he reminds his mother that Adonijah is after all his older brother. This raises the possibility that Nathan, Bathsheba and Zadok, and then David, are being less than fair to Adonijah.

I suggested that Adonijah was not wrong to assume he as the remaining firstborn would be the next king. He fled to the altar because he felt Nathan and Bathsheba had wrongly accused him of intending to murder Solomon and Bathsheba. Joab likewise flees to the altar because he too is persuaded that he has killed nobody in order for Solomon to seek to kill him. *Neither Adonijah nor Joab would have fled to the horns of the altar unless they believed they were innocent and would thereby be saved.* They would have run away far from Solomon. Instead they run to the horns of the altar and remain there, a sitting target for Solomon. I suggest they both only did this because they were convinced of their innocence of murder, and that therefore Bathsheba's claim to David that Adonijah was likely to murder herself and Solomon was just manipulative- she wanted her son Solomon to be king, not Adonijah. It all presents a sad picture of deceit and low moral fibre in all concerned.

1Ki 1:51 It was told Solomon saying, Behold, Adonijah fears king Solomon; for, behold, he has laid hold on the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let king Solomon swear to me first that he will not kill his servant with the sword' -

The idea was that if God had atoned for his sin of rebellion (see on :50), then Solomon should not carry out the death penalty. The whole process of reasoning was very twisted, and are in fact the words of an equally twisted Jacob to Esau in Gen. 25:31,33.

1Ki 1:52 Solomon said, If he shows himself a worthy man, not a hair of him shall fall to the earth; but if wickedness be found in him, he shall die-

Solomon is intentionally vague. Not a hair falling to the earth could be read as meaning that an intended punishment would not be carried out (1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11). "But if wickedness be found..." could be read as meaning 'If there is any more of this in future', or 'We will investigate the matter by judgment and the just penalty will be given in future'.

1Ki 1:53 So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. He came and bowed down to king Solomon; and Solomon said to him, Go to your house-

This was not real forgiveness, because Solomon evidently considered it not politic to immediately slay Adonijah, but that was his intention. Perhaps he was reasoning that Adonijah's support base would be encouraged to repent if they saw that they were not going to all be slain. And Solomon probably didn't feel he had the political strength at that point to slay men like Joab and Abiathar. And we must examine our own apparent forgiveness of

others, to determine whether it is really just a matter of politics and prudence rather than true forgiveness.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 2

1Ki 2:1 Now the days of David drew near that he should die; and he commanded Solomon his son saying-

According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 7.14,7) the events of 1 Chronicles 28, 29 happened in the interval between the first anointing of Solomon and the death of David. I would argue that the events related in 1 Chron. 22–29 had occurred between 1 Kings 1 and 2. The final events in David's life reveal all concerned to be egocentric, devious, manipulative, and yet also naïve, impulsive, and vulnerable. This is exactly what it is to be human. We have human nature here displayed... in a totally psychologically credible way.

1Ki 2:2 I am going the way of all the earth-

This is quoting the words of Joshua, as do the second part of the verse. David has Joshua in mind because he considers that Solomon is going to now inherit the Kingdom.

Be strong therefore, and show yourself a man-

As noted above, this is the language of Joshua (Dt. 31:7,23; Josh. 1:6,7). See on :3. "Show yourself a man" may refer to the fact Solomon was very young (1 Kings 3:7) and needed to quickly act as an adult.

David seems to have theoretically recognized that the building of the temple was conditional on Solomon's spirituality, but he overlooked this in his enthusiasm for Solomon to be the Messiah, who may be the reference of "a man". He tells Solomon to show himself a man, and goes on in :4 to speak of how "a man" would eternally reign on his Messianic throne. He was encouraging Solomon to be and act like Messiah. Ps. 127 is "For Solomon" (Ps. 127:2 "beloved" = Heb. Jedidah), and warns him that his labour for the temple will be in vain unless *God* builds it. The Psalm basically says that God will build Solomon a house in the sense of a family centered in the beloved seed who would die ["sleep"] to enable it; and therefore Solomon should not be so sweating himself day and night to build God a house / temple. This is the very message which God had given David earlier. David and Solomon evidently shelved their knowledge of the fact that Heaven is God's dwelling place. It would seem that Solomon particularly was guilty of a false humility; there is a gross contradiction within his words of 2 Chron. 6:2,18: "I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling *for ever*... But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built?". This is one of several hints that Solomon felt that the full fulfilment of the Davidic promises was to be found in him (cp. 2 Chron. 6:10). He failed to look forward to the spirit of Christ, instead becoming obsessed with the achievement of his own works. He was largely encouraged in this by David, who seems to have felt that Solomon was the Messiah figure the promises spoke about. Thus Ps.72 is dedicated to Solomon, and yet it speaks clearly of the messianic Kingdom. In the same way as David came to misquote and misapply the promises God made to him, Solomon did likewise. God told David that He did not want a physical house, because He had never commanded this to be done at any time in the past. Solomon misquotes this in 2 Chron. 6:5,6 to mean that God had never asked for a physical house in the past, but now he had asked David's son to build such a house in Jerusalem.

1Ki 2:3 and keep the instruction of Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do, and wherever you turn

yourself-

In Prov. 29:14 "The king that faithfully judges the poor, his throne shall be established for ever", Solomon is clearly referring to the promises to David, which he assumed were about him. He thought that because he had judged the poor harlots wisely, therefore he would be the promised Messiah. And this was just what David his father had hoped and expected of him. David had even asked Solomon to "do wisely" i.e. to show wisdom, in order that the promises to him about Messiah would be fulfilled (1 Kings 2:3 RVmg.). So *this* was surely one of Solomon's motives in giving them justice and being 'wise'; he sought to live out his father's expectations and to fulfil the requirements of the Messiah figure.

"That you may prosper" is s.w. "to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6). David's desire was that Solomon would be "wise" just as David had been "wise / prospered" (1 Sam. 18:5,14,15), and so Solomon asked God for wisdom and wanted to be wise. But his subsequent life showed this was because he wanted to live out parental expectation rather than be personally wise. And so he later turned away from that wisdom in his personal life. The language of prospering continues the Joshua allusions (see on :2; Josh. 1:7,8).

1Ki 2:4 This is so that Yahweh may establish His word which He spoke concerning me saying, 'If your 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 you', He said, 'a man on the throne of Israel'- The "He said..." again shows us that David is reporting God's words, claiming this is what God said. But as discussed earlier, 2 Sam. 24 were the last prophetic words of David by Divine revelation. His various claims as to what God said about Solomon in 1 Chron. 23-29 are all reported by him, claimed by him, and in fact contradict what God actually said in 2 Sam. 7. David wanted Solomon to be that "man" (:2). Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve or observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to *his* wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to *God's* ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

Another example of Solomon misquoting God is in 2 Chron. 6:6. Solomon claims that God said: "I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there". God had chosen no resting place, although it would have been politically convenient for Solomon if the city of Jerusalem as a city was where God had chosen to dwell. And so he kept thinking that way until he persuaded himself that in fact this was what God had said. David had charged Solomon with the words which he claimed God had spoken to him about Solomon: "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul" (1 Kings 2:4). But Solomon subtly changes this when he reminds God of how He had supposedly told David: "There shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne of Israel; so that they children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me" (1 Kings 8:25). Two things become apparent here:

- The conditionality of the promise to David about Solomon is totally overlooked. "*If* thy children..." becomes "so that...", with the implication that David would always have descendants on the throne who would walk obediently before God. The possibility of personal failure had been removed by Solomon from his own perception of God.

- God's desire that Solomon should "walk before me in truth" was changed to "walk before me as thou [David] hast walked before me". This defined walking before God personally as having the relationship with God which your father had. And so often we have made the same mistake. The call to personally follow the Lord has become displaced by a following Him through others.

Notice how Solomon says these words to God Himself. Solomon had persuaded himself that this truly was what God had asked of David and himself, and so he comes out with these words to God.

There was no sense in Solomon that he might have the possibility of failure, of rejection by God. The promises to David were conditional- David pointed this out to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:4: "*If thy children take heed to their way...*". But Solomon misquotes this in 1 Kings 8:25: "Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised 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 to walk before me as thou hast walked before me". Some translations offer paraphrases of the difficult "so that" phrase. But there's no getting around it. Solomon is saying 'Give me what you promised me, without conditions, so that I will fulfil those conditions... it's not possible for anyone to fulfil those conditions unless you first give them what you conditionally promised'. The logic is all upside down, and is very demanding upon God, implying that any failure to "take heed to the way" would be because God hadn't given what He promised. It's a telling insight into Solomon's mind. It was all about him, rather than all about God and glorifying Him.

Note that all this happened at the very start of Solomon's reign; it seems to me that he was always on the wrong track, rather than as it were 'going wrong' later on.

1Ki 2:5 Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me and what he did to the two captains of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war on his sash that was about his waist, and in his shoes that were on his feet-

The only person in David's life whose belt is noted is Joab (2 Sam. 20:8; 1 Kings 2:5). But Ps. 109:8,19 wish curses upon the man who was well known for his belt. See notes there for the extent of David's anger with Joab and his desire for the man's condemnation because of it- even though David was not himself perfect. Solomon's comment that Joab shed the blood of war in peace, perhaps meaning 'in the name of peace', may allude to how Joab killed Amasa whilst asking him whether "Is all well with you?", using the word *shalom*, "peace".

We see David's narcissism even at this final point in his life. He considers Joab had done evil "to me". Joab had in fact preserved David on his throne multiple times. But all that 'good' was forgotten beneath David's obsession with what he considered was 'evil' done to him. He also overlooks the fact that the murders of Abner and Amasa were [especially in Abner's case] for the good of David. I noted on 1 Kings 1 that it was effectively Joab who had led Israel in battle rather than David; and to lead the people in battle was the definition of what it was to be king of Israel. David dies with unbridled jealousy, leading him in his mind to turn a friend into a foe, to turn good into evil. What "evil" had Joab done David? He had told him the hard home truth that his soppy obsession for his worthless son Absalom would cost him his throne. He had backed Adonijah as future king rather than Solomon. But that was not "evil" to David. Or we can translate: "You know also what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, how he

dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel". David sees Joab's "evil" to him in slaying Abner and Amasa. But Joab was without doubt the best army commander David could have wished for. But as the classic narcissist, David wants to personalize this as if it had been done to him personally. And the irony is that Joab's murders of Abner and Amasa,

especially of Abner, likely solidified David's power and despite Joab's personal motives for the murders, he was effectively establishing David in power. But David doesn't want to see that.

We can read 'what Joab did to me' as David believing that the guilt for the blood of Amasa and Abner had been wrongly placed on him by Joab. David thus takes his false narrative about Joab yet further. Solomon bought into this when he tells Benaiah to "fall upon him [Joab] and bury him, and turn aside from me and from my father's house the innocent blood that he has shed" (:31,32). The reasoning was that actually David had been falsely counted guilty of the blood of Amasa and Abner, and that could only be removed by the blood of Joab being shed. This of itself is false spiritual logic, because God would not count Solomon and his descendants guilty for supposed murders by David which David was genuinely innocent of. David overlooks that he was actually guilty of the blood of Uriah and the other soldiers. And that guilt had been removed by grace and not by any blood sacrifice. If that wonderful truth had remained his guiding light, he would not have expanded his false narrative about the "need" for Joab's blood to atone for his supposed guilt. And David ought to have learnt by this point in his life that the only blood guilt worth worrying about is that which God counts against a person. If others thought that David had been behind the murders of Abner and Amasa, that was their problem and the only thing that mattered was whether God counted David as guilty. In all this, David shows how far he has gone from the David of the penitential psalms. In Ps. 51:14 he prays "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God". He realizes he is saved from blood guilt by God's grace alone, and not by sacrifice, let alone the blood of Joab. But now at his end, he has pretty much cancelled all those lessons he had learnt. Earlier at the time Joab murdered Abner, David publically stated " 'I and my kingdom are forever guiltless ... for the blood [of Abner]' " (2 Sam. 3:28). It could be argued that Joab killed Abner as permitted blood revenge for Abner's murder of his brother Asahel. And Abner was likely a threat to David at the time; and likely Amasa too, who strangely delays or fails to gather an army with which to put down Sheba's rebellion. Joab's murders were in support of David. But now he presents his political, ungrateful, faithless scheming to Solomon as "your wisdom" (:6), "you are a wise man; you will know what to do" (:9). It was nothing of the sort, despite David framing it against his command that Solomon be obedient to God's law (:2-4). There is a sharp and intended contrast between David's spiritual appeal in :2-4 and the harsh, unspiritual material which follows in the next verses. Justice was to be the characteristic of Israel's king (Dt. 17:17-20) and yet David shows no justice in his commands about Joab and Shimei, and sets up Solomon to be unjust. It all set Solomon up for spiritual failure. It would require him to perceive that his father's wisdom was not at all wisdom. And that is hard for any son whom his parents have set up in power.

David says that Joab "killed, and shed the blood of war in peace", he killed men who thought they were at peace with him. Yet this is exactly what David had done to Uriah and the other soldiers killed to cover up Uriah's murder. He dies with no sense of conviction for his sin against Uriah, hypocritically judging and condemning others to the death penalty which he himself had been spared from by grace. Earlier David had thanked God for His forgiveness of David, triumphing that God had brought him up from the grave, rather than allowing him to be brought down to it: "Yahweh, You have brought up my soul from Sheol. You have kept me alive, that I should not be brought down to the pit" (Ps. 30:3). But now he wants to bring others down to the grave. We have a powerful warning not to forget grace and forgiveness shown to us, and to live humbled by it literally all our days, and not just for a few days at the time.

David is also arguing that just as Joab had murdered men he was apparently at peace with, so he might murder Solomon. And to just remove that possibility, he commands Solomon to take the initiative and kill Joab. Or he could be saying that as Joab has murdered

two previous army commanders, he may also now murder Benaiah, whom Solomon appointed army commander (:35). Again, we see fear of possible consequence leading to murder, as it does so often in homicides today. But faith is the opposite of fear... and David appears to have little of it.

1Ki 2:6 Do therefore according to your wisdom, and don't let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace-

Solomon alludes to this in Prov. 19:5,9: "A false witness shall not be unpunished; he who utters lies shall perish". See on :5. Solomon is alluding to his father David's parting commandments to him to destroy all the opposition to him (1 Kings 2:6,9). So whilst what Solomon writes is true, he is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning.

Joab was David's cousin, who had shown David a lifetime of loyalty. But we sense a personality conflict between the two of them, and indeed it seems that originally Joab had supported Absalom's idea of seizing power, but then fell out with him; and he supported Adonijah's. David held Joab as too hard a man, not understanding grace; whereas Joab held David to be far too soft, and increasingly lacking strong leadership skills in his old age. The support for Adonijah was perhaps more because of disillusion with David than because Adonijah personally had much to offer. Yet to order his death seems to me absolutely lacking in grace.

1Ki 2:7 But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those who eat at your table; for so they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother-
On balance, over a lifetime, Joab had shown David far more kindness than Barzillai. So it is so sad that David, who had experienced so much grace, at the end of his life was so lacking in it and so short termist in his view. After Solomon's ascension, there was judgment and reward; in the form of being able to eat at his table (1 Kings 2:7 cp. 2 Sam. 9: 7,10; 19:28). After Christ's return, the reward is to break bread with Him (Lk. 14:15; 22:30). Breaking bread with Him now is a sign of joyful fellowship with Him in anticipation of that; it shouldn't therefore be a scary, worrying experience.

We note the inconsistency in David's reasoning. David had been saved from Absalom's revolt by Joab, whom he now commanded to be slain. But now he asks that Barzillai be rewarded for helping him with a nice meal at that time. There is no justice here, and justice was to be the characteristic of Israel's king (Dt. 17:17-20).

1Ki 2:8 Behold, there is with you Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite of Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I vowed to him by Yahweh saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword'-

David had told Shimei "You will not die" (2 Sam. 19:23). But just as he twists God's promises to him, so he now again plays with words by iterating this as "I will not put you to death with the sword". As if his emphasis had been upon the word "I". David would not, but Solomon could. Yet his promise was "You will not die". Again we see David twisting the narrative to his own advantage [as he perceived it] and misquoting and twisting words. We note how David breaks his oath to Shimei, but all so as to keep his supposed [unrecorded] oath to Bathsheba that Solomon should reign. His morality and justice was highly selective.

David earlier forgave Shimei for cursing him. But he tells Solomon to bring down that old man's white hairs to the grave with blood on them- a crude image for the murder of an old man (:9). And he uses the same awful turn of phrase to ask Solomon to do this also to his lifelong friend Joab (1 Kings 2:6,9). Surely grace would've found another way? He was

therefore barred from building the temple because of the amount of blood he had shed (1 Chron. 22:8).

David graciously overlooked Shimei's cursing, promising him that he would not die because of it (2 Sam. 16:10,11; 19:23). But he didn't keep up that level of grace to the end: he later asked Solomon to ensure that Shimei was killed for that incident (1 Kings 2:8,9). And one wonders whether it was Shimei's words which so broke David's heart that he later wrote: "Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man...as he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so may it be far from him. He clothed himself also with cursing as with a garment..." (Ps. 109:16-18).

1Ki 2:9 Now therefore don't hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man-

This was not at all "wisdom". It was secular, not spiritual wisdom. Possibly Solomon's request to God for true wisdom was so thrilling to God because it reflected a tacit acceptance that his father's "wisdom" was not at all wise. And possibly his request for wisdom might reflect some regret for his murders of Joab and Shimei on his father's say so, cloaked as "wisdom".

It is significant that Solomon's spiritual life has more appearance of spirituality the closer we get back to David's death. David had asked for wisdom (Ps. 119:34), and even Solomon's request for wisdom can be seen as rooted in a desire to live out parental expectation more than purely from his own volition. For David had told him: "You are a wise man" (1 Kings 2:9), and Solomon wanted to live up to that expectation. In other words, David's influence was extremely strong, but it decreased over the years. Yet even at the end, Solomon's wisdom stayed with him in that some aspects of his upbringing stayed with him- he could never escape from it. When he says that he has never found a truly wise woman, but he did know one wise man (Ecc. 7:28) he may well have had David in mind.

And you will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down to Sheol with blood-

Solomon alludes to this in Prov. 21:11: "When the mocker is punished, the simple gains wisdom. When the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge". This seems to be justifying David's command for Solomon to punish the mocker Shimei, who had cursed him at the time of Absalom's rebellion. At the time, David had forgiven Shimei and forbidden his men to kill him. But at the end of his life, David didn't maintain that level of grace, and commanded Solomon to ensure that he brought Shimei's grey hairs down to the grave with blood. And Solomon justified this collapse of forgiveness and grace by saying that it would give wisdom to others and instruct the wise.

Shimei was a wicked man who hated God's servant David. God told him to curse David (2 Sam. 16:10). Afterwards, Shimei repents and acknowledges that by doing so he sinned (2 Sam. 19:20). And although David recognized that God had told Shimei to curse him (2 Sam. 16:10), David tells Solomon not to hold Shimei "guiltless" for how he had cursed him (1 Kings 2:9). As with the evil spirit from Yahweh working upon Saul, a man is encouraged by God to do the sinful act in which he has set his heart.

Psalm 7:16 had been David's commentary about Shimei: "The trouble he causes shall return upon his own head, his violence shall come down on the crown of his own head". In the context of Shimei, whose cursing was the initial context of this Psalm (see on Ps. 7:1), David sought himself to bring this about. He told Solomon to ensure that Shimei's head and grey hairs should be brought down with blood to the grave by him (1 Kings 2:8,9). This unspiritual attitude of David was rooted in the way that at the earlier point, here in Ps. 7:16, David rejoiced in the thought that Shimei would be condemned by God; and sets about to bring that condemnation about himself. This surely was a case of taking Divine judgment into

his own hand in a way he should not have done, and quite overlooking the Divine desire for repentance (Ez. 33:11).

1Ki 2:10 David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David-

This idiom is clear evidence that the distinction in reward between good and evil people is not made at the point of death. Death is unconsciousness, and the eternal outcome of our lives will be at the resurrection and day of judgment.

There is a huge contradiction between the Bible later setting David as the gold standard of spirituality, and the historical record of David post Bathsheba. The contradiction is so laboured, so repeated and so huge that there has to be a point being made. And it surely is that God sees His beloved, His Davids, as wonderful. Because they are His beloved. And if they have a heart for him, despite all their major surface level weakness. It is apparently possible to have a heart for the Lord and yet still fail, in things great and small... And all this has huge meaning for we who are justified in Christ, declared to have His righteousness. David is a worked example of how this looks from God's side. Perhaps this is why in Chronicles we have such a sanitized view of David, omitting mention of his sin with Bathsheba and presenting him so positively- because this is how God saw him. Here are just some of the passages which set David as some gold standard of obedience, spirituality and devotion to Yahweh:

- Abijam: "His heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father" (1 Kings 15:3).
- Asa: "And Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as David his father had done" (1 Kings 15:11).
- Amaziah: "And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not like David his father" (2 Kings 14:3).
- Ahaz: "And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God, as his father David had done" (2 Kings 16:2).
- Hezekiah: "And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done" (2 Kings 18:3).
- Josiah: "And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (2 Kings 22:2)
- "Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father" (1 Kings 3:3). But later: "Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done" (1 Kings 11:4-6). "And if you will walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days" (1 Kings 3:14). "And as for you, if you will walk before Me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel for ever, as I promised David your father" (1 Kings 9:4,5).
- A similar conditional promise is made to Jeroboam: "If you will hearken to all that I command you, and will walk in My ways, and do what is right in My eyes by keeping My statutes and My commandments, as David My servant did, I will be with you, and will build you a sure house, as I built for David" (1 Kings 11:38). But later God tells Jeroboam: "I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you; and yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments, and followed Me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in My eyes" (1 Kings 14:8).

1Ki 2:11 The days that David reigned over Israel were forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and he reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem-

Seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11) becomes "seven years" (1 Kings 2:11); three months

and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9) becomes "three months" (2 Kings 24:8). Sometimes the Biblical record is vague, other times exact. This reflects how God is not seeking to cover His back against critics. He is of an altogether higher nature than that. There are times when the Spirit uses very approximate numbers rather than exact ("about the space of four hundred and fifty years", Acts 13:20 cp. 1 Kings 6:1). The reference to "seventy" in Judges 9:56 also doesn't seem exact. And 1 Kings 7:23 gives the circumference of the laver as "thirty cubits", although it was ten cubits broad. Taking 'pi' to be 3.14, it is apparent that the circumference would have been 31.4 cubits; but the Spirit says, summing up, "thirty".

We note there is no mention of any lament over David. Post Bathsheba, he was unpopular- and the many rebellions against his power each gained significant mass support, reflective of the disillusion of the masses with David. He died unloved, manipulated by those closest to him...

1Ki 2:12 Solomon sat on the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was firmly established-

The language continues to allude to that of the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7. But the fulfilment of those promises was conditional; so we are being given here the impression which was externally given, and how Solomon himself perceived things. For Solomon and his kingdom were not the ultimate fulfilment of those promises. But God did establish his kingdom, and potentially enabled him to be that Messiah figure. And so his kingdom appears to be a type of that of the Lord Jesus. But in reality I would rather express it as saying that he was given the potential to have the Messianic kingdom, but only achieved a dim image of it.

1Ki 2:13 Then Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. She said, Do you come peaceably? He said, Peaceably-

She feared for her life, using the same term as in 1 Sam. 16:4. We wonder why Adonijah would ask Bathsheba if he could marry Abishag. The fact he goes to her is a tacit reflection of the power Bathsheba had. She was a king maker. I suggested on 1 Kings 1 that she set up the situation between David and Abishag in order to prove David's impotence and thus disqualify him from actively reigning; instead pushing him thereby to make her son king. She presents as a powerful manipulator. And this influences our reading of her in the account of her adultery with David, where I suggested she was far from an innocent victim of power rape.

1Ki 2:14 He said moreover, I have something to tell you. She said, Say on-

He had come not only to ask for the hand of Abishag in marriage, but also to tell her something (:15). We can understand that Solomon therefore interpreted Adonijah's actions as a desire to usurp him.

1Ki 2:15 He said, You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign. However the kingdom is turned around, and has become my brother's; for it was his from Yahweh-

This is a typical mixture of truth and untruth. Indeed the kingdom was Solomon's "from Yahweh" in that David had made that decision and sworn by Yahweh. It is however not so true that "all Israel" wanted him to be king, for when Solomon was pronounced king, there was ecstatic rejoicing amongst the people. And "the kingdom was mine" only in that he was the eldest surviving son of David; but being the eldest son didn't at all mean that the throne was passed on to him, because kings typically chose one of their sons to reign rather than the throne passing automatically to the eldest son. And he quite overlooks the promises to David, which make being the true son of David conditional upon obedience to Yahweh. Adonijah is

presumably quoting David's words "It was [Solomon's] from Yahweh", but I have elsewhere suggested that God didn't say this- this was merely David's claim. Adonijah clearly took it that way, for otherwise he wouldn't have tried to be king.

1Ki 2:16 Now I ask one petition of you. Don't deny me. She said to him, Say on-

This again is manipulative. Perhaps "Say on" was too close to agreeing to grant a petition she had not yet heard; for perhaps from pride she asks Solomon to grant the petition, even though it was highly dubious.

1Ki 2:17 He said, Please speak to Solomon the king (for he will not tell you 'no'), that he give me Abishag the Shunammite as wife-

Again Adonijah is playing with words and logic, arguing that Solomon cannot say no to his mother, and she cannot say no to him, Adonijah. Why did Adonijah want to marry Abishag? He surely knew it looked like a positioning of himself to unseat Solomon, which he had vowed not to do. The only obvious reason was sexual infatuation. Thus he followed his father's failure and lost his life for it. Possibly Bathsheba runs with his request because she foresees how her son Solomon would respond, and thus get rid of another possible competitor against her son.

1Ki 2:18 Bathsheba said, Alright. I will speak for you to the king-

Either she was naive, or she felt bound to ask because of her unwise response to him in :16. But I will later suggest she agrees to ask Solomon because she foresees Solomon's reaction, and wants to see the death of a potential rival to her son.

1Ki 2:19 Bathsheba therefore went to king Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. The king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself to her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a throne to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand-

We sense here and in 1 Kings 1 the deep sense of respect for David and Bathsheba. Solomon speaks so highly of his mother in Proverbs, apparently modelling the "virtuous woman" of Prov. 31 upon her. To sit on the right hand means to be second in command of power, so we can assume Bathsheba was a powerful political individual as David's favourite surviving wife and mother of the son he had chosen as king.

1Ki 2:20 Then she said, I ask one small petition of you; don't deny me. The king said to her, Ask on, my mother; for I will not deny you-

He repeats the same error she had made in :16, agreeing to a petition before knowing what it was. This seems a theme the Bible likes to raise, for we think of king Darius with Daniel, and Herod and the daughter of Herodias. She considers it a "small petition", but it was a very large petition because of its major political ramifications, which Solomon immediately perceived. We wonder therefore whether she was being simply naive rather than feeling railroaded because of her response in :16.

Bathsheba here comes over as manipulative. She makes a request with huge political implications, but passes it off to her son as 'just a small thing'. We wonder whether Abishag was under Bathsheba's control and manipulation. There is ample evidence from surrounding nations that the queen mother controlled the king's harem and it is in my view quite possible that Bathsheba was doing this with Abishag. I suggested on 2 Sam. 11 that Bathsheba may well have been far from an innocent victim in her affair with David. There likely was an element of manipulation in her, and this comes out clearly in her attitude to Abishag and getting her son Solomon declared the next king. Again we get the impression of an impotent David, unloved and surrounded on his death bed by people who were using and manipulating

him, developing their own agendas regarding what would happen after his death. That loneliness at the end was surely to propel him towards final trust in God and His promises to David. And lonely final years and emotionally hard deaths are used by the Father to teach men the same lesson to this day.

1Ki 2:21 She said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as wife- Perhaps she thought that Adonijah's only motive was his desire to marry a beauty queen. But as suggested on 1 Kings 1:1, Abishag was more than a carer for a man in a geriatric ward. She had had intimate sexual contact with David, although he had not succeeded in achieving intercourse with her. He was therefore to be considered as at least one of his concubines, and whoever married her was thereby strengthening their connection with David's throne. The Hebrew is "Abishag... shall be given to Adonijah"; this and her description of this as a "small" favour (:20) again reveal Bathsheba as manipulative. Quite possibly Bathsheba is doing all this with some irony. She foresees her son's reaction and is in fact setting up Adonijah to be slain. Possibly she actually creates the whole story. It was after all in her interests to have the rightful claimant to the throne murdered, and her son Solomon thereby more firmly established as king.

1Ki 2:22 King Solomon answered his mother, Why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also; for he is my elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah-

Solomon may well have been correct. But there is also the possibility that he wildly extrapolated from the fact Adonijah wanted to marry this beautiful woman, and refused to give him credit for accepting that Solomon rather than himself was Yahweh's choice for the throne (:15). And from that, Solomon creates a conspiracy theory about Joab and Abiathar. He had threatened Adonijah that he had as it were a suspended death sentence which would be triggered if he committed any more "wickedness" (1 Kings 1:52). Adonijah's motives are left intentionally unclear in the record, to provoke our reflection. Whatever, it seems to me that Solomon was eager to perceive Adonijah as having broken the conditions of 1 Kings 1:52 so that he could kill him.

We may well ask: "Why does Solomon first promise to grant his mother's request, then attack her for making it, then switch his wrath to Adonijah?". Perhaps it all contributes to the overall impression of fickleness and people acting without principle. And also there is a theme here of people's behaviour being on one hand shrewd and on the other most unwise. Why did Bathsheba agree to Adonijah's request? Why did Adonijah even think of so quickly trying to position himself as Solomon's rival, when he has just been spared from death by Solomon and has sworn loyalty to him? This is all psychologically credible. We are being given the impression of a court family plagued by weakness, instability and unwisdom.

1Ki 2:23 Then king Solomon vowed by Yahweh saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life-

If Adonijah realized how Solomon would react, he surely wouldn't have gone ahead as he did in trying to marry Abishag. And as noted on :14-17, his reasoning was less than honest and deceitful, but again, we could put this down to his simple desire to marry the beautiful Abishag. It seems a rather strict interpretation of 1 Kings 1:52 to claim that the request for Abishag was "wickedness". We note that Solomon is going totally on the words of Bathsheba reporting what she says Adonijah said. He makes no effort to hear Adonijah's side of the story, and his murder of Adonijah for this reported request seems totally wrong. Likewise Benaiah was wrong for operationalizing it. Solomon has come out of nowhere in 1 Kings 1, propelled to the throne by Bathsheba, and then his father David falling for that and making all

kinds of false claims in 1 Chron. 22-29 about how God had in fact long ago named Solomon as next king. Solomon is set up as a man who was propelled to power in a putsch orchestrated by his mother, taking the throne from Adonijah. And who begins his reign with very poor, unspiritual behaviour. This sets the path; for after the account of his glory and apparent wisdom, we will then learn that he has no heart for God and turns away to idols, in one of the greatest cases of spiritual failure in the pages of Scripture.

1Ki 2:24 Now therefore as Yahweh lives, who has established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as He promised, surely Adonijah shall be put to death this day-

David's belief that Ps. 72 applied totally to Solomon would have encouraged him Solomon to feel that the fact that he was the great Son of David and had had the promises made to him justified all his actions. This is an example. For as discussed on :22,23, his desire to murder Adonijah was not on any very Biblical basis from the law of Moses. The seed to be eternally established upon David's throne was one to be born after David slept with his fathers, and would be a Divinely begotten son. Solomon fulfilled neither of these requirements.

"Established" is the word used in the promises of the eternal establishment of David's throne (2 Sam. 7:12,13,16 etc.), and Solomon wrongly assumed that the conditional nature of the promises concerning the seed were just irrelevant to him as he had wisdom. Therefore he uses the word of how his kingdom has been "established" (1 Kings 2:24 s.w.). Solomon's contenders for the throne were all stopped by God, they tried to prepare or establish themselves but it never worked out (2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Kings 1:5); and so surely Solomon has the idea in mind that he has been established as the promised Messianic seed of David with an eternally "established" throne and kingdom. This leads him to the conclusion that the outcome of wisdom and folly is in this life, and he has no perspective of a final day of judgment and eternal establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. This is why the simplistic dichotomies he presents in Proverbs between the blessed and wise, and the cursed and foolish, are not always true to observed experiences in this life. For it is the future Kingdom which puts them in ultimate perspective.

He felt that God "has made me an house, as he promised" to David. He felt that he was the fulfillment of the promises, and therefore the Kingdom had come; he failed to be awed by the greatness of the Christ to come, and abstracted and reduced His coming Kingdom into an effective nothingness. By doing so, he totally overlooked the highly conditional nature of the promises, and forgot his own proneness to failure, and the weakness of his nature. He failed to meditate upon the promises beyond what they seemed to offer him in the here and now; and the result was that he felt they were *totally* fulfilled in him (1 Kings 8:20,24).

1Ki 2:25 King Solomon sent by Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell on him, so that he died-

Benaiah must now have been an old man, so perhaps he arranged the murder through a proxy.

1Ki 2:26 To Abiathar the priest the king said, Go to Anathoth, to your own fields; for you are worthy of death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord Yahweh before David my father, and because you were afflicted in all in which my father was afflicted-

One act of kindness to David during Absalom's rebellion, i.e. carrying the ark of Yahweh at that time, is seen as rationale for sparing Abiathar. But Joab had saved David from Absalom in battle... and that didn't figure at all in Solomon's logic. As discussed on :22,23, there was no specific evidence that Abiathar had done anything worthy of death, nor that he was actually involved in any plot to establish Adonijah as king again. Perhaps it was as simple as

Adonijah being in love with a beautiful woman and wanting to marry her. And Adonijah is being dogmatically condemned on the basis of conspiracy theory alone. We note that Abiathar carried the ark at the time of Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 15:24); but it is hard to prove that he was from the line of Levites who were allowed to do this. David had been taught through the death of Uzzah that the ark must be carried only according to the specific Mosaic legislation. But he apparently was so close to the spirit of the law that he realized even after that, that the letter of that law could be broken.

1Ki 2:27 So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest to Yahweh, that he might fulfil the word of Yahweh, which He spoke concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh-

But we get the impression God didn't want that prophecy to have to come true. All Abiathar's family had been slain by Saul and Doeg for their loyalty to David. But Abiathar had been preserved, presumably because God hoped that somehow He would not have to fulfil that prophecy of destruction. For He hopes against hope, in the gap between the statement of condemnation and fulfilling it, for human repentance and persuasion of Him to change His mind. But Solomon knew none of that, and just wanted Abiathar destroyed because he was potentially disloyal to him. We may well enquire what right Solomon had to thrust out Abiathar from the priesthood; surely only God could ultimately do that. Perhaps Solomon quoted God's words about the house of Eli. But his murder of Abiathar was inappropriate; for on that logic, David should have murdered Abiathar long ago just for who he was, a descendant of Eli. Solomon's spirituality was highly flawed and biased towards his own self justification, right from the beginning of his reign.

However we have to face a hard truth here. This claim is an intentional untruth. Abiathar was a descendant of the priests of Nob, not Eli. Just as David twists God's words to him in 2 Sam. 7, so he does here, falsely using scripture, as it were, to justify his own devious end. He does the same twisting of words as noted on :8.

1Ki 2:28 The news came to Joab; for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he didn't turn after Absalom. Joab fled to the tabernacle of Yahweh, and caught hold on the horns of the altar-

This was a sad end for Joab, who was by now elderly. It seems David had a personality clash with Joab, frustrated at his refusal to understand grace and complaining that Joab was "too hard" for him. But it ended up with David's son Solomon ordering Joab to be slain, despite all his loyalty, and I would consider this as the supreme example of intolerance of intolerance, showing a lack of grace to someone because they had not understood grace. David in the later part of his life had always refused to carry out legitimate death sentences, e.g. as demanded by the behaviour of Amnon and Absalom. But Solomon lacked that grace, because he failed to perceive his own sins and need for grace himself.

1Ki 2:29 It was told king Solomon, Joab has fled to the tabernacle of Yahweh, and behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada saying, Go, fall on him-

It seems that Solomon didn't really reflect on who his father really was. He had an ideal image of him, choosing to overlook his failures with women. David committed the sin of presumption with Bathsheba, and yet Solomon judges Joab for committing presumptuous sin without mercy (1 Kings 2:29 cp. Ex. 21:14). LXX has Joab adding: "Because I am afraid of you I have fled to the Lord". Like Adonijah, he is using Ex. 21:12-14: "One who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death, but not if it is unintentional, but God allows it to happen: then I will appoint you a place where he shall flee. If a man schemes and comes presumptuously on his neighbour to kill him, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die". This offered salvation at the altar for those falsely accused of murder. I suggested that

Adonijah was not wrong to assume he as the remaining firstborn would be the next king. He fled to the altar because he felt Nathan and Bathsheba had wrongly accused him of intending to murder Solomon and Bathsheba. Joab likewise flees to the altar because he too is persuaded that he has killed nobody in order for Solomon to seek to kill him. Neither Adonijah nor Joab would have fled to the horns of the altar unless they believed they were innocent and would thereby be saved. They would have run away far from Solomon. Instead they run to the horns of the altar and remain there, a sitting target for Solomon. I suggest they both only did this because they were convinced of their innocence of murder, and that therefore Bathsheba's claim to David that Adonijah was likely to murder herself and Solomon was just manipulative- she wanted her son Solomon to be king, not Adonijah. It all presents a sad picture of deceit and low moral fibre in all concerned. Solomon murders Joab on the basis that he can't legitimately take refuge at the altar because he has committed other murders. But so had David! And Solomon is willing to desecrate the altar with Joab's blood, a sign he has scant regard for Yahweh's holiness; for Ex. 21 says that the insincere seeker of asylum at the altar must be removed from the altar and only then slain: "thou shalt take him from my altar to put him to death" (Ex. 21:14 LXX). Solomon murders Joab, the army commander, for having murdered two previous army commanders. The hypocrisy is evident, and doesn't bode well for Solomon's long term spiritual path. He of course has been set up in this hypocrisy by David.

1Ki 2:30 Benaiah came to the tabernacle of Yahweh and said to him, Thus says the king, 'Come forth!'. He said, No; but I will die here. Benaiah brought the king word again saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me-

As discussed on 1 Kings 1, to grab hold of the horns of the altar was done by those under unfair persecution for blood guilt. Joab was utterly persuaded of his innocence and maybe that is why he insisted on dying there by the altar. Perhaps Joab said this to still try to avoid death, reasoning that surely Solomon would have more respect for the tabernacle than to order him to be slain on the altar. Or perhaps Joab's spiritual side was eager to die as a sacrifice upon God's altar. Or maybe he wanted to make Solomon unpopular with the people by ordering him slain on the altar. The narrative is purposefully open ended to provoke our reflections.

1Ki 2:31 The king said to him, Do as he has said, and fall on him, and bury him; that you may take away the blood which Joab shed without cause, from me and from my father's house-

Solomon's reasoning was wrong in so many ways. To murder someone on the horns of the altar showed a lack of respect for Yahweh's holiness. Joab could easily have been removed and executed elsewhere. The blood shed by Joab "without cause" was no reason for his death at this stage; David himself had shed much blood without good cause. The slaying of Shimei and Joab was in fact likewise "without cause". And Joab's guilt did not pass to David and Solomon. And murdering Joab did not somehow cleanse Solomon from some imagined guilt by association with Joab. Solomon wanted Joab dead because his father had told him to eliminate him. And so he was using any quasi spiritual reasoning which came into his head to justify it.

David's graceless attitude to bloodguilt was continued by Solomon, who uses the argument to justify slaying Joab in order to cleanse David's descendants from blood guilt for the murders Joab had committed (1 Kings 2:31-33). Solomon's argument here is weak; because as noted on 2 Sam. 21:1, David had been saved from his own blood guilt by grace, and he ought to have reflected that in turning down the request of the Gibeonites. But Solomon just repeats his father's political usage of blood guilt expiation, and wrongly reasons

that he has to slay Joab lest David's family be charged with blood guilt seeing that Joab was David's cousin, of the same blood family.

1Ki 2:32 Yahweh will return his blood on his own head, because he fell on two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword, and my father David didn't know it: Abner the son of Ner, captain of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the army of Judah-

This may have been true on one level. But David had slain men like Uriah who were more righteous and better than himself. And been forgiven by grace. The reasons given by Solomon are in fact a condemnation of his father rather than a justification of him. We note already an effective distinction between Israel and Judah; the division which was to come was only bringing into the open what had historically been developing for generations. God confirms men in the divisions they themselves wish to happen, and binds together those who wish to unify. David [in my view, falsely] claimed Yahweh precluded him from building the temple because he had shed much blood, and yet in the next breath he orders the death of Joab for shedding the blood of just two men. David shows here a total lack of remorse for the deaths of Uriah and the other soldiers who died in an attempt to cover that up. He goes to his graveplanks impenitent. Despite an earlier peak of penitence when confronted for his sin. And yet will still be saved by grace alone.

1Ki 2:33 So shall their blood return on the head of Joab, and on the head of his seed forever. But to David, and to his seed, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace forever from Yahweh-

The eternal peace upon David's throne would be achieved only through God's only begotten son bringing eternal peace with God. Solomon here states dogmatically that he is the eternally blessed seed of David, and his house and throne are to be blessed with eternal peace with God. But those promises were conditional upon his obedience, and he ignored those conditions. He was led into this by the assumptions and parental obsessions of his father, but all the same, it was this which led him to make shipwreck of his faith. This assumption that the Davidic promises were fulfilled in him led him to a lack of self examination and no humility arising from a sense of the eternal future he might miss if he turned away. See on :45.

Solomon may be alluding to how "it will go well with you" if the shedder of innocent blood is condemned to death (Dt. 19:13). But he fails to realize that David was in exactly that situation, and had been saved by Divine grace alone. And he ought to have reflected that grace, even if David didn't.

1Ki 2:34 Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and fell on him, and killed him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness-

The 'going up' would have been by the steps which led up to the altar; unless the reference is to 'going up' to the mount Zion where the temple was.

1Ki 2:35 The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army; and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar-

Benaiah surely did the wrong thing by slaying Joab, without evidence for his wrongdoing, by the altar. Yet he is rewarded for his conscienceless behaviour by political promotion. All this doesn't sound the stuff of God's Kingdom.

1Ki 2:36 The king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and don't go out anywhere from there-

The intention of making him move to Jerusalem from Bahurim (1 Kings 2:8) was surely in order to set him up to be murdered. Solomon reveals a very calculating and callous side, typical of a man who (unlike David) had never been personally spiritually desperate, and had not known grace.

1Ki 2:37 For on the day you go out, and pass over the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall surely die: your blood shall be on your own head-

The limit of the Kidron was to ensure Shimei didn't return to Benjamite territory in order to stir up a Saulide rebellion against Solomon. Shimei didn't cross the Kidron when he went to Gath. Indeed, Shimei's journey there would've been in the steps of David who fled there from Saul and was saved there only by grace. But Solomon doesn't want to reflect that grace and jumps at the chance to slay Shimei for leaving home. There is no grace in Solomon, only fear and narcissism. Nor is there any perception in him of the grace shown to his father David.

Solomon may well have been present that terrible night when David and his family passed over the brook Kidron, and then encountered Shimei's cursing. And he therefore built this memory in to his punishment of Shimei. The Kidron was the river he would have had to cross were he to return to his home town of Bahurim, from whence he had been summoned to live in Jerusalem (1 Kings 2:8). See on :40. We sense Solomon's playing of God by the manner in which he alludes to the curse in Eden, that "in the day" the brook was crossed, "you shall surely die"; see on :44.

1Ki 2:38 Shimei said to the king, The saying is good. As my lord the king has said, so will your servant do. Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days-

The description of the length of time periods in the Bible is relative; "many days" is three years (:39).

1Ki 2:39 It happened at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away to Achish, son of Maacah, king of Gath. They told Shimei saying, Behold, your servants are in Gath-

These slaves may have been Philistines who ran back home. David had twice fled to Achish king of Gath (1 Sam. 21:10; 27:2). But Solomon is unmoved by these associations with his father's days of desperation and a life preserved by Divine grace.

1Ki 2:40 Shimei arose, saddled his donkey, and went to Gath to Achish, to seek his servants; and Shimei went, and brought his servants from Gath-

The road to Gath would not have involved crossing the Kidron; it was in the opposite direction. For Solomon to insist that Shimei had broken the spirit of his commandment about not crossing the Kidron was therefore very legalistic, and not a very solid basis upon which to murder a man whom David had assured of forgiveness.

1Ki 2:41 It was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and had come again-

Shimei surely did this assuming that he was not liable for the death penalty because he had not crossed the Kidron (:37), as Gath was in the opposite direction; and he had kept the spirit of the agreement in that he had returned. Solomon comes over as very much lacking in integrity in now killing him.

1Ki 2:42 The king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, Didn't I adjure you by Yahweh and warn you, saying, 'Know for certain, that on the day you go out, and walk abroad any where, you shall surely die?'. You said to me, 'The saying that I have heard is good'-

There is no reference in the narrative to any such oath by Yahweh. This is not to say no such reference to Yahweh was made, but it also rather supports the impression we have of Solomon's lack of integrity and willingness to tell untruths; see on :40.

1Ki 2:43 Why then have you not kept the oath of Yahweh, and the commandment that I have instructed you with?-

Solomon is condemned for not keeping the covenant / oath of Yahweh and His commands (s.w. 1 Kings 11:10,11, which implies he was guilty of not doing so from his youth: "he didn't keep that which Yahweh commanded. Therefore Yahweh said to Solomon... you have not kept my covenant and my statutes..."). His hypocrisy and lack of grace is so marked.

1Ki 2:44 The king said moreover to Shimei, You know all the wickedness which your heart knows full well, what you did to David my father. Therefore Yahweh shall return your wickedness on your own head-

Again, Solomon is playing God, as we saw him doing on :37. It was not Yahweh who was returning his wickedness upon him, but Solomon doing so. Shimei had apologized for his words of cursing, and David had forgiven him and given him assurances. Solomon's attitude is very wrong, and there was no Mosaic legal justification for the death penalty for cursing a man. And Shimei's stoning of David and calling him a "man of blood" had been justified, in that indeed David was worthy of death by stoning and was indeed a man of blood. To slate this as "wickedness" worthy of the death penalty is very severe judgment. And Solomon is choosing to respect his father's senile words spoken from his deathbed, rather than his father's earlier gracious forgiveness of Shimei.

1Ki 2:45 But king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before Yahweh forever-

Solomon saw himself as the Messianic Son of David, therefore he felt his kingdom was the Messianic Kingdom; and he here states dogmatically that he is the eternally blessed seed of David. But those promises were conditional upon his obedience, and he ignored those conditions. And in all this, of course, we see our warning. This may explain why he built his own house as a replica of God's house - he felt that in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant his house was God's house. Solomon's attitude to the Kingdom was that it was all here and now, and it was not so much the Kingdom of God as the Kingdom of Solomon. In this Solomon may seem far removed from our experience. But with eyes half closed, discerning only the general outline, Solomon is surely in a mind-set analogous to many of us. Solomon was so sure that because of his father's righteousness, therefore God would establish him. "Mercy and truth preserve the king, and he upholdeth his throne by mercy" (Prov. 20:28 RVmg.) says as much- the promises ("mercy and truth" usually refer to God's promises) had been given to David and just because of that, Solomon was sure that *his* throne and kingdom would thereby be upheld.

1Ki 2:46 So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he went out, and fell on him, so that he died. The kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon-

Clearly the kingdom was established in a secular sense, by Solomon's brutal murder of potential contenders for the throne. But this was not the same as the promised eternal establishment of David's kingdom in the hands of his Messianic seed.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 3

1Ki 3:1 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 Yahweh, and the wall of Jerusalem all around-

The opening account of Solomon's reign is negative about him. We know he will go on to have a vast harem of 1000 women; and in such a harem, the first wife is of huge influence. And that first wife is presented as being none other than a Gentile, and the daughter of Pharaoh, Israel's historical and idolatrous enemy. We note that the temple Solomon built was very similar to Egyptian temples, especially with the emphasis upon gold plating of everything [remembering that the king of Israel was not supposed to love gold, Dt. 17:18]. And his wife's palace was next to it. The first wife in African culture [and Egypt was African] usually chose the husband's subsequent wives- and she chose Gentiles. And Solomon went along with all this. It was a spiritually disastrous relationship. Solomon had a system of forced labour, and had 12 administrative districts [not following the 12 tribes] with 12 officers who each provided the king's food one month / year (1 Kings 4:7-20). All this was exactly how Egypt was organized under Amenhotep III and is surely the influence of having Pharaoh's daughter for his leading wife. It has been noted that "She is mentioned more than any other wife. She is mentioned more than seven times among his foreign wives (1 Kings 3:1; 9:16,24; 7:8; 11:1; 2 Chron. 8:11; 1 Chron. 4:18). She is the only one that Solomon built a house for (1 Kings 9:24). She is the only one identified with her father, Pharaoh. The rest of the foreign wives are mentioned as Edomites, Ammonites" etc.

Remember that in Ecclesiastes he says that he just had an obsession with all manner of building projects. God's temple was just one of them. Building God's house is therefore mentioned together with all the other building projects.

Solomon's son Rehoboam was the son of Naamah from Ammon (1 Kings 14:31), with LXX adding "the daughter of Ana the son of Nahash". Possibly "Ana" is Hanun-who had been a bitter enemy of David. Solomon's marriage to his daughter may have been from a perverse teenage desire to rebel against his father, or to make peace with Ammon. Possibly the making of affinity with Pharaoh was similar. But it shows Solomon involved with women who were the historical enemies of God's people. Yet Bathsheba his mother, according to the Song of Solomon, crowned him with a crown on the day of his "espousal". Everything militated against Solomon being spiritual; his father projected unreal expectations onto him, requiring him to be the Messiah. And it seems his mother encouraged him in marrying a Gentile. His request for wisdom, when David had told him to murder Joab and Shimei according to "his wisdom", is therefore so pleasing to God. It's as if Solomon wanted to really know what God thought about it all. Yet he slumped back into following mere parental expectation. Solomon's failure with Gentile women therefore began right at the start of his reign. "Made affinity" doesn't have to mean this was because of an alliance, but the phrase can just mean 'became son in law to'. It is the word used in Ezra 9:14 of how such "affinity" with Gentiles provoked God's wrath. Rehoboam's mother was from Ammon, so the Egyptian wife was not his only Gentile woman. However we note that there are no Egyptian gods listed amongst those whom Solomon later worshipped. Perhaps Solomon justified this marriage by a legalistic reading of the verses which condemned marriage with Canaanite women; and Solomon may have argued that Egyptians weren't Canaanites (Ex. 34:16; Dt. 7:3). The fact he only allowed her to live in the city of David for a time could mean that he realized there

was something wrong in having a Gentile wife living in David's city. We get the impression that he gingerly committed this sin; but soon became used to it, and went on to marry hundreds of such women. Or the hint could be that after he had built his own house, which took 13 years, he then parted company with her. The Song of Solomon could be about his relationship with this Egyptian woman, and it ends in an unsatisfactory way with the couple splitting up.

1Ki 3:2 At that time the people sacrificed in the high places, because there was no house built for the name of Yahweh-

This surely reflects Solomon's perspective- for God Himself didn't need a built house in which sacrifice could be offered. The temple became such an obsession with Solomon that he came to think that no really acceptable worship could occur outside of the idea which he had so developed in his own mind. It's rather like thinking that one *must* have a physical church building in which to be an ecclesia of the living God- who doesn't dwell in buildings made with hands.

"Only" the people sacrificed in high places... and Solomon loved the Lord... *only* he sacrificed... in high places" (1 Kings 3:2,3), highlights the contradiction between Solomon's love for God and his willingness to sacrifice in the "high places" which God detested - for the Law clearly spelt out that sacrifice could only be offered in the tabernacle, at the place where Yahweh's Name was placed (Dt. 12:5-8; 14:23-25).

1Ki 3:3 Solomon loved Yahweh, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places-

The Divine assessment of Solomon's spirituality makes no reference to his obedience to God's commands; rather "Solomon loved Yahweh (in that he) walked in the statutes of David his father" - rather than God's statutes. This perfectly explains why Solomon blandly disobeyed God's word in the very ways his father David did. Again, there are unpleasant similarities with our own position. Weaknesses which our forefathers and community have accepted without comment for generations are tolerated without a quibble; there are other issues, equally contrary to Divine principles, over which we create great complaint- simply because this is what parentally and communally we have been taught to react against. Yet the Gospel should be making us a new creation, standing independently of tradition and background conditioning. Knowing others who are doing the same should be the basis of our fellowship, rather than just belonging to the same community with the same background.

LXX "And Solomon loved the Lord, so as to walk in the ordinances of David his father". This suggests that Solomon's desire was firstly to walk in the path of his father, and his love of Yahweh was only in order to achieve that. It should have been the other way around, loving his father's way in order to love God. David idolized Solomon and projected unreal spiritual expectations onto him; and Solomon does the same to the image of David. This kind of club of mutual admiration, even between persons now dead, is unhealthy. It is by nature a closed system without God in it.

"Only he sacrificed..." suggests that from the start, Solomon's spirituality was deficient. He followed his father David, but... there was a "but" to that. He also did what God's law forbade, worshipping on the hills, with their association with idol shrines. And we will later learn that it is on the hills / high places around Jerusalem that Solomon will build temples to other gods when he turns away from Yahweh. The

point is being made that right from the start, he had begun the slide to that point. This is the repeated style of the record- to describe Solomon's external greatness with little footnotes, as it were, bringing out his fundamental spiritual weakness. Sometimes, as here, this is done explicitly; other times, implicitly. Thus the description of so much gold and silver being amassed and used by Solomon is an implicit contrast with Dt. 17:17, which commands the king of Israel not to hoard gold and silver. Solomon's own wisdom contrasted gold against wisdom (Prov. 3:14; 8:10,19; 16:16). But he sought to have both. Likewise Dt. 17 forbade the king of Israel to multiply horses and wives, but Solomon is recorded as amassing both. There is no explicit comment on this, but we are supposed to read the implicit contrast with the Dt. 17 passage. And so when we come to the condemnation of Solomon for his apostasy in 1 Kings 11, this is not in fact out of step with the overall presentation of Solomon throughout 1 Kings.

1Ki 3:4 The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place. Zadok cared for the tabernacle at Gibeon, which was "the great high place" (1 Chron. 16:39; 1 Kings 3:4), and so it is another example of correlation within the inspired records that he had access to that horn and the oil with which to anoint Solomon (1 Kings 1:39). Solomon had replaced Abiathar with Zadok as chief priest, so perhaps his worship to Gibeon rather than Jerusalem [where Abiathar had officiated] was a nod towards Zadok.

Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar-

This was clearly out of step with what David had earlier been taught after his sin with Bathsheba; that God did not want thousands of sacrifices, but rather broken, contrite hearts (Ps. 40:6-8). And Solomon repeats David's failure in this, by again offering such huge numbers of sacrifices. Which, like the temple, God didn't want. Solomon failed to understand that his parents, especially his father, had been saved by grace rather than sacrifice. He had not taken to heart his father's Psalm 51.

1Ki 3:5 In Gibeon Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give you-

This is the first and one of the few times that God has ever asked man what he wants. Godly men usually asked or enquired of God on their initiative, as David did (s.w. 1 Sam. 22:10; 23:4; 2 Sam. 5:19). But Solomon had apparently merely offered ritual sacrifices, and had not engaged with God in personal relationship. Now he is encouraged to do so.

I have argued that Ecclesiastes is Solomon's self reflection, a kind of autobiography. It is also a rejection and renunciation of his faith, because he wrote it at the end of his life, when his heart had been turned aside from God (1 Kings 11:3). I suggest it is this dream which is the reference of Ecc. 5:3: "For as a dream comes with a multitude of cares, so a fool's speech with a multitude of words". If we enquire what reference a "dream" may have to Solomon's historical life, we naturally think of this dream at the start of his life when he was offered whatever he wanted, and he chose wisdom. Several times in Ecclesiastes he appears to regret that choice, as he considers there to be no ultimate advantage to wisdom or going God's way because death ends it all, and God, Solomon thinks, cannot resurrect the dead to judgment (Ecc. 3:22). And so in Ecc. 5:3 Solomon seems to be saying that that dream was simply self induced, an outcome of his "multitude of cares", and the "multitude of words" of wisdom he had written in response to it was but "a fool's speech". Like many who have had the direct involvement of God in their lives in youth, he came to rationalize it as nothing at all

Divine, considering his dream had just been some Freudian reflection of his own internal "cares". And this kind of rationalizing of the Divine over time is absolutely true to observed experience in those who turn away from God.

1Ki 3:6 Solomon said, You have shown to Your servant David my father great grace, according as he walked before You in truth, righteousness and in uprightness of heart with You. You have kept for him this great grace, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day-

Thus the eternity of God's truth is paralleled with the eternity of His righteousness (as in Ps. 119:142,160). David walked / lived "in truth and righteousness" (s.w. 1 Kings 3:6; Ps. 15:2), because this was how God is. The Messianic seed of David was to have this characteristic, ruling on David's throne in truth and righteousness (s.w. Is. 16:5).

But Solomon has it all the wrong way around in saying that Yahweh had showed grace to David because he had walked before Yahweh in truth. Solomon totally misunderstood grace. It is a pure gift from God, and not at all granted in response to our righteous walk. David himself had seen Solomon's kingship as God's greatest grace to him (1 Kings 1:48). Sadly, both David and Solomon failed to perceive that God's forgiveness of Solomon's parents for their sin was God's greatest mercy to them. Instead they liked to think that Solomon's kingship was the greatest mercy shown to David.

These words are doubtless an allusion to the mercy God showed David in his relationship with Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. But Solomon makes no mention of David's great faith in God's grace, and his subsequent appreciation that animal sacrifices were meaningless. These were David's real strong points, but Solomon is obsessed with David's public life of obedience ("according as he *walked*"). He evidently saw his father as the epitome of spiritual good, faultless in God's sight. "Mercy" and "truth" both occur in 1 Kings 3:6, and they often refer to the promises. Solomon seems to have seen the promises to David as a reward for David's good life, rather than an expression of God's unwarranted grace. David's reaction was "Who am I...?" to receive such an honour. Solomon's feeling was that David deserved them because of his righteousness. So here is a feature of many parent-child relationships in the Lord. The children love and respect their parents spiritually, but often for the wrong reasons; they actually misunderstand their forefathers' spirituality. This is why their understanding of parental and community expectation is often wrong in the first place.

1Ki 3:7 Now, Yahweh my God-
See on :10.

You have made Your servant king instead of David my father. I am but a little child. I don't know how to go out or come in-

Solomon was not that young. David had exaggerated Solomon's youth when he called him "young and tender" just before his death (1 Chron. 22:5; 29:1). Solomon views himself as his father had done. And he does the same in his false view of himself as the promised Messianic seed of 2 Sam. 7. David's perceptions of his son set that son up for spiritual failure. The only way for Solomon to break out of this would have been for him to see himself as himself, and as God saw him. But he took the easier and more natural path, of living out his father's expectation of him. And it was to his own destruction. Solomon's claim to be "but a little child" needing help is in sharp contrast to the ruthless, murdering, immoral Solomon we have just read of in 1 Kings

2. Yet despite his false humility, God seizes upon the positive- in that Solomon asks for wisdom. And James likewise alludes to this in urging us all to ask for wisdom.

David considered Solomon a "wise man" (1 Kings 2:6,9). By asking for wisdom, Solomon was hereby recognizing that he did not in fact have the wisdom which his father claimed he had. This baby step movement to reject paternal expectation of him was strongly and enthusiastically welcomed by God.

To 'go out and come in' means 'to lead'. It is used of David at the start of his career (1 Sam. 18:13,16); and again we have the impression that David is asking for this ability in order to mimic his father, whose expectations he clearly wanted to live out. But when he matured beyond that stage of life, Solomon was revealed as personally empty in spiritual terms.

This is alluded to in Mt. 18:3,4; become a child so you can rule the Kingdom; Christ was the greatest child as he will be the greatest ruler. This sets Solomon up as our example in this aspect. Notice how Sarah's unspiritual comments "cast out the bondwoman..." and "my Lord being old..." are interpreted positively in the NT.

Ecclesiastes is in many ways Solomon's self-examination; and it was accurate. He indicates that the temple had actually made him stumble, and that his numerous sacrifices had been the sacrifices of a fool, rather than the wise man he had appeared to be (Ecc. 5:1); and surely he was casting a sideways glance at himself when he spoke of the wise child (cp. Solomon initially, 1 Kings 3:7) being greater than the old and foolish king who would no longer be admonished (Ecc. 4:13; even though Solomon had advisers, 1 Kings 12:6). Yet he chose to do absolutely nothing about this; once again, his accurate spiritual knowledge had no real practical influence upon him.

So very often does Solomon speak of "David my father", and that God had made him king "instead of David my father" (e.g. 1 Kings 3:7). Thus he asks Hiram to deal with him just as he had done with David his father (1 Kings 5:2-7; and cp. 1 Kings 5:1 with 2 Sam. 5:11). The number of times these phrases occur in the records is so large that we simply have to recognize that God is pointing something out to us about the relationship between Solomon and David (1 Kings 2:24,26,32,44; 3:6,7,14; 5:3,5; 6:12; 8:15,17,18,20,24,25,26; 9:4; 11:33; 2 Chron. 1:8,9; 2:3,7,14; 6:4,7,8,10,15,16; 7:17). Solomon was raised a believer, and he lived out parental expectation; but in later life, he himself was revealed as having no real faith at all, and he turned away from Yahweh to idolatry. So often in his prayers to God does Solomon make reference to David; for example: "Thou hast showed 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 upon his throne" (1 Kings 3:6).

1Ki 3:8 Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people, that can't be numbered nor counted for multitude-

Solomon assumes that the promises to Abraham of an innumerable seed had been fulfilled in his kingdom, just as he assumes the promises to David of the seed were fulfilled in him. He has no perspective of the future Kingdom of God, nor does he factor in the conditional nature of those promises.

And so Solomon 'had the truth', he knew so deeply the true principles of Yahweh worship and the promises which formed the basis of the covenant. But like us, he scarcely considered the enormity of the gap between the theory he knew

and the practice of it in his own heart and living. We too have a tendency to build up masses of Biblical and spiritual knowledge, and to let the mere acquisition of it stop us from practicing it. He flouted the explicit commandments not to get horses from Egypt, not to marry Gentile women, and not to multiply silver and gold (Dt. 17:17,18 cp. 1 Kings 10:21-29). At the end of his days, he recognized that although he had loved the theory of wisdom, the image of a spiritual life, the wisdom of God had never really impacted his soul: "I said, I will be wise (referring back to his request for wisdom in 1 Kings 3); but it was far from me" (Ecc. 7:23). His request for wisdom had only been so that he could do the job of leading Israel, living out the parental expectation of his father, whom he admits in Proverbs 4 had taught him to ask for wisdom. In Prov. 19:12 he speaks as if his own wisdom was like the dew coming down- as if he felt that the mere possession of wisdom made him the Messiah figure which his father had so hoped for him to be in Ps. 72:6). And he says as much in Prov. 29:3: "Whoso loveth wisdom [exactly what Solomon was commended for doing] rejoiceth his father". He saw his wisdom and knowledge as some sort of a reward in themselves: "the prudent are crowned with knowledge" (Prov. 14:18). This is of course true in a sense, as all the Proverbs are. But Solomon surely had the idea that he, who was so renowned for his knowledge, was somehow thereby rewarded by having it. This assumption by Solomon was likely behind each of the many references he makes to the value of wisdom and the blessedness of the man who has it. It is rather like feeling that 'we have the truth' because somehow our correct understanding of doctrines is a reward for our righteousness, and mere possession of doctrinal truth means that we are acceptable to God.

1Ki 3:9 Give Your servant therefore an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this Your great people?-

I suggest on Ps. 119:169 that David asked for the word of promise that he would become king to be fulfilled; and in that context he asked for "wisdom / understanding" in how to rule Israel. And this was likewise the prayer of Solomon when he became king; but his motives were less than pure because he was consciously seeking to imitate his father in this request.

Solomon in Proverbs presents wisdom as of great personal benefit, indeed it is "for yourself"; and folly likewise is to your loss. But this presents a somewhat selfish view of wisdom. Solomon had been granted wisdom not for himself, but because he wanted to know how best to rule God's great people. But once he has the wisdom, he becomes exalted by it, and concludes that wisdom is essentially for the personal benefit of those who have it, "you are wise for yourself" (Prov. 9:12). Whatever truths are revealed to us are so that we might use them to the glory of God with others, and not to merely keep them for our own personal benefit.

Solomon's desire to know good and evil is one of several connections back to Adam and Eve in Eden. For he too was given 'dominion' over all in God's land / *eretz*. God's response to giving Solomon this knowledge is to tell him that 'length of days' is still conditional. Just as the tree of life was not available to Adam and Eve after they had eaten the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Again and again, we are invited to see Solomon at his finest, in all his glory, always presented as having something hollow and false to him. It is a challenge to self examination in every man.

Solomon had been set up for failure by his father. David had commanded him to show "wisdom" in slaying Shimei and Joab (1 Kings 2:5,9). This was not true wisdom, and those murders were unnecessary and reflected David's total lack of

appreciation of grace. The fact Solomon asks God for *His* wisdom is therefore commendable, and that is why God was so thrilled with this request. It was an attempt to break out of having been set up for failure by the wrong expectations of his parents.

1Ki 3:10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing- David had wrongly told Solomon to 'do according to his wisdom' and slay Shimei and Joab. I have discussed previously how wrong this was, and how wrong Solomon was in the way he did it. Likewise in the way he treated his brother Adonijah. His request for wisdom, implying he didn't then have it, was therefore so pleasing to God. Despite having been set up for spiritual failure by his father, Solomon was genuinely asking for wisdom in order to know how best to lead God's people. God comments that Solomon had "asked for yourself understanding to discern justice". "For yourself" is the point. He was wanting to individuate from the expectations of his father and be independent before God. But he fell away from this, continued living out his father's expectations, and then was revealed for having no personal faith.

See on :11. We may wonder why *adonai* is here used for "Lord", and *elohim* in :11, rather than Yahweh. It could well be that this reflects the fact that Solomon was not really in covenant relationship with Yahweh, from His viewpoint. Although Solomon certainly speaks of "Yahweh my God" in :7, it could be that this was mere language he had picked up from David. For his subsequent life shows him to have been a man who acted as if he were outside of covenant relationship with Yahweh. But that is not to say that his choice was not deeply pleasing to Yahweh, and He wanted to work further with Solomon to bring him to Himself.

1Ki 3:11 God said to him, Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself long life, neither have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice- God may be alluding to how David had asked long life and been given it (Ps. 21:8). This allusion was seeking to show Solomon that he was not to merely live out the image of his father David, but to think independently and forge his own relationship with God. Likewise Solomon had not taken literally the invitation of Ps. 2:8 to Messiah to "ask of Me (s.w. :5) and I will give you the Gentiles". Instead he had asked for wisdom.

1Ki 3:12 therefore I have done according to your word. Behold, I have already given you a wise and an understanding heart; so that there has been none like you before you, neither after you shall any arise like you- Solomon asked God for a wise heart- but he was told that God had already given him this. The process of educating Solomon in wisdom would have started long before; but it was released, as it were, by Solomon's specific prayer. We likewise are to ask in faith believing that we already have the things we ask for. And Solomon is every man: "If any of you lack wisdom [which we all do], let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally... and it shall be given him" (James 1:5, clearly alluding to Solomon).

1Ki 3:13 I have also given you that which you have not asked- We are not merely reading history here. God's word is living and engages with us in all generations. We too are given exceeding abundantly above all we ask (Eph. 3:20 alludes here)- if we put first the wisdom of achieving God's glory .

Both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like you, all your days-

"Riches" is s.w. Prov. 14:24 "The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools crowns them with folly".

It was Solomon who was the king and wore the ultimate crown in his society. And he implies that his fantastic riches were a result of his wisdom, and that his pattern should be followed by others. But he fails to remember that his desire for wisdom was recognized by God in that He gave Solomon riches. Those riches were a gift from God, by grace, and not acquired or generated by his own application of wisdom. He therefore misused his possession of wisdom and experience of grace to justify himself, and present himself as a self made man; when he was not that at all.

Solomon knew and warned that a little folly can destroy the man who is in reputation for wisdom and honour (Ecc. 10:1). Solomon had "honour" [s.w.] to an unprecedented extent (1 Kings 3:13). But in the same book he admits that he, the man famed world-wide for wisdom, gave himself to folly (Ecc. 2:3). He knew so well the error and folly of his ways, but he could only preach the lesson but not heed it. He "saw that wisdom exceedeth folly" (Ecc. 2:13)- but so what...

1Ki 3:14 If you will walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days-

This is added as a foil to the grant of wisdom. Solomon was being reminded that the gift of wisdom didn't necessarily mean that he personally would walk in God's ways. And the wisdom incident comes right after we are introduced to Solomon's reign with the information that he married a Gentile. The narrative is signalling to us that possession of wisdom, and using it for others, isn't the same as personal spirituality. And God repeats this warning to Solomon (1 Kings 6:12,13).

LXX "And if thou wilt walk in my way, to keep my commandments and my ordinances, as David thy father walked, then will I multiply thy days". This contrasts with David's statements in Ps. 72 that Solomon would live for ever. Here length of life is made conditional. God is patiently trying to undo the damage caused by David having set Solomon up with false images of himself.

God counted David as having observed His statutes, even though he laments that he doesn't observe them as he wished (s.w. Ps. 119:5,9). His desire to observe them was counted finally as if he had done so. Solomon was commanded to personally keep or watch over [s.w.] the commandments (1 Kings 3:14 and often); but he seemed to think that possession of intellectual understanding would keep / watch over him and of itself keep him in the way (Prov. 2:11). This is the temptation for all who pride themselves on possession of academic knowledge of Divine truth. God is here warning him against this, and reminding him of the conditional nature of the promises to him.

Like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:27), Solomon could have prolonged his days as king over Israel if he walked in the ways of David (1 Kings 3:14), which we are specifically told he did not. Seeing Solomon reigned 40 years, this promise of prolonged days surely implied supernaturally prolonged life, beyond usual human lifespans. Indeed the term is used of how the Lord Jesus "prolonged his days" eternally (Is. 53:10). Hence Solomon twice uses the word to speak of how wise rulers could prolong their reigns (Prov. 28:2,16). He surely has himself in view; but failed to realize this potential. Indeed he cynically uses the word in Ecc. 7:15; 8:12 in claiming that it is the wicked and not the obedient who have their days prolonged.

1Ki 3:15 Solomon awoke; and behold, it was a dream-

We wonder why this detail is added, when it seems obvious. Perhaps later in the

nihilism of Ecclesiastes he would come to think that he had merely had a dream about wisdom. For he reasons as if his wisdom is purely of himself, and acts and reasons as if he has had no relationship with Yahweh. Or maybe it is to highlight the fulfilment of Ps. 127:2: "He gives to His beloved (Jedidiah) in sleep".

Then he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, and offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants-

Solomon had just offered before the sanctuary in Gibeon, and now he does so at Jerusalem, perhaps to indicate that he considered both shrines equally valid.

1Ki 3:16 Then two women who were prostitutes came to the king, and stood before him-

The "then..." suggests that now we have an example of Solomon's wisdom and ability to discern when judging God's people. The whole situation spoke of the kind of shameless prostitution which the Mosaic Law demanded should be punished by death. And yet prostitutes at the time typically worked in the idol shrines, rather than as it were randomly on the street corner. There was thereby even more legal need for them to be put to death. We note the unusual emphasis upon "in the house", mentioned four times in :18,19, as if this were a specific house, "the" house. Quite possibly an idol "house" is in view rather than a brothel. But the way of Divine wisdom in this case was not to automatically apply Divine law in condemning sinners. Instead, by cutting to the conscience within those women, and appealing to it, they were led to at least the possibility of repentance, transformation, salvation. Solomon's wisdom was given him in order to know how to guide God's great people. The way of wisdom is therefore sometimes not to press a point when someone's in the wrong. We see this in all levels of relationships. There are weak points in relationships, fissure lines, which when pressed or brought under tension will cause earthquakes and destruction. It's best not to press on them; and yet if they are ignored, then the quality of relationship suffers and descends into interacting only over 'safe' matters. So what are we to do? By not raising the obvious issue- you're whores and must be put to death- Solomon showed grace, but he showed it in such a way that those women surely couldn't have felt the same again; rather like the woman taken in adultery. The very fact she was not condemned by the One who could condemn her- meant that she went away indeed vowing to "sin no more".

1Ki 3:17 The one woman said, Oh my lord, I and this woman live in one house. I gave birth with her in the house-

Solomon alludes to himself at this point in Prov. 18:17: "He who pleads his cause first seems right; until another comes and questions him". This is the language of the courtroom, and is advice to judges. But the average Israelite was not a courtroom judge. And so Solomon, as so often, has himself in view as the parade example of what he means. And the implication is that his judgments were perfect and beyond question, apart from by fools.

1Ki 3:18 It happened the third day after I gave birth, that this woman gave birth also. We were together. There was no stranger with us in the house, just us two in the house-

Neither woman had assistance in giving birth. No family were present- they were prostitutes, the very lowest of Hebrew society, cut off from their extended families.

See on :16. Presumably the first woman is claiming that she recognized her baby because it was three days older than the other woman's baby. The claim is that the incident occurred on the third day after the first woman gave birth- i.e. the night that the second woman gave birth. Would a woman who has just given birth just go to sleep straight after childbirth and not pay attention to her immediately needy first born? They apparently both say the same. There is immediately a lack of credibility in the stories.

1Ki 3:19 This woman's child died in the night, because she lay on it-
"This woman..." enables us to play Bible television with the record, and imagine it all happening right before our eyes. See on :22. The question arises as to how she knew the cause of death if she was herself asleep.

1Ki 3:20 She arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while your handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom-
The story lacks credibility, although they both apparently repeated it. If the other woman was awake at midnight and saw the guilty woman arising, then why did she allow her to swap over the babies? But the way of wisdom and justice (see on :28) is not to always point out the glaring inconsistencies within the narrative or beliefs of others. But to act on a higher level. We see this kind of thing so often in the way the Lord responded to questions. Likewise the statement of :19 that the other woman's child died "because she lay on it" is an assumption, seeing the claimant also claims she was asleep at the time. Despite it being night and the woman supposedly being asleep, she claims precise knowledge of the other woman's movements: "she arose at midnight and took my son from my side... and laid him at her breast... and her son who died she laid at my breast". They both say the same- the story is just not credible. "There was no one else (literally "no stranger") except the two of us in the house" is a strange claim to make whilst on the other hand claiming to have been fast asleep. How did she know there was no other party involved? The whole story is an obvious contradiction that any legal team or judge would pick upon. These women present as none too smart, they are both lying about what happened, although indeed the child of one of them did die. And they were lying to the king, the highest court of appeal. They could have been slain for false witness, apart from being prostitutes. But Solomon "executed justice" (:28) and not the women, as legally he was supposed to do. Solomon's wisdom and justice involved not picking on the obvious errors in others' narrative, and 'absolute truth claim' groups need to learn that lesson. Prostitutes were renowned for being liars; this was part of what it was to be labelled a prostitute. The account presents them as true to type; Solomon can have no idea what actually has gone on. But his wisdom is in showing grace rather than trying to establish some agreed version of actual events. And that is to be seen in how we judge with grace. The total inversion of human conceptions of justice, integrity and logic is the essence of God's grace. And we likewise show this when we forgive and in other ways reflect our experience of His grace.

1Ki 3:21 When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, it was dead; but when I had looked at it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, whom I bore-
The first "morning" would be the twilight of dawn, but then when the sun arose she realized it was not her son. As noted on :20, the story line of both women has internal contradictions. But the way of wisdom and justice was not to point these out. For the argument is unrealistic- that she needed the light of day to recognize whether it was

her baby or not. The fact they both seem to have said the same makes it clear that whatever had really happened, they were both lying.

1Ki 3:22 The other woman said, No; but the living is my son, and the dead is your son. The other said, No; but the dead is your son, and the living is my son. Thus they spoke before the king-

The repetition of the phrase "the other" invites us to first listen and look at one woman making her case, and then swivel our attention to the other. See on :19.

1Ki 3:23 Then the king said, The one says, 'This is my son who lives, and your son is the dead'; and the other says, 'No; but your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one'-

As noted on :20,21, there were internal contradictions in their stories which a judge would typically have picked up on and explored further, in order to elicit whose story was more credible. The women come over as simple, and it would not have been hard through a series of questions to get closer to the truth. But the way of wisdom and justice (:28) is not like this nor does it treat people in that forensic manner. And it was this which so impressed the observing audience. All this was the primary fulfilment of Palm 72, David's prayer for Solomon, that he would judge the poorest of the people with wisdom and justice. And yet justice is not served in a technical sense. And that is the true wisdom in all this. It's rather like Paul's argument in Romans, that sinners must die, we are all sinners- but yet with utter integrity and justice, we are counted as righteous as Jesus, our advocate for the defence turns out to be our judge... God's view of "justice" is therefore presented as not being ours. This is what Paul marvels at- that His integrity in counting us righteous, when we are sinners, is a mystery. To be accepted with gratitude, even though it is inexplicable within human paradigms of integrity, logic and justice.

1Ki 3:24 The king said, Get me a sword. They brought a sword before the king-

The phrase for bringing a sword is that used of the punishment for breaking the covenant (Lev. 26:26,36). Solomon was aware that his parents' first child had died as a result of judgment upon their immorality, and that God had earlier summoned a sword upon David's family because of it. It is as if he is saying that judgment was appropriate upon these prostitutes. But the way of true wisdom and justice was not to do so. And he had learned that by observing how God's sword of judgment had now been withdrawn from his own family, by grace.

1Ki 3:25 The king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other-

This was not Solomon's intention, as he stresses "in no way kill it" (:27). It was done to elicit the psychological reaction of the women, and this was to be the basis of discerning truth. Likewise truth is arrived at in ways other than forensic examination of evidence and argumentation. This is the way of the Spirit and true wisdom.

1Ki 3:26 Then the woman whose the living child was spoke to the king, for her heart yearned over her son, and she said, Oh my lord, give her the living child, and in no way kill it! But the other said, It shall be neither mine nor yours. Divide it-

The instinctive gut reaction of the true mother said it all and showed her for who she was. It may be that when the one said "Let (the baby) be neither mine nor yours, but divide it", this is the Spirit's description of her inner attitude, rather than the literal

words she spoke. But her inner thoughts were counted as her words (careful re-reading and reflection make this seem most likely here). "Heart" is literally 'womb', giving us the impression of deep connection between the woman and the child. The woman who agreed "Divide it" was acting in a psychologically credible way; she had lost her child, and wanted the other woman to also lose her. That is surely why she was willing for the king to kill the child.

1Ki 3:27 Then the king answered, Give her the living child, and in no way kill it. She is its mother-

Solomon repeats verbatim the words of the real mother in :26, thereby identifying with her- even though her story was palpably untrue on some points. Having determined who the real mother was, Solomon could have had the other woman executed for false witness and kidnapping a child. But he doesn't. And the very fact he bothers personally judging between two low life women reflects his primary fulfilment of Psalm 72 describing how the Messianic king will bother judging even the lowest; all are significant to Him. The law's requirement that he who be put to death is shown to be inappropriate as we imagine the poor infant in the presence of these low life women. To save its life but then execute its mother would have been wrong. True wisdom and justice (:28) saw far beyond this letter of the law. And this is the pattern for us today.

1Ki 3:28 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 justice-

But as noted on :16, that "justice" was not the judgment which the law required for prostitutes. "The wisdom of God was in the midst of him" (1 Kings 3:28 AVmg) looks ahead to the description of the Lord Jesus in Col. 2:3. On one hand Solomon was a type of Christ, but in reality it was rather that he had been potentially empowered to be the Messianic seed, but he failed. And the Lord Jesus fulfilled the potentials of the seed perfectly, leaving Solomon a failed, marred reflection of Him.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 4

1Ki 4:1 King Solomon was king over all Israel-

The unity of Israel is associated with its glory. Israel's maximum point of glory under Solomon was also its historically most united period.

1Ki 4:2 These were the princes whom he had: Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest- Azariah was therefore a king-priest (cp. Rev. 5:10). The kingdom of Solomon can indeed be viewed as a type of the future kingdom of the Lord Jesus. The twelve deputy rulers (:7) correspond with Mt. 19:28; the provision of food each month (:27) corresponds with Is. 66:23; Ez. 47:12 and Rev. 22:2. But in reality it was rather that Solomon had been potentially empowered to be the Messianic seed with a Messianic kingdom as promised to David, but he failed. And the Lord Jesus fulfilled the potentials of the seed perfectly, leaving Solomon and his kingdom as a failed, marred reflection of Him.

1Ki 4:3 Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder-

Shisha was the Shavsha of 1 Chron. 18:16, the Sheva of 2 Sam. 20:25 and the Seraiah of 2 Sam. 8:17. Jehoshaphat would have now been elderly (2 Sam. 8:16; 20:24); see

on :4.

1Ki 4:4 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests-

This is only a description of things as they initially were. For Abiathar was soon deposed by Solomon, and Benaiah was by now an old man who would not have lived long into Solomon's reign.

1Ki 4:5 Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers; Zabud the son of Nathan was chief officer, the king's friend-

Solomon alludes to this in Prov. 27:9: "Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart; so does earnest counsel from a man's friend". This is true, but Solomon may be using Divine truth to justify himself; for he had appointed the son of Nathan the prophet, loyal to David his father, as "the king's friend".

1Ki 4:6 Ahishar was over the household; and Adoniram the son of Abda was over the men subject to forced labour-

The emphasis upon the forced labour brigades is significant (1 Kings 5:13,14; 12:18), and it was Solomon's brutal treatment of his people which led to the complaint after his death that he had whipped the people and abused them. This was exactly as Samuel had warned the people would happen if they chose a human king rather than God as their king; for God is kinder than men. We see therefore that Solomon was no better than Saul. All his wisdom failed to make him value the meaning of the human person. It was therefore only held by him in theory not in practice.

1 Sam. 8:11-18 had warned Israel that their king would not be good, and would enslave them and make them serve his whims. The people groaned beneath him, as they told his son Rehoboam. And so exactly was fulfilled the threat: "You will cry out for relief from the king, but Yahweh will not hear" (1 Sam. 8:16,17). The taxes which Samuel warned Israel of are described in 1 Kings 4:7,22,23,27,28. Solomon is being presented as exactly this king. This is to demonstrate that the positive descriptions of his kingdom in :20,25 are just a surface appearance. The point is made within otherwise apparently positive descriptions of his kingdom. This is to create the desired effect of giving the impression that Solomon's apparently wonderful kingdom was underlaid by a very unspiritual, unGodly foundation. As noted on :7 and 1 Kings 3:1, Solomon's wife likely influenced Solomon to use the Egyptian system of forced labour. But that was the very system that had been used to abuse Israel in Egypt. And Solomon uses it for his building projects, just as the Pharaoh of the Exodus did, also building treasure cities etc.

1Ki 4:7 Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household: each man had to make provision for a month in the year-

See on :2. This implies a huge amount of food was required by Solomon to feed his extended family. His 700 wives and 300 concubines would have produced many children who all required feeding. Solomon's indulgence of every sexual whim came at a cost, which he forced his people to meet; and it gave him no family happiness, but rather led him to the cynical reflection of Ecc. 5:11.

Solomon had a system of forced labour, and had 12 administrative districts [not following the 12 tribes] with 12 officers who each provided the king's food one month / year (1 Kings 4:7-20). All this was exactly how Egypt was organized under

Amenhotep III and is surely the influence of having Pharaoh's daughter for his leading wife. See on 1 Kings 3:1.

1Ki 4:8 These are their names: Ben Hur, in the hill country of Ephraim-

It could be argued that Solomon's taxation system was effectively taxing the other tribes apart from Judah. Yet the tax from the other tribes paid for Solomon's extensive building projects, which were all in Judah (the temple, the palace, the Millo and wall of Jerusalem, Ezion-Geber, the copper mines, Debir, etc.). This was not so much wisdom but a cunning establishment of the dominance of his own tribe and throne.

For the twelve administrative districts exclude Judah:

1. Mount Ephraim
2. Makaz
3. Arubboth
4. Naphath-dor
5. Taanach and Megiddo
6. Ramoth-gilead
7. Mahanaim
8. Naphtali
9. Asher and Zebulun
10. Issachar
11. Benjamin
12. The land of Gad (1 Kings 4: 7-19)

This organization was not strictly according to the tribal divisions but was more geographically based. Thus group 2 was from both Dan and Ephraim; group 3 from both Manasseh and Ephraim. Perhaps this was an intentional attempt to undermine tribalism, which Solomon saw as a potential threat to his power base. If he had been obedient to God, he could have been quietly assured that God and not his cunning would establish and eternally maintain his kingdom. And yet the regional governors imposed by Solomon were largely from Judah or somehow related to David's "old guard". Thus group 9 was ruled by the son of David's advisor Hushai (2 Sam. 15:32-37). Group 8 by Solomon's son in law Ahimaaz (1 Kings 4:15). Group 5 was ruled by a connection with the priest Zadok, and possibly by the brother of David, and Solomon's scribe Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 4:3). Abinadab of group 7 was probably the son of Iddo who had been one of David's men (1 Chron. 27:21). Abinadab who ruled Group 4 was Solomon's son in law (1 Kings 4:11).

All this was an attempt by Solomon to establish the kingdom in his own strength. The regional governors were not locals, but rather under the direct control of Solomon in Jerusalem and appointed on the basis of loyalty to him. No wonder that after his death, the other tribes wanted to break free from Judah.

We note that the geographical extent of these areas was not that great. It covered central and northern Israel but nothing much further south of Judah; and some areas just over the Jordan river into Moab and Ammon. Clearly enough Solomon was not receiving tax tribute from a very large area. This fact therefore counterbalances the descriptions of his kingdom as stretching from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. That may have technically been the case, but not for long and his control was not strong enough to make them pay tribute to him. Time and again, the apparently glowing descriptions of his kingdom are found to be surface level only. We note too that the tax subdivisions did not generally follow the boundaries of the tribes which

God had given. Solomon was trying to break down tribal unity so that the north would be less unified in opposing him. This is not in line with how God wanted Israel organized. The tribal leaders were unimportant; they were effectively replaced by the men of Judah or pro-Solomon men who were over the new tax districts Solomon had created.

1Ki 4:9 Ben Deker, in Makaz, and in Shaalbim, and Beth Shemesh, and Elon Beth Hanan-

These were in Dan (Jud. 1:35). Beth Shemesh was a priestly city (Josh. 21:16), but Solomon still required them to pay taxes to him in Jerusalem, contrary to the spirit of the Mosaic law.

1Ki 4:10 Ben Hesed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh, and all the land of Hepher)-

I suggest this Socoh is the one in Manasseh and not the one in Judah; see on :8.

1Ki 4:11 Ben Abinadab, in all the height of Dor (he had Taphath the daughter of Solomon as wife)-

- See on :8.

1Ki 4:12 Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth Shean which is beside Zarethan, beneath Jezreel, from Beth Shean to Abel Meholah, as far as beyond Jokmeam-

The brother of Jehoshaphat (:3), again reflecting how the rulers of the regions were not local men but part of Solomon's inner circle, or their relatives. See on :8.

1Ki 4:13 Ben Geber, in Ramoth Gilead (to him belonged the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead; to him belonged the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars)-

They had begun as small towns (Num. 32:41) but had grown since then. But they were all to pay their taxes to Jerusalem; see on :8.

1Ki 4:14 Ahinadab the son of Iddo, in Mahanaim-

- See on :8.

1Ki 4:15 Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he also took Basemath the daughter of Solomon as wife)-

- See on :8. As no father's name is mentioned we could conclude that the well-known son of Zadok the priest is meant, who helped David was fleeing before Absalom (2 Sam. 15:27). A pro house of David loyalist was chosen in order to get the tax sent back to Solomon in Jerusalem, and Solomon was his father in law.

1Ki 4:16 Baana the son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth-

- See on :8.

1Ki 4:17 Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar- See on :8.

1Ki 4:18 Shimei the son of Ela, in Benjamin-

Although Judah and Benjamin were always connected, as explained on :8, Solomon

expected Benjamin to pay taxes to him in Jerusalem. We note at this point the clear omission of Judah as a taxable area.

1Ki 4:19 Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan; and he was the only officer who was in the land- "Only" could mean "the greatest", and "the land" may refer to the territory on the east of Jordan. "Officer" translates a military term; the idea may be that he was the only garrison officer stationed in that area, which had many Gentiles in it.

1Ki 4:20 Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry-

The taxation system just described became heavy for Israel, took men away from food production at home, was biased to make the north provide labour and material resources for Judah, had administrators who were pro Judah, undercut the tribal cantons and made Judah tax free. It set up the complaint of Israel against Rehoboam that Solomon abused them, and led to the division of the kingdom. But the result is apparently that they were all well fed and merry. Apparently, the promises to Abraham of a seed "many as the sand" had been fulfilled. But here again we see how the statements describing a glorious kingdom are in fact glosses over a much less pleasant reality. And this was the nature of Solomon and his kingdom- a good surface appearance hiding much that was deeply wrong beneath it.

This is alluded to by Solomon in Prov. 14:28 GNB: "A king's greatness depends on how many people he rules; without them he is nothing". Solomon is again justifying himself, for the people at his time are described as very many at his time (1 Kings 4:20). Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning.

We must remember that baptism means that we are *now* the seed of Abraham, and the blessings of forgiveness, of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and God's turning us away from our sins are right now being fulfilled in us (Acts 3:27-29). Israel were multiplied as the sand on the sea shore (2 Sam. 17:11; 1 Kings 4:20), they possessed the gates of their enemies (Dt. 17:2; 18:6)- all in antitype of how Abraham's future seed would also receive the promised blessings in their mortal experience, as well as in the eternal blessedness of the future Kingdom.

"Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry" combines allusions to two different passages. Clearly there is reference to the fact that the Abrahamic promises had a primary fulfillment at this time. But the final phrase refers back to Israel's idolatry with the golden calf. It is as if the dualism within Solomon at this time - in being the primary fulfillment of the seed, and yet also being apostate - was fulfilled in Israel. We see elsewhere several indications that Solomon and Israel were closely connected (cp. Christ and the church).

1Ki 4:21 Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt: they brought tribute, and served Solomon all the days of his life-

Israel was at its largest extent in Solomon's Kingdom; lost land was restored, and the borders re-established (2 Chron. 9:26; 8:4 cp. Josh. 16:3,5); it was also at its political strongest; nations submitted to Solomon (1 Kings 4:20); Israel was the chief of the nations and the nations brought "presents" (s.w. sacrifices) to him (1 Kings 4:21).

All this looked ahead to the Messianic Kingdom; but see on :25. But again we have a surface appearance only. For as discussed above, Solomon only received tax revenue from a very small part of the area mentioned here. The "tribute" mentioned here would have been only at one time. He had no effective 'rule' over the kingdoms or else they would have been brought within the tax administration system described earlier in the chapter. It was only for a brief period, and even then, not very powerful "rule". We note from 1 Kings 9:15-19 that Solomon built fortified military bases around the borders of his territory- and clearly his territory didn't effectively stretch from the Euphrates to Egypt. Otherwise the location of his fortifications would have been different. And if indeed the image of peace were so true, why Solomon's huge number of chariots and war horses? And it is rather overlooked that David had taken Damascus (2 Sam. 8:6), but it was taken over by Solomon's enemy Rezon and never recovered by him (1 Kings 11:23-25).

Further, there is ample evidence within the record that throughout Solomon's reign, there were other kings within the area of the land promised to Abraham. And with some of them Solomon traded, disagreed with, or suffered their rebellions against him: King Hiram of Tyre (1 Kings 5:1), Hadad the Edomite (1 Kings 11:14), King Hadadezer of Zobah (1 Kings 11:23), the kings of the Hittites and Aram (1 Kings 10:29), and the kings of Arabia (1 Kings 10:15). These significant areas were not exactly ruled over by Solomon. Indeed Solomon sells the cities of Cabul to Hiram. We therefore have to probe deeper the statement that he ruled so extensively. One possibility is that this is how Solomon perceived things; it was the impression he wanted to give. And the Biblical record presents things as he wanted to see them, yet giving the actual facts of the matter which contradicted Solomon's perception. And thereby shows the fallacy and surface nature of the impression Solomon had and gave. He was convinced he was ruling in the Messianic kingdom according to his father's projections and expectations; when the reality was so far from that. We note that such exaggerated claims of dominion are found in the records of other kings, especially of Egypt, Babylon and Assyria. Indeed the 'glorious kingdom' passages regarding Solomon's kingdom are very similar to the self descriptions of other kings broadly contemporary with Solomon. We therefore lean towards the possibility that the Biblical descriptions are a case of focalization; the focus is upon Solomon and his perception of himself and his kingdom. But the Biblical record gives ample reason to perceive that his perceptions were false or at best, incomplete.

1Ki 4:22 Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and sixty measures of meal-

Solomon in Prov. 23:3 warned not to desire huge meals. But Solomon clearly revelled in his food, and speaks in Ecclesiastes of how he tried to find fulfilment in gluttony. He knew God's truth, but "it was far from me" personally, as he laments in Ecclesiastes. There mere possession of Divine truth can in fact lead a man to think it doesn't apply to him. This is why the word must be made flesh in us, as it was in the Lord.

From the amount of flour used each day, it could be guessed that there were 14,000 people / day being fed. If Solomon had 1000 wives and children by them, this would make sense.

1Ki 4:23 ten head of fat cattle, twenty head of cattle out of the pastures, one hundred sheep, besides harts, gazelles, roebucks and fattened fowl-

"Fattened fowl" has been translated as geese or swans. Not all these animals were

clean food, but Solomon (according to Ecclesiastes) wanted to experiment with all human experience.

1Ki 4:24 For he had dominion over all on this side of the River, from Tiphshah even to Gaza, over all the kings on this side of the River: and he had peace on all sides around him-

In the context of this chapter, the "dominion" in view may mean that all had to pay taxes to Solomon.

1Ki 4:25 Judah and Israel lived safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon-

Clearly this language, and the great fertility of the land implied by :22-28, is the language of the Messianic kingdom (Mic. 4:4; Ez. 34:28; Is. 35:1,2). But in reality it was rather that Solomon had been potentially empowered to be the Messianic seed with a Messianic kingdom as promised to David, but he failed. And the Lord Jesus fulfilled the potentials of the seed perfectly, leaving Solomon and his kingdom as a failed, marred reflection of Him. I suggested above that this "living safely" and at peace was a facade, as the record continually alludes to how Solomon is breaking the commands of how a king should be (Dt. 17:17,18). Here in :25 likewise we have the idea of safety, but this was perhaps because of the vast number of chariots and horses Solomon accumulated as mentioned in the next verse. Yet this was brazen disobedience to the command for Israel's king not to have chariots and horses. And trusting in chariots means not trusting in Yahweh's Angel chariots (Ps. 20:7; Is. 2:7,8; 22:18;

31:1; Mic. 5:10). Samuel mentions chariots three times when warning about the corruption of Israel's desired king (1 Sam. 8:11,12).

1Ki 4:26 Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen-

Solomon's enthusiasm for Egyptian horses is clearly chronicled (1 Kings 4:26-28), although this was studied disobedience to Dt. 17:16. There is a powerful point to be made here: we can deceive ourselves that God is blessing us, when actually we are breaching explicit commands. Would Solomon had understood the concept of self-examination.

1Ki 4:27 Those officers provided food for king Solomon, and for all who came to king Solomon's table, every man in his month-

"He that loves silver (as Solomon did, Ecc. 2:8; 1 Kings 10:21-29) shall not be satisfied with silver (as he wasn't- see Ecc. 2); nor he that loves abundance (s.w. used about the abundance of Solomon's wives, 2 Chron. 11:23) with increase. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them (cp. the large numbers at his table, 1 Kings 4:27)" (Ecc. 5:10,11). The Hebrew word translated "not be satisfied" occurs around 25 times in the Proverbs, with Solomon warning of how the way of the flesh couldn't satisfy. Solomon said all this with an eye on himself. He preached it to others, he felt deeply the truth of it, but he saw no personal way out of it. All he had was the accurate knowledge of his situation, but no real motivation to change- like the alcoholic or drug abuser who knows every aspect of the harm of his habit.

They let nothing be lacking-

Heb. 'they let nothing be missing'. This is in the context of describing the taxation

system, whereby taxation was enforced and the taxes were indeed gathered to Solomon.

1Ki 4:28 Barley also and straw for the horses and swift steeds brought they to the place where the officers were, each man according to his duty-

Just as Solomon's abundance of wives led to having a few thousand mouths to feed, and Israel needed to provide for that; so his obsession with thousands of horses meant that there was a need for a huge amount of fodder for them. And all Israel had to provide this- all for the sake of Solomon's obsessive desires. That he reigned for as long as he did was truly a sign of God's grace to him for the sake of his father David, and is a tacit reflection of how much God loved David despite all his failures.

1Ki 4:29 God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and very great perception, according to the sand which is on the seashore-

His wisdom was to guide Israel, but it concerned the natural creation; as if his expositions concerning this were teaching spiritual lessons (1 Kings 4:29,32,33)- as the Lord's parables. The "largeness of heart" (AV) was to be experienced by all Israel, whose largeness of heart was to lead to the Gentiles flowing to them (Is. 60:5). Paul's appeal to allow the Holy Spirit to enlarge our hearts could be seen as alluding to the gift given Solomon (2 Cor. 6:11,13).

The description of the "largeness" of heart in 1 Kings 4:29 uses the same word used about the largeness of the land of Israel in Ex. 3:8; Neh. 9:35; his wisdom was "as the sand that is on the sea shore", as Israel were described in Gen. 22:17. He wanted wisdom, but so as to teach it to others, not to personalize it. Even in his spiritual collapse at the time of Ecclesiastes, Solomon still taught Israel true wisdom, and organized his wisdom into more accessible books (Ecc. 12:9-12), giving himself the title *kohleth* ('the preacher'). And yet he himself tried alcohol, wealth, women, indeed every addiction, in order to "see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven" (Ecc. 2:3). And yet he knew from childhood the conclusion of the matter- man's duty is to fear God and be obedient (Ecc. 12:13). He who had been given wisdom started out in a search for it... showing clearly enough that what he knew was so much theory, but never touched his own heart. Solomon taught wisdom to the youngsters, but he gave himself over to search for some kind of vague philosophical truth outside of God.

1Ki 4:30 Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt-

If this is simply God's comment, then it would be axiomatic that Solomon's Divinely given wisdom was better than that of the Gentiles. So we should rather read this as stating how his wisdom was perceived amongst the Gentiles. Despite having greater wisdom than "all the wisdom of Egypt", Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter. And yet Egypt gave sanctuary to his rival Jeroboam and also let Jeroboam marry into the royal family. About five years after his death, Egypt invaded Judah in the reign of his son Rehoboam. So the point is made that despite possessing far more wisdom than them, he allowed them to morally corrupt him. He likely thought [wrongly] that the mere possession of such superior truth would preserve him from such personal failure.

1Ki 4:31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman-

Ethan and Heman are mentioned together in 1 Kings 4:31 as men whom Solomon's wisdom exceeded; and in 1 Chron. 15:19 they are both singers whom David

appointed. We can assume that they were famed for their wisdom; but Solomon's wisdom exceeded theirs.

Calcol, Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all the nations all around- Calcol and the other names mentioned in 1 Kings 4:31 as wise men are all mentioned in 1 Chron. 2:6 as sons of Zerah, men of Judah. The idea of 1 Kings 4:30,31 is that Solomon's wisdom exceeded that of famous Gentile wise men, and also of the wise men of Judah.

1Ki 4:32 He spoke three thousand proverbs; and his songs were one thousand and five-

LXX says 5000 songs. David was famed as Israel's psalmist, and his songs were distributed to the surrounding nations, appealing for them to turn to Israel's God. Solomon's obsession with writing songs can be seen as an attempt to live out his father's image.

1Ki 4:33 He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, birds, creeping things and fish- We note that the things mentioned here refer more to knowledge and science, than to the wisdom required to judge God's people with grace and justice.

The greatest of trees in Palestine, the cedar, is contrasted with the smallest, the hyssop; the idea being that Solomon spoke of the entire range of plant life. But later Solomon sadly reflects in Ecc. 1:8 LXX that "a man will not be able to speak of them". And yet Solomon had spoken of all things by the wisdom given him (1 Kings 4:32,33), but now he says that the vanity of all human experience is beyond speaking of. Whilst Solomon retained his wisdom, he felt that it was not the full answer to the mystery of life; and the answer was, so far as he could see it, that all things are vain and wearisome. Life is not therefore particularly worth living. This is the attitude which arises when we fail to personalize wisdom, and refuse to accept that this life is not God's Kingdom; that is yet to come. This wisdom about plants and animals was given Solomon for the sake of God's people Israel. It was intended to boost their agriculture. See on 1 Kings 5:6.

1Ki 4:34 There came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom-

The repetition of the two phrases gives the impression that they heard of his wisdom, and so they came to hear his wisdom. As exemplified by the visit of the Queen of Sheba, it is one thing to hear wisdom; but there is a natural desire to hear the word made flesh. This principle is so true for our witness today. The presentation of God's truth as words on a screen is far less persuasive than hearing them as a word made flesh, from a live person. And that is why God did not leave His word as it was, but made it flesh in the Lord Jesus; so that He speaks to us "in His Son".

1 KINGS CHAPTER 5

1Ki 5:1 Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the place of his father: for Hiram had always admired David-

So very often does Solomon speak of "David my father", and that God had made him king "instead of David my father" (e.g. 1 Kings 3:7). Thus he asks Hiram to deal with him just as he had done with David his father (1 Kings 5:2-7; and cp. 1 Kings 5:1

with 2 Sam. 5:11). The number of times these phrases occur in the records is so large that we simply have to recognize that God is pointing something out to us about the relationship between Solomon and David (1 Kings 2:24,26,32,44; 3:6,7,14; 5:3,5; 6:12; 8:15,17,18,20,24,25,26; 9:4; 11:33; 2 Chron. 1:8,9; 2:3,7,14; 6:4,7,8,10,15,16; 7:17). Solomon was raised a believer, and he lived out parental expectation; but in later life, he himself was revealed as having no real faith at all, and he turned away from Yahweh to idolatry. So often in his prayers to God does Solomon make reference to David; for example: "Thou hast showed 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 upon his throne" (1 Kings 3:6).

1Ki 5:2 Solomon sent to Hiram saying-

As noted on :1, Solomon was obsessed with living out the image of his father. As Hiram had sent messengers to David (2 Sam. 5:11), so Solomon sends to Hiram.

1Ki 5:3 You know how that David my father could not build a house for the name of Yahweh his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until Yahweh put his enemies under the soles of his feet-

Solomon had a way of spinning things, even God's word, in his own selfish way. David had insisted that God had told him that he couldn't build the temple because he had shed so much blood in war (1 Chron. 22:8). But Solomon just slightly spins this when he asks Hiram to come and help him build the temple, because, he says, his father David hadn't had the time to get around to the job because of being busy fighting wars (1 Kings 5:3). He says nothing about David shedding blood; the moral aspect of it all is nicely ignored by Solomon.

1Ki 5:4 But now Yahweh my God has given me rest on every side. There is no adversary nor any evil occurrence-

Solomon's argument is that his father David had not been given rest from his enemies, but he had been given rest, therefore it was for him to build the temple. But that is exactly the opposite of what we are told. David had rest from his external enemies (2 Sam. 7:1) and therefore wanted to build a temple. God replied that indeed He had given David rest from His enemies (2 Sam. 7:11), but He didn't want a temple. The same word for "rest" is used throughout.

As is typical of the Solomon record, this lack of adversary was true in Solomon's mind and self-presentation, but not in reality. For 1 Kings 11:14,23,25 list Solomon's adversaries, using the same word. We likewise have to doubt, therefore, the veracity of his claims in :3. Solomon imagines that his kingdom is the promised "rest" of the Messianic kingdom promised to David. But his degree of "rest" was only in his imagination. For he had various adversaries on the borders, Hadad, Rezon and others (1 Kings 11:14,23,25). So again, Solomon is spinning things to fit his narrative.

The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament uses the Greek word *diabolos* to translate the Hebrew 'Satan'. Hence Devil and Satan are effectively parallel in meaning. Thus we read in the Septuagint of David being an adversary [Heb. *Satan*, Gk. *diabolos*] in 1 Sam. 29:4 ["turns against us"]; the sons of Zeruiah (2 Sam. 19:22), Hadad, Rezon and other opponents to Solomon (1 Kings 5:4; 11:14,23,25). We face a simple choice- if we believe that every reference to 'Satan' or

'Devil' refers to an evil cosmic being, then we have to assume that these people weren't people at all, and that even good men like David were evil. The far more natural reading of these passages is surely that 'Satan' is simply a word meaning 'adversary', and can be applied to people [good and bad], and even God Himself- it carries no pejorative, sinister meaning as a word. See on :18.

1Ki 5:5 Behold, I purpose to build a house for the name of Yahweh my God, as Yahweh spoke to David my father saying, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name' -

Again this is a spin; because it was David who had purposed to build the temple, and had prepared for it. And again we see Solomon assuming that the promises of 2 Sam. 7 were totally fulfilled in him; whereas being the Messianic son of David was conditional. And the house to be built was more essentially the house of God's family which God was to build for David rather than any physical temple. But Solomon totally missed all this. We note he speaks of "the" house, not "a house". He saw the promised "house" to be built as solely and exclusively fulfilled in his temple. The idea of Messiah building a house of people for God's Name was far from him. And he was hardly the promised begotten son of God, to be born *after* David "slept with his fathers".

Jer. 32:31 states that God's anger and fury were against the temple from the day it was built until the day He destroyed it, it was a provocation of His anger. Just as He gave Israel a king in His anger and took him away in His wrath. But He patiently and even desperately tried to work with Israel through both the temple and the kingship. His glory entering the temple was therefore a concession to their weakness. Solomon was provoking God to wrath by building the temple and we must bear this in mind as we read the record of his apparently zealous building of it. And remember that in Ecclesiastes he says that he just had an obsession with all manner of building projects. God's temple was just one of them.

2 Chron. 2:4 adds the detail that Solomon said: "The temple that I am going to build will be great, for great is our God beyond all the gods". He is alluding [as always] to the words of his father David in Ps. 135:5: "For I am certain that Yahweh is great and great is our Lord beyond all gods". It is Yahweh who is great. But Solomon turns this into a statement that therefore the temple he builds must be "great" and greater than any temple built to other gods. This explains why the style of the temple is so similar to that of other temples from the time- it's just bigger and more lavish. Solomon reduces the greatness of Yahweh, and His infinite superiority over the other gods, to the simple term of having a greater temple than the other gods. Any purely religious approach to God diminishes His true greatness, which is in His grace. Solomon reduces the unique greatness of Yahweh to the uniqueness of the temple he is going to build Him. A temple Yahweh never wanted anyway. He fails to see Yahweh's greatness as being in terms of His grace and eternal salvation, which He had demonstrated for all time in His salvation of David regarding his affair with Solomon's mother Bathsheba. David made the same mistake in confusing the greatness of his projected temple with the greatness of Yahweh Himself. He says in 1 Chron. 29:11 "To you, Yahweh, belong the utmost greatness, might, distinction, eminence, and splendor- yes all that is in heaven and on earth" but then in 1 Chron. 22:5 "The temple I am about to build for Yahweh must become utterly great, for fame and distinction throughout all lands".

2 Chron. 2:6 fills out what Solomon told Hiram: "But who is able to build Him a house, since heaven and the heaven of heavens can't contain Him? Who am I then,

that I should build Him a house, except just to burn incense before Him?". "Who am I?" is a quotation of David's words about the temple in 1 Chron. 29:14: "But who am I..?". But this in turn had been David's response when God first told him that He didn't want a temple, but rather would build a house for David from his descendants. David totally misrepresented God's response as saying that He did in fact welcome the idea of a grandiose physical temple, and so by repeating his response at the time, he is surely guilty of a false humility. Solomon quotes these words of apparent humility and applies them to himself. But just as we cannot sing words of humility in a Christian song or hymn and thereby be humble, Solomon failed to realize that humility is not a bought or inherited position. It has to come from the heart. And he had no sense of personal sin or possibility of failure, and therefore no humility. Solomon claims that he solely wanted to build a temple in order to offer incense and sacrifice. But the obvious counter to that is that God only asked for an altar roughly made of earth or at best, unhewn stones, in order for man to offer sacrifice. A grandiose temple wasn't required for sacrifice.

2 Chron. 2:9 further fills out Solomon's words to Hiram: "for the house which I am about to build shall be great and wonderful". The greatness and wonder of the house was a big theme with David and Solomon. But God's response to David's initial suggestion of a temple was that He is a humble God, and doesn't like grandiose structures; rather does He wish above all for men to allow Him to work according to His grace in building a house for His glory made out of contrite, responsive hearts. Form eclipsed content for Solomon, religion overtook spirituality, as has happened constantly in the history of God's people. "Great and wonderful" is a Hebrew phrase consistently used about what God does for men by His grace; and not what man can do for God (Job 5:9; 9:10; 37:5; Ps. 86:10 "You are great, and do wondrous things"; 136:4 "Him who alone does great wonders; for His grace endures forever"; Jer. 32:17 "by Your great power... there is nothing too wonderful for You, who show loving kindness to thousands" of sinners). In a time of greater humility, David had vowed not to exercise himself in anything great and wonderful apart from to marvel at God's grace (s.w. Ps. 131:1 "nor do I concern myself with great matters, or things too wonderful for me"). But now, Solomon is seeking to build a great and wonderful place for God, rather than allowing God to build that great and wonderful house of humbled human hearts.

1Ki 5:6 Now therefore command that they cut me cedar trees out of Lebanon. My servants shall be with your servants; and I will give you wages for your servants according to all that you shall say. For you know that there is not among us any who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians-

Perhaps this was connected with the Divine wisdom about cedar trees which God had given Solomon (1 Kings 4:33). The irony is that David had told God that he was unhappy living in a house of cedar, and wanted to build God a house; and God had specifically said that He did not want such a house as David had, i.e. of cedar.

1Ki 5:7 It happened, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he was very pleased and said, Blessed is Yahweh this day, who has given to David a wise son over this great people-

Hiram's usage of the Yahweh Name could suggest he had become a proselyte and was therefore eager to assist with building the temple.

1Ki 5:8 Hiram sent to Solomon saying, I have heard the message which you have sent

to me. I will do all your desire concerning timber of cedar and concerning timber of fir-

"Fir" is LXX pine wood. This would have created a distinctive and pleasant smell in the temple.

1Ki 5:9 My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon to the sea. I will make them into rafts to go by sea to the place that you shall appoint me, and will cause them to be broken up there, and you shall receive them. You shall accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household-

The appointed place was Joppa (2 Chron. 2:16). Tyre was built on a small island, and so as a maritime trading nation, regular provision of fresh food was greatly sought after by them.

1Ki 5:10 So Hiram gave Solomon timber of cedar and timber of fir according to all his desire-

There is the hint that Solomon's work for the temple was really not so much for God, as a fulfilment of his own desires. He served God only insofar as it was attractive to him. We note from Ecclesiastes that he was obsessed with building work; and his work for the temple was just part of that. We need to learn the lesson; that service of God is not according to what we want to do, but according to what people need and what will glorify God.

1Ki 5:11 Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food for his household, and twenty measures of pure oil. Solomon gave this to Hiram year by year-

The different figures in 1 Kings 5:11 cp. 2 Chron. 2:10 could be because part of the amount was for Tyre generally, and part for Hiram's personal household. Twenty measure of pure oil appears relatively small; but it is the same word used for the oil of the tabernacle rituals (Ex. 27:20), and as a proselyte Hiram may well have built his own kind of tabernacle system. I suggest on Ez. 28:14 that he indeed did so, but it turned into apostasy.

1Ki 5:12 Yahweh had given Solomon wisdom, as He promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a treaty together-

The implication is that the way of peace is the way of wisdom.

1Ki 5:13 King Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men-

Solomon's lack of sensitivity to God's word led him to be tragically insensitive to people; in short, he showed no love. The way Solomon raised a "levy" or tribute from Israel, whereby the men of Israel had to serve him one month out of three and 'bear burdens', with 3,300 taskmasters over them (1 Kings 5:13-15), who 'bore rule' over (Heb. 'trampled down') the people (1 Kings 5:16)... is all reminiscent of Samuel's warning about the kind of King which Israel would have. And the language also recalls their bondage in Egypt; note that the levy was also in order to build treasure cities for Solomon, just as Pharaoh did (1 Kings 9:19). The Hebrew word for "levy" in 1 Kings 5:13 strictly means 'a burden causing to faint', and is rendered "taskmaster" in the record of Israel's suffering in Egypt (Ex. 1:11). One even wonders if Solomon's father-in-law- who also happened to be a Pharaoh of Egypt- influenced him (consciously or unconsciously) to act like the Exodus Pharaoh. Possibly Solomon

justified this abuse of northern labour to build things in Judah through the assumption that northerners were lazy. For he uses the same word in Prov. 12:24 "The hands of the diligent ones [Judah and his family] shall rule, but the slothful shall be under tribute". Or maybe he milfully misinterpreted Gen. 49:15 about Issachar in the north of the land, who would "become a servant under tribute".

1Ki 5:14 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 men subject to forced labour-

The emphasis upon the forced labour brigades is significant (1 Kings 4:6; 5:13,14; 12:18), and it was Solomon's brutal treatment of his people which led to the complaint after his death that he had whipped the people and abused them. This was exactly as Samuel had warned the people would happen if they chose a human king rather than God as their king; for God is kinder than men. We see therefore that Solomon was no better than Saul. All his wisdom failed to make him value the meaning of the human person. It was therefore only held by him in theory not in practice. Making men work one month out of three meant that labour would have been lacking in their homes- and that meant reduced food for families.

1Ki 5:15 Solomon had seventy thousand who bore burdens, and eighty thousand who were stone cutters in the mountains-

1 Kings 5:13-16 reveals that Solomon had 153,000 full time and 90,000 part time male servants. Israel's complaint that Solomon had whipped them implies that he treated them like slaves, with himself as the slave-driver.

600,000 adults came out of Egypt (Ex. 12:37), and assuming the population only rose slightly over the next 550 years, we have the picture of an Israel where almost half the males (i.e. probably the majority of the working population) were pressganged into slavery to a despotic King Solomon.

This huge number of men involved in quarrying and transportation of the stones was because of the obsession with building projects which Solomon admits he had in Ecclesiastes. Just as Solomon's abundance of wives led to having a few thousand mouths to feed, and Israel needed to provide for that; so his obsession with thousands of horses meant that there was a need for a huge amount of fodder for them (1 Kings 4:28). And all Israel had to provide this- all for the sake of Solomon's obsessive desires. That he reigned for as long as he did was truly a sign of God's grace to him for the sake of his father David, and is a tacit reflection of how much God loved David despite all his failures.

The huge amount of labour required- 80,000 men hewing stone alone- was nothing more than Solomon acting like Pharaoh, using taskmasters to trample down / rule over the people to achieve his quotas and enable his building fantasies to become reality. The Hebrew word translated "bear rule over" (Heb. 'to trample down') in 1 Kings 5:16 is that which we find in the Law's prohibition of this in Lev. 25:46: "But over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule over one another with rigour". Solomon knew the Law, and he rambles on in Proverbs about the need to read, love and obey that law. And yet he thought that he could give that one a miss, 'because I am doing God's work and building His house'. And how many a believer has ended up missing the entire point of God's law, the very essence of Christianity, because of their obsession with serving God in a form which is effectively merely serving themselves, excusing their fantasies in the name of doing God service. It's the

process of Solomon's apostacy which is so instructive; for he justified himself by saying that he was doing God's work. He didn't simply quit on God.

1Ki 5:16 besides Solomon's chief officers who were over the work, three thousand three hundred, who bore rule over the people who laboured in the work-

See on :13. This levy was evidently one of the reasons which led the next generation to complain that Solomon had chastised the people with whips (1 Kings 12:11; the happiness of the people which the Queen of Sheba observed in 1 Kings 10:8 was therefore just an impression Solomon arranged for her to receive). Yet "this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised: in order to build the house of the Lord, and his own house..." (1 Kings 9:15). Solomon justified his zest for power and control by saying it was in order to do the Lord's work, to build His house... and yet had he listened to God's word more carefully, he would have realized that the true house of Yahweh was in fact people... yet Solomon abused people in order to build a visible house for God. And so very often religious people have gone down the same path-devaluing the meaning and value of persons, because they want to be seen as achieving something visible for God, no matter how many people they abuse on the way. The ends simply don't justify the means; Solomon told himself that they did, and he ended up as bad as Saul and Pharaoh, who are alluded to in the records of his levy of slaves from Israel. And yet the 1 Kings record gives the impression of all happily working together to create a great temple for God. When we probe deeper, we find this was far from the case.

David had prophesied that his great son would "have dominion from sea to sea" (Ps. 72:8). 'Have dominion' is again the Hebrew word translated 'rule over' in 1 Kings 5:15. David's vision of his Messianic son having a world-wide Kingdom, in which all people blessed him for his grace and beneficence, was abused by Solomon into justifying 'having dominion' over people as his personal slaves; and they certainly didn't bless him for it but rather complained (1 Kings 12:11). It's as if Solomon grabbed the word 'rule over / have dominion', wrenched it out of context, and used it to justify his actions, giving a quasi-Biblical justification to his pure selfishness. This is where knowledge of God's word can be a dangerous thing; leading people into a stronger self-justification than they would otherwise have had if they were guided by self-recognized greed alone.

We note the similarities to Israel's forced labour in Egypt, and so we can read an irony in 1 Kings 6:1, just a few verses later, when Israel's coming out of slavery in Egypt is mentioned as a time marker.

1Ki 5:17 The king commanded, and they cut out great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house with worked stone-

But 1 Kings 9:15 says that all this labour regarding quarrying was not simply for the temple; but also for his own house, which was far larger than God's house, and took nearly twice as long to build. He justified his own serving of his own desires under the guise of serving God. He justified the temple as being merely a place for sacrifice. But God had asked men to build Him altars of dirt, or unhewn stones. Yet there is huge emphasis upon Solomon's cutting and hewing of stones. He is presented [to the thoughtful, Biblically aware reader] as fake all the way through, justifying his own passions in the name of God... we think of William Golding's novel, *The Spire*. God had promised that He would build a house / family for His Name. The foundation stone of that house would be His begotten Son, to be begotten after David "slept with his fathers". Solomon was focused upon himself and not upon the future Christ. Is.

28:16 clearly states that the foundation of God's house will be a person, not some stones cut by Hiram: "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation. He who believes shall not be ashamed". These words are quoted in the New Testament about the Lord Jesus.

1Ki 5:18 Solomon's builders along with Hiram's builders and the Gebalites cut them, and prepared the timber and the stones to build the house-

The idea of Israelites and Gentiles working together to build God's house looks ahead to the greater fulfilment in the things of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus. The kingdom of Solomon can indeed be viewed as a type of the future kingdom of the Lord Jesus (see on 1 Kings 4:2). But in reality it was rather that Solomon had been potentially empowered to be the Messianic seed with a Messianic kingdom as promised to David, but he failed. And the Lord Jesus fulfilled the potentials of the seed perfectly, leaving Solomon and his kingdom as a failed, marred reflection of Him.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 6

1Ki 6:1 It happened in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt-

The difficulties in chronology with the 480 years are probably because the periods of the judges involved some overlap between them; and some judges may have judged one part of Israel whilst others judged another at the same time. LXX gives the 440th year. Sometimes the Biblical record is vague, other times exact. This reflects how God is not seeking to cover His back against critics. He is of an altogether higher nature than that. There are times when the Spirit uses very approximate numbers rather than exact ("about the space of four hundred and fifty years", Acts 13:20 cp. 1 Kings 6:1). As noted on :38, the temple was built in seven and a half years, but this is summarized as seven years. The reference to "seventy" in Judges 9:56 also doesn't seem exact. Seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11) becomes "seven years" (1 Kings 2:11); three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9) becomes "three months" (2 Kings 24:8). And 1 Kings 7:23 gives the circumference of the laver as "thirty cubits", although it was ten cubits broad. Taking 'pi' to be 3.14, it is apparent that the circumference would have been 31.4 cubits; but the Spirit says, summing up, "thirty".

In the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Yahweh-

The note in the LXX at the end of 1 Kings 5 says that the preparation of the materials took three years. Which would mean that Solomon began the project immediately he came to the throne, wrongly seeing the building of the temple as some kind of proof that he was indeed the Messianic son of David promised in 2 Sam. 7. But :37 makes it clear that the foundations of the temple were only laid in Solomon's fourth year, despite David having prepared everything ahead of time. Why the delay? If we read the entire record into 1 Kings 7, the answer may be that he got distracted with building his own house and his other building projects, seeking to create a huge palace-temple complex where effectively the temple was just the royal chapel which was connected to his own [double the size] palace, by an "ascent" or magnificent ramp which the Queen of Sheba noticed. He didn't make the temple a priority, and it was only part of his own huge palace complex.

1Ki 6:2 The house which king Solomon built for Yahweh, its length was sixty cubits, and its breadth twenty, and its height thirty cubits-

This was twice the size of the tabernacle. The overall size of Solomon's temple was much larger than this 60 x 20 measurement, because of the porch, the chambers and court surrounding it. The actual "house" wasn't that large, only 90 x 30 x 45 feet high.

Psalms 127 is prefaced with the information that it is a Psalm for Solomon—perhaps given by some nameless prophet (Gad? Nathan?) to warn him of where he was going. Verse 1 reminds him that God must be the builder of any house, or else the builders labour in vain. There is good reason to think that Solomon utterly failed to appreciate this. The records stress time and again that *Solomon* built the temple (1 Kings 6:2,14; 9:10,25; 10:4; 1 Chron.6:10,32; 2 Chron. 8:1,12; 9:3; Acts 7:47); yet the house referred to in the Davidic promises was to be built by God, through David's Messianic Son, the Lord Jesus. Zechariah prophesied at the time of the rebuilding of the physical temple. It is significant, in this context, that Zech. 6:12 reminds Israel that the true temple of God will be built by the Branch, the Lord Jesus. Indeed the point is laboured twice: "The man whose name is the Branch... he shall build Yahweh's temple; even he shall build Yahweh's temple; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne" (Zech. 6:12,13).

1Ki 6:3 The porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was its length, according to the breadth of the house. Ten cubits was its breadth before the house- The height of the porch was 120 cubits, or 180 feet (2 Chron. 3:4). This is out of proportion to the length and breadth. And it would have dwarfed the actual sanctuary (see on :2). In this case, we can say that form eclipsed content, as always with Solomon. For the sanctuary would have been dwarfed by the massive porch; just as is seen in Egyptian temples, which it seems were what Solomon was imitating. But perhaps what is meant is that the height of each of the four walls has been added together, which would give a height of 30 cubits. This style is to be found in 2 Chron. 3:11, where the length of the wings of the cherubim is given as 20 cubits, but this was a way of saying that each of the four wings was five cubits long. We have another example in the way that the two pillars are said to be 18 cubits high (1 Kings 7:15), but in 2 Chron. 3:15 they are 35 cubits high. What that means is that there were two cubits of 17.5 cubits high each, summarized as 18 cubits high in 1 Kings 7:15.

1Ki 6:4 He made windows of fixed lattice work for the house- "Windows broad within and narrow without" (AVmg.). They were for ventilation, not for light. There was no natural light in the temple just as there wasn't in the tabernacle. The hope was that it would be lit by the light of God's glory; and likewise there is no natural light in the spiritual temple, only that of God's glory. But we could argue that they were in fact for light; because Solomon was more interested in natural light than in the light provided by God's glory. Yet despite this, God by grace still sent the shekinah glory into this temple to give His light, all the same.

1Ki 6:5 Against the wall of the house he built storeys all around, against the walls of the house all around, both of the temple and of the oracle; and he made side rooms all around-

The idea is that three stories (R.V.) of small chambers were built around two sides and one end of the temple. Josephus says there were 30 of these side rooms / chambers, which were accessed by passing through each room, i.e. there was no corridor. These rooms are alluded to by the Lord in Jn. 14:1-3, where He speaks of how there is a chamber or abiding place for each of us in God's temple which He was enabling to be built by His death. We each will have our own personal existence and

place in God's Kingdom; our personality will be preserved, and not subsumed into some kind of nirvana. These are the chambers used for storage and even living in Neh. 13:5; Jer. 36:10,20.

1Ki 6:6 The lowest storey was five cubits broad, and the middle was six cubits broad, and the third was seven cubits broad-

This refers to the gap between the wall of the temple and the outer wall of the three stories of chambers described in :5. The temple wall was very thick at the bottom, seeing that at five cubits height there was a kind of ledge of one cubit wide, upon which rested the floor of the middle chambers. Then five cubits above that, there was another such ledge upon which was put the floor of the third story; and finally at a point 15 cubits high there was another ledge to support the roof beams of the top story. The wall of the holy place continued up for another 15 cubits, in which there were the "windows" or, effectively, ventilation slats. Assuming that upper wall was two cubits thick, the base of the temple wall must have been five cubits thick. Remember that each story of the side chambers was one cubit wider than the one below it.

For on the outside he made offsets in the wall of the house all around, so that the supporting beams should not be inserted into the walls of the house-
The idea is that there was no hole made in the wall of the temple or holy place.

1Ki 6:7 The house, when it was in building, was built of stone prepared at the quarry; and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building-

This was perhaps an attempt to follow the spirit of the law which commanded that no iron tool should be used in the shaping of stones for an altar (Ex. 20:25; Dt. 27:5). But typical of Solomon, it is a getting around of God's law; because all the same, iron tools were used in preparing the stones. The Lord Jesus is presented as the builder of the spiritual temple, in which the stones should fit together without strife (Eph. 2:21 alludes to 1 Kings 6:7). This means that we as the stones are being prepared in this life; every knock and blow we receive is intended to shape us to fit next to other stones, eternally. And the final assembly of the stones at the day of judgment will not be the time for shaping; that is going on now. However in the immediate context, this is likely one of many reasons to think that the building of the temple was in line with pagan myths about temples. For there is evidence from various Ancient Near Eastern literature that it was believed that human noise could repel the divine presence and drive away the deity from the holy space. Therefore there is evidence that the images of the idols were made away from the temple in order to preserve the quiet sanctity of the supposed holy ground. And the Mosaic law was that no iron tool should be used on stones used for an altar; and yet Solomon in mock humility describes the temple as merely an altar. He sidesteps the Divine intention- that God just wants some earth kicked together, or rough stones. For that is the basis of our sacrifice to Him. But Solomon sought to get around that and make a grandiose fancy altar, which God didn't want.

1Ki 6:8 The door for the middle side rooms was in the right side of the house: and they went up by winding stairs into the middle storey, and out of the middle into the third-

LXX has "lowest" instead of "middle", which makes sense because otherwise there is

no way of accessing the lowest chambers. "The right side" is Heb. 'shoulder', and refers to the face of the temple building.

1Ki 6:9 So he built the house, and finished it-

This seems to refer to the actual temple building, as the storeys of surrounding chambers of :5 are mentioned separately as being built (:10).

And he covered the house with beams and planks of cedar-

This refers to the roof. No cedar trunk would have yielded wood long enough to cover the required length, and so there would have been supporting beams. The inspired record makes such good sense, and is not open to serious criticism from a practical point of view. This roof would have imitated the covering upon the tabernacle and would probably therefore have been pitched at an angle.

1Ki 6:10 He built the storeys against the whole house, each five cubits high: and they were attached to the house by cedar beams-

These beams rested on the shoulders or ledges of :6.

1Ki 6:11 The word of Yahweh came to Solomon saying-

As shown in :12, God was concerned that Solomon thought that simply having built the temple meant that he was fulfilling the promises of 2 Sam. 7 and was therefore the promised Messianic seed. God noticed how Solomon was bypassing in his mind the conditional nature of the promises.

1Ki 6:12 Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes, and execute My ordinances, and keep all My commandments to walk in them; then will I establish My word with you, which I spoke to David your father- God constantly warned Solomon about the conditionality of the promises, before the building started (2 Sam. 7:14), during it (1 Kings 6:11-13) and immediately after completing it (1 Kings 9:2-9). God stresses that "*you* are building" this house- when His intention was that He would build a house of people through the future Messianic seed. Solomon struggled with the grace of all this and wanted something tangible and physical, the work of his own hands and not God's.

Thanks to Solomon's prayer, and *if* he had been obedient, all Israel would have been blessed and experienced Yahweh dwelling amongst them (1 Kings 6:12,13). Moses prayed for God to forgive Israel; and He responded: "I have pardoned, according to *your* word" (Num. 14:20)- rather than according to their repentance and prayer. Indeed it would seem from Heb. 11:28 that Israel were delivered from the Egyptians due to *Moses'* faith in the Christ whom the sprinkled Passover blood pointed forward to. And so Israel's blessing was dependent on Solomon's obedience (1 Kings 6:12,13); their joy was because of the honour God had given Solomon (2 Chron. 7:10). The blessing of others can be dependent upon a third party (e.g. Mk. 2:5).

1Ki 6:13 I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel-

Yahweh's dwelling amongst Israel is therefore not predicated upon the splendour of the temple, but upon walking in God's ways (:12). He was aware that Solomon misunderstood this.

The Lord Jesus was well aware of the connection between God's refusal to answer prayer and His recognition of sin in the person praying (2 Sam. 22:42 = Ps.

2:2-5). It is emphasized time and again that God will not forsake those who love Him (e.g. Dt. 4:31; 31:6; 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Kings 6:13; Ps. 94:14; Is. 41:17; 42:16). Every one of these passages must have been well known to our Lord, the word made flesh. He knew that God forsaking Israel was a punishment for their sin (Jud. 6:13; 2 Kings 21:14; Is. 2:6; Jer. 23:33). God would forsake Israel only if they forsook Him (Dt. 31:16,17; 2 Chron. 15:2). We can therefore conclude that His desperate "Why have You forsaken me?" was because He was so intensely identified with our sins that in the crisis of the cross, He indeed felt forsaken because of sin. He did not sin, but felt like a sinner; He thereby knows how sinners feel.

God said that He accepted the temple not so much as a place to dwell in (as Solomon assumed it was) but as a place facilitating sacrifice, prayer etc., for the glorification of His Name through these things; He emphasized that He dwelt amongst *His people* (1 Kings 6:13; 2 Chron. 7:12-16). There are several other places where God's response to Solomon's words seems to be corrective rather than affirmatory. Thus Solomon says that God will hear the prayers of His people because *the temple* is called by God's Name; but God's response is that "My people, which are called by My Name" would pray to Him themselves and be heard, quite apart from the temple (2 Chron. 6:33 cp. 7:14). He sees them as bearing His Name rather than the temple building, as Solomon perceived it. God goes on to parallel the temple and His people in 2 Chron. 7:21,22, saying that if He punishes the temple He will punish the people. Solomon seems to have thought that the temple would still stand favourably in God's eyes even if the people were punished. The record records that the temple was "perfected" whereas Solomon's heart wasn't perfect [s.w.] (1 Kings 11:4 cp. 2 Chron. 8:16).

1Ki 6:14 So Solomon built the house, and finished it-

There appears no particular need for the phrase "Concerning this house which you are in building" in :12- it appears somewhat redundant, until we realize that God is saying 'OK I see you are building this house, thinking you are so obedient to My word; well, get on and keep My word in reality, and *then* the promises to David will apply to you'. Activity supposedly in God's service can lead us to think that of course we are being obedient to His word... when the very obsession of the activity may be blinding us to the fact that we aren't at all. There's no record that Solomon responded positively to God's warning words- 1 Kings 6:14 states that "So Solomon built the house, and finished it". We are expecting to hear Solomon respond to God- but instead, he gets on with building again.

"And finished it" may not mean that all the internal decorations were finished; see on 1 Kings 7:1 where Solomon finished all his house, perhaps implying he didn't finish all the internals of the temple. Because here we have a description of the basic stonework structure in :2-8; then the roof and some basic structural woodwork in :9,10; now the statement that Solomon "finished" the house; and then in :15-38 the descriptions of the internal woodwork and massive scale gold plating of everything, even the floor and walls. This would have required a huge amount of gold and would in any case have not been practicable in daily usage. And we cannot but note the similarities between the language here and the Mesopotamian inscriptions of how monarchs claimed to have built houses and temples with specifications far above what were achieved in practice- with the same rubric / completion formula "built and finished it". Nabonidus left many such examples.

Ps. 89:4 speaks of how Yahweh's promise was to eternally build up David's throne and house, which would be His house. It will become true in the Lord Jesus, whose throne will be eternally built up in that His rulership will eternally expand. That opens up a vista of us eternally extending His rule- in our own hearts, over other beings and dimensions. "Build up" is also translated "to obtain children". It's as if the seed continues to grow eternally, the throne is built up in that more people submit to the king, so His "kingdom", those beneath His dominion, increase eternally. This suggests we will spend eternity bringing other beings beneath that dominion, and we can begin living that spirit now in our witness and bringing others into that dominion. The contrast was with David wanting to "build [up]" a house for God. His response was that He didn't want David spending a few years building up a house for Him; but rather He would spend eternity building up David's house in the sense of his family, who would also be God's family and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:5,7 etc.). Solomon totally missed the point of all this in reasoning that David could not build the house because of his bloodshed, but therefore he [Solomon] was intended to physically build a house for Yahweh (1 Kings 5:3,5). Perhaps this is why we read several times that Solomon built [up] the house and finished it (1 Kings 6:9,14), he was building the house seven years and then finished it (1 Kings 6:38), which appears to be stating the obvious until we see the intended contrast- Yahweh's building up of David's house, which was also to be His house, would be eternal and never finish. And 1 Kings 8:13 is almost comical in the contrast; Solomon proudly says that "I have surely built [up] for You a house to dwell in, a settled place for You to abide in for ever". But no, Yahweh is about eternally building up a house for David where He will live, in the hearts of an ever and eternally expanding group of people who would be David's true seed. Solomon built a physical house for God's Name... but how can a Name, Yahweh's characteristics, abide in a cold stone building? They can only be found in the hearts of humans made in His image. This is why Ps. 89:2,4 parallel the "building up" of the throne and "Mercy shall be built up for ever". The ever expanding dominion of God in hearts and minds is all of His grace and mercy, and that will continue to grow and be magnified for ever. Although David set Solomon up for failure with his insistence on building up a physical house rather than let Yahweh build up his spiritual house, David does also 'get it' that it is Yahweh who is the builder and not him. He does often admit this in his Psalms: "Do good unto Zion, build Thou the walls of Jerusalem... Yahweh built up His sanctuary... Jerusalem is builded up as a city compacted together... Except Yahweh builds up the house they labour in vain who build... Yahweh builds up Jerusalem... " (Ps. 51:18; 78:69; 122:3; 127:1; 147:2). And this time of building up would not be until the Lord Jesus returned: "When Yahweh shall build up Zion, he shall appear in His glory" (Ps. 102:16). This is the time of the new covenant: "I will build you [up] and you shall be built, O virgin of Israel... I will watch over them to build them up... I will build them [up] as at the first... I Yahweh build up the ruined places / people... in that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David and will build it [up]" (Jer. 31:4,28; 33:7; Ez. 36:36; Am. 9:11).

We note the constant emphasis on Solomon being the builder of the temple (:1,2,14; 1 Kings 7:51). But it was Hiram who was the craftsman and slaves who did the building. I suggest again the record is giving us the self perspective of Solomon, who considered he had built the temple himself and this fulfilled the promises to David.

1Ki 6:15 He built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar: from the floor of the house to the walls of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood; and he

covered the floor of the house with boards of fir-

"Fir" is LXX "pine", which along with the huge amount of cedar would all have been brought from Hiram.

1Ki 6:16 He built twenty cubits on the back part of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the ceiling: he built them for it within, for an inner sanctuary, even for the most holy place-

"The back part", AV "sides", uses a word elsewhere describing inner recesses, e.g. of a cave (1 Sam. 24:4) or forest (Is. 37:24). The reference is to the 'back part' of the temple as one looked into the temple from the entrance- which was the wall at the end of the Most Holy Place. This was separated from the rest of the Holy Place by a door (:31) with "chains of gold" across it (:21) and a veil across it all (2 Chron. 3:14).

1Ki 6:17 In front of the temple sanctuary was forty cubits-

The reference is to the holy place; the preceding verses have just described the most holy place.

1Ki 6:18 There was cedar on the house within, carved with buds and open flowers: all was cedar; there was no stone seen-

"Open flowers" means open flower buds. "Buds" is a guess at translation, for the Hebrew word is very obscure, literally "wild gourds", a poisonous plant (s.w. 2 Kings 4:39). It is unlikely this plant is in view. But there are observable similarities with the decoration of Egyptian holy places. Seeing that Solomon had married an Egyptian, and the Song of Solomon reflects Solomon's deep admiration for things Egyptian, it seems likely that even in the temple, Solomon allowed Gentile influence. And that was to be a theme of this temple until its destruction. See on :29. No wonder God told Jeremiah that He had been furiously angry with the temple from the day it was built to the day He destroyed it.

1Ki 6:19 He prepared an inner sanctuary in the midst of the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of Yahweh-

"Inner sanctuary" is AV "oracle", and is the Hebrew word usually translated "word". It refers to the most holy place, but perhaps the idea is that God's word is ultimately where we are to find the presence of God represented by the ark.

1Ki 6:20 Within the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in its height; and he overlaid it with pure gold: and he covered the altar with cedar-

The idea is that within the inner sanctuary there was a space of 20 cubits length. The altar within the Most Holy was the altar of incense. The altar is described in some manuscripts as "made" with cedar, and this surely must be the case. It was the cedar which was overlaid with pure gold as in Ex. 25:11.

The Outer Court was 30 cubits high, while the Holy of Holies was 20 cubits high, about 4 meters lower. We would have expected the Holy of Holies to be higher. But the likely reason for this was that the design of the temple reflected that of other temples unearthed in and around the land of Israel. They have a forecourt, an outer court, a 'holy of holies' *lower than the outer court*, two large pillars [cp. Jachin and Boaz] and some kind of large water tank [cp. the "molten sea"]; and the king's palace adjacent.

1Ki 6:21 So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he drew chains of gold across before the inner sanctuary; and he overlaid it with gold-
The most holy place, or "inner sanctuary", was separated from the rest of the Holy Place by a door (:31) with "chains of gold" across it and a veil across it all (2 Chron. 3:14).

1Ki 6:22 The whole house he overlaid with gold, until all the house was finished: also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold-
2 Chron. 3:8 says this was 600 talents of gold. One talent is 26 kilograms (57 pounds). 1 kilogram of gold is currently worth about 40,000 US\$ [2020], meaning the value was around 625 million US\$ in current terms. But in the poor, subsistence farming economy of those times, this sum was far greater in real terms. But this was not even all the gold which came to Solomon in the course of one year (1 Kings 13:18), so it was not particularly generous.

1Ki 6:23 In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high-
"Olive" is s.w. "pine", and may also have been brought from Gentile Hiram- to be worked into God's glory.

1Ki 6:24 Five cubits was the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing to the uttermost part of the other were ten cubits-
This means that the wings of the cherubim touched each other. There was a complete covering over the mercy seat, or top of the ark where the blood of atonement was sprinkled each year, and above that but below the wings of the cherubim the shekinah glory of God was seen. The ark and mercy seat were placed under the cherubic wings (2 Chron. 8:6). It was only a relatively small space, as noted on :26.

In the tabernacle the wings were "spread out on high" (Ex. 25:20; 27:9), but here their wings touch each other. Although Solomon claims he built everything according to Divine revelation, we wonder whether in fact he felt free to liberally reinterpret the tabernacle features. And he changes wings uplifted to God's glory to wings which are closed in upon each other; the mercy seat, or cover of the ark, is no longer exposed to Heaven, as it were, but now closed over.

1Ki 6:25 The other cherub was ten cubits: both the cherubim were of one measure and one form-
This "one form" is significant, as the various Biblical visions of the cherubim seem to present them as having slightly different forms in each vision. Like everything to do with God's glory and manifestation, the form is constantly variable over time but expresses the same Divine glory. They stood upon their own feet in this vision (2 Chron. 3:13).

1Ki 6:26 The height of the one cherub was ten cubits, and so was it of the other cherub-
See on :24. The ark and mercy seat were placed under the cherubic wings (2 Chron. 8:6). The ark was one and a half cubits high (Ex. 25:10) and the cherubim were ten cubits high. In this relatively small space, the shekinah glory of God was manifest.

For God doesn't need much space in which to reveal Himself; which is an abiding principle.

1Ki 6:27 He set the cherubim within the inner house; and the wings of the cherubim were stretched forth, so that the wing of the one touched the one wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house-

We note that "the wall" refers to the interior of the wall. If this is likewise how "the walls" are described elsewhere, then the thickness of the walls is not included in the dimensions given.

1Ki 6:28 He overlaid the cherubim with gold-

Considering the construction of the cherubim leads us to reflect that they were not somehow supernatural, they were made of ordinary materials and didn't fall down from Heaven, as claimed by many of the religious cults.

1Ki 6:29 He carved all the walls of the house around with carved figures of cherubim-

The idea was that the glory and presence of God represented by the cherubim was not only in the most holy place, but extended beyond it. David had often perceived this in his Psalms whilst on the run from Saul.

And palm trees and open flowers-

Perhaps the reference was to David's imagery of the righteous flourishing like the palm tree (Ps. 92:12). But Solomon had likened his Egyptian lover to a palm (Song 7:7,8), and the palm and open flowers feature in Egyptian architecture. See on :18. Seeing that Solomon had married an Egyptian, and the Song of Solomon reflects Solomon's deep admiration for things Egyptian, it seems likely that even in the temple, Solomon allowed Gentile influence, although mixing it with the imagery of the cherubim of Yahweh's manifestation. And that was to be a sad theme of this temple until its destruction.

Inside and outside-

The idea is "within and without", "the inner and outer", and I suggest the reference is to the inner and outer areas just described, i.e. the most holy place ['inner'] and holy place ['outer'].

1Ki 6:30 The floor of the house he overlaid with gold, inside and outside-

David had perceived that "Holiness adorns Your house, Yahweh, forever" (Ps. 93:5). David realized in that Psalm that if God's throne was David's throne, then David's house was to as Yahweh's house, adorned with holiness. Solomon interpreted this in physical terms, adorning the temple with symbols of holiness (the cherubim) and gold; but the real adornment was of personal holiness, which Solomon failed in ultimately because of his obsession with the external and material. This overlaying with gold was typical of Egyptian temples; again we see the influence of his Egyptian wife and probably other such wives. Overlaying a floor with gold was impractical as gold is a soft metal; and likewise the description of an altar overlaid with cedar wood in a place where there was no altar in the tabernacle (:20). We therefore immediately perceive that Solomon's interest was not on practical utility / usage, but rather on external appearance and creating a legend that his temple was paved with gold even on the floor.

1Ki 6:31 For the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood-
The most holy place, or "inner sanctuary", was separated from the rest of the Holy Place by a door with "chains of gold" across it (:21) and a veil across it all (2 Chron. 3:14).

The lintel and door posts were a fifth part of the wall-
The wall was 20 cubits high, so the length and breadth of the door posts / lintel were 4 x 4 cubits.

1Ki 6:32 So he made two doors of olive wood; and he carved on them carvings of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold; and he spread the gold on the cherubim, and on the palm trees-

"Two doors" means two leaves meeting in the middle- just as was the recent rage at the time in Egyptian temples. Likewise the spreading of the gold on the cherubim means that the gold was hammered and nailed over the protruding shapes of the cherubim- again, just as in Egyptian temples.

See on :29 for the significance of the carvings. The floors and walls were covered with gold plating, but the carved work had to be covered with gold spread or beaten onto it. Seeing gold seemed in plentiful supply, we wonder why Solomon didn't make the cherubim of solid gold. Perhaps he was careful to imitate how they had been made in the tabernacle, or perhaps it was Divinely overruled that he didn't make them of solid gold. For the significance of the stress upon overlaying with gold was that God works with very ordinary materials, wood and stone, and turns them into something far more beautiful in response to our faith, which is the real gold.

1Ki 6:33 In the same way he also made for the entrance of the temple door posts of olive wood, out of a fourth part of the wall-

The wall was 20 cubits high, so the length and breadth of the door posts / lintel were 5 x 5 cubits. "The entrance" in view could be that into the holy place from the porch. "Out of a fourth part of the wall" can be rendered simply as meaning there were four doorposts. So I suggest that in the entrance from the Forecourt to the Outer Court there were four doorposts of olive wood (1 Kings 6:33 Heb.). At the entrance between the Outer Court and the Holy of Holies, there were five doorposts of olive wood (1 Kings 6:31 Heb.). What does this signify and why is it recorded? It's hard to say this has any meaning- until we realize that this was typical of other temples. Thus in the elaborate stone building model from Khirbet Qeiyafa there is exactly the same design.

1Ki 6:34 and two doors of fir wood: the two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding-

This means there were four leaves. Two collapsed together on one wall and two on the other. This meant that the opening could be just a quarter of the entire door, or more or less the entire aperture could be opened.

1Ki 6:35 He carved cherubim and palm trees and open flowers; and he overlaid them with gold fitted on the engraved work-

See on :29 for the significance of the carvings. 2 Chron. 3:6 adds that the gold was from Parvaim, and that precious stones were also used. The context is of the doors, so the idea may be that the carvings and embossed parts of the doors were overlaid rather than the entire doors.

1Ki 6:36 He built the inner court with three courses of cut stone, and a course of cedar beams-

This other court would be the "court of the priests" (2 Chron. 4:9), the "higher court" of Jer. 36:10. Perhaps it was made "higher" by the three layers of stone and the cedar decking placed upon it. Perhaps the idea was that the people in the outer court could see what the priests were doing. This building of a temple on a platform of three rows of stone was, again, exactly the style of Egyptian temples.

1Ki 6:37 In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of Yahweh laid, in the month Ziv-

This was the fourth year of Solomon's reign (:1).

1Ki 6:38 In the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all its parts, and according to all its fashion. Thus he was seven years in building it-

Comparing with :1, the period was seven and a half years. But as noted on :1, the Bible is often not exact about time periods.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 7

1Ki 7:1 Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house-

The record of Solomon's building of his own house is clearly framed to reveal the sad fact that his zeal for God's house was only an outcome of his own natural zeal and passion for building which he comments upon in Ecclesiastes; but that tremendous energy was given far more scope in achieving his own ends. So often apparently active brethren are only so because the Truth is only compounding their own naturally active characters. For example, those who naturally like travelling can seem zealous Gospel missionaries. The style of the record makes this clear of Solomon:

"So was he seven years in building (God's house)...

but Solomon was building his own house thirteen years" (1 Kings 6:38; 7:1).

His own house (cp. our family and mortgage) assumed almost double the importance of God's house. In this we see Solomon's apostasy. The architectural detail given concerning Solomon's house and "the house of the forest of Lebanon" seems to be given in such a format as to compare with that concerning God's house. The question is whether all these building projects happened chronologically, one after another, or whether they in fact were all going on at the same time. If chronologically, we would expect a note to that effect at this point. Instead we are left to conclude that the building of the temple, of his own house, of "the house of the forest of Lebanon" and the "house for Pharaoh's daughter (whom Solomon had taken as wife)" (:8) all happened at the same time. We could conclude that he was distracted from building God's house by his other building projects, and that's why the building of the temple took seven years. This may appear to be contradicted by the statements in 1 Kings 9:10 and 2 Chron. 8:1: "It happened at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of Yahweh and the king's house...". However the context of those verses goes on to state that Solomon had given twenty cities to Hiram in return for his labour and materials for the building of the houses. So we could legitimately read those passages as meaning that at the end of the twenty year period over which the two houses had been built and twenty cities given to

Hiram... that Hiram became dissatisfied. The recurrence of the number twenty could hint that he was paid one city a year for twenty years.

He had initially justified building the temple because of the fact that Israel were worshipping in "high places" contrary to God's expressed intention. That however was a fake excuse anyway, because they could have simply assembled wherever the ark was. And if indeed Solomon was so concerned about this matter, he would have made building the temple a priority and not delayed it because of his other building projects. We can also conclude that the list of all his building projects here in 1 Kings 7 is again the record's way of making an implicit criticism of Solomon. His appeal for wholehearted devotion to God in 1 Kings 8:61 is therefore hypocritical. We recall David already had a grand cedar house for himself, so grand he felt guilty about it, which had prompted his desire to build a house for God. But this wasn't enough for Solomon; he spent 13 years building himself an even grander palace. The references to all the windows and openings in the house of the forest of Lebanon were for the air to circulate, suggesting it was a grand summer house. And so we have a scene reminiscent of other eastern monarchs. A grand palace, a house for his chief wife, a summer house, a judgment hall and throne (:7) and a royal chapel, which in Solomon's case was Yahweh's temple- all within the same palace-temple complex. The queen of Sheba will later be awed at "the ascent" by which Solomon entered the temple- some grandiose entrance ramp from his own house to the temple, which was effectively his royal chapel.

"He finished *all* his house" could hint that he never in fact finished *all* the temple [for what elaborate architectural plans are finished to the end?]; but he did finish his house. We read simply that he built and finished the temple (1 Kings 6:14; I suggest there that this refers only to the basic structure). This might explain why the temple rather fades from view in Solomon's later reign and in the accounts of the kings after him. We wonder how much it was ever used at the time.

1Ki 7:2 For he built the house of the forest of Lebanon; its length was one hundred cubits, and its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits, on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars-

It was called the house of the forest of Lebanon because of the resemblance of the mass of cedar pillars to the Lebanon cedar forest. The length of "a hundred cubits" (150 feet) was nearly twice as long as the entire temple without the porch.

LXX "three rows". This must be correct because the three rows of 15 pillars make the 45 pillars of :3. Building using 45 pillars is exactly what we find in the surrounding nations- the 45 pillar layout is most clearly seen in the palace of Cyrus at Pasargadae.

The Temple was smaller than Solomon's house; he took nearly twice as long to build it. Clearly he spent more effort at housing his own glory than he did housing God's. The comparisons are intended to show this. The following comparisons put the temple first, and then Solomon's house.

Length: 60 cubits, breadth 20, height 30 (1 Kings 6:2) cp.Length: 100 cubits, breadth 50, height 30 (1 Kings 7:2)

Used cedar pillars and beams (1 Kings 6:9,10) cp. 1 Kings 7:2

Inner court built with three rows of hewn stone and a row of cedar beams (1 Kings 6:36 RV) cp. "The great court round about had three rows of hewn stones, and a row of cedar beams, like as the inner court of the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 7:12)

Hiram called in to build it (1 Kings 5:1-5) cp.1 Kings 7:13

The Most Holy within God's house (1 Kings 7:8) cp. The "another court within the porch" in his house seems to have been a replica of the Most Holy within God's house. Here Solomon's wives worshipped their idols.

Built on large foundation stones cp. The record of the foundation stones (7:10) is similar to that of the temple foundations.

The temple had a "porch" (Ez. 8:7,16) cp. The porch of Solomon's house matches that of the temple (Ez. 8:7,16), which in Ezekiel's time was a place of apostasy.

Open flowers design of the temple cp. The two pillars with their pomegranates and lily-work seem to have matched the open flowers of the temple, and they have ominous connections with Absalom's pillar of self-glorification (2 Sam. 18:18).

The way the record of Solomon's house follows straight on from that of God's house (1 Kings 6,7) seems to highlight the similarity between them. The house of Yahweh and Solomon's house are often spoke of together (e.g. 2 Chron. 7:11; 8:1; 9:11) to make us reflect on this. Indeed, the record of Solomon's house in 1 Kings 7:1-12 is a parenthesis out of historical sequence; 5:2-6:38 and 7:13-9:9 are about the temple; 7:1-12 is a clear parenthesis to demonstrate Solomon's weakness.

The size and grandeur of Solomon's house would have dwarfed the temple; when it should have been the other way around. Indeed it could be argued that the temple then appeared as his royal chapel, similar to how many kings in the area built a huge personal palace with a chapel to their god nearby.

1Ki 7:3 It was covered with cedar above over the forty-five beams, that were on the pillars; fifteen in a row-

Is. 2:6-13 condemns Israel for their pride whilst making many allusions to Solomon: "Full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures... full of horses... chariots... idols... the work of their own hands... the cedars of Lebanon" (i.e. Solomon's armoury of 1 Kings 7:2,3; 10:17). The amount of cedar used for Solomon's house as well as the temple would have probably resulted in the deforestation of parts of Lebanon in order to provide this number of mature cedar trees. To cover an area of 100 x 50 cubits with a roof of cedar would have required 5000 square cubits of cedar wood if it were a flat roof, and more if the roof was angled; although it could be that not all the area was covered, i.e. there may have been a courtyard. But if it was, then we can better understand why it was called "the house of the forest of Lebanon" (1 Kings 10:17; Is. 22:8). About a whole forest of Lebanon would have been felled and transported to Jerusalem for all this building work.

1Ki 7:4 There were window frames in three rows, and window was over against window in three ranks-

The words used here are generally different to those in 1 Kings 6:4 and speaks more of windows for light. There was no natural light in the temple just as there wasn't in the tabernacle. The hope was that it would be lit by the light of God's glory; and likewise there is no natural light in the spiritual temple, only that of God's glory. But there were windows admitting natural light in Solomon's own house.

There is the implication here that the building was of three stories, as was the temple (1 Kings 6:6). His house was a conscious imitation of God's house, but on a far grander scale.

1Ki 7:5 All the doors and posts had square frames: and window was opposite window in three tiers-

These windows were for light; AV "light against light". There was no natural light in the temple; but Solomon's house was full of natural light. The difference is significant. For the temple was to be illuminated by God's glory, whereas Solomon's own house was all about his own natural light.

1Ki 7:6 He made the porch of pillars; its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth thirty cubits; and a porch before them; and pillars and a threshold before them-

It's hard to determine which building this porch joined to, but it was a colonnade, and perhaps a separate building; and the point to note is that it was far grander than the porch built for Yahweh's house. It was an Egyptian propylaea, a kind of "pillar hall", and reflects Egyptian influence upon Solomon.

1Ki 7:7 He made the hall of judgment for the throne where he was to judge, even the porch of judgment: and it was covered with cedar from floor to floor-

This was effectively replicating the most holy place of the temple; and Solomon was placing his throne of judgment as the equivalent to the ark in the most holy place. He was playing God, exalting his judgment over that of Yahweh.

1Ki 7:8 His house where he was to dwell had another court within the porch, which was of the same plan. He made also a house for Pharaoh's daughter (whom Solomon had taken as wife), like this porch-

"His house" may differ from the one just described from :1-7, which was called the house of the forest of Lebanon, and was really a glorious law court, with Solomon's throne exalted as the judge of all (see on :7).

The porch of Solomon's house matches that of the temple (Ez. 8:7,16), which in Ezekiel's time was a place of apostasy. Solomon's own house was undeniably larger than God's, although built with the same layout (e.g. 1 Kings 6:2 cp. 7:2; 6:36 cp. 7:12; 5:1-5 cp. 7:13). The "another court within the porch" in his house seems to have been a replica of the Most Holy within God's house (1 Kings 7:8), yet it was here that Solomon's wives worshipped their idols. Likewise the record of the foundation stones (7:10) is similar to that of the temple foundations.

1Ki 7:9 All these were of costly stones, even of cut stone, according to measure, sawn with saws, inside and outside, even from the foundation to the coping, and so on the outside to the great court-

"According to measure" may mean as in AV that the precious stones were cut and used to a similar size as building brick, the cut stone. "Inside and outside" seems to mean that the precious stones were cut or polished on the inside as well, i.e. the side not exposed to view. This opulence and grandeur is far greater than what Solomon invested in the building of God's house.

1Ki 7:10 The foundation was of costly stones, even great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits-

This could mean that precious stones were inserted in even the foundation; see on :9. It seems these stones were smaller than those used in the temple, meaning that more effort was put into Solomon's own house than God's house. And that is the challenge of these specifications to us.

1Ki 7:11 Above were costly stones, cut stone, according to measure, and cedar wood-

That is, above the foundation stones of :10. The stones built upon them were "cut stones", implying they were smoothed. Again as noted on :10, more effort was put

into Solomon's own house than God's house. As discussed earlier, the record is implicitly criticizing Solomon all the way through. His building efforts for his own house dwarfed his efforts for God's house, and this was to be the complaint of Haggai centuries later.

1Ki 7:12 The great court around had three courses of cut stone, and a course of cedar beams; like the inner court of the house of Yahweh, and the porch of the house-
Again we see Solomon playing God. His house had two courts [like the temple, 1 Kings 6:36] and was a conscious replica of the temple, the house of Yahweh, but to a grander scale and with far more effort put into it. Again we note that Egyptian and Assyrian palaces always had such an external court, and then one or more inner courts or quadrangles.

1Ki 7:13 King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre-

This contrasts with how Solomon's communications with Hiram regarding the temple had been by messenger. But for the matters of building his own house, he wants him present in person. Again we see how more effort was put into Solomon's own house than God's house.

However I suggest that the actual Hiram king of Tyre is not necessarily in view, but a man called Hiram (2 Chron. 4:11), of similar spelling, who is described as a "father" to Hiram the king (2 Chron. 2:13); in the sense in which Joseph was a father to Pharaoh (Gen. 45:8), his leading official. Thus we read in 2 Chron. 4:16 that "the vessels thereof did Hiram his father make for king Solomon". However the point is established that a leading political figure within Tyre, who was known for his craftsmanship, was summoned personally to work on Solomon's own house, whereas this wasn't done for the work of God's house.

Another possibility is that this craftsman was Hiram's own representative, and is therefore spoken of as being "Hiram".

1Ki 7:14 He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass-

2 Chron. 2:14 says "Hiram" was "son of a woman of the daughters of Dan", whereas 1 King 7:14 says he was "the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali". Dan may refer to the town called Dan or Laish which was in the territory of Naphtali, but inhabited by Danites (Josh. 18:27; 19:47; Jud. 18:7). Here we see how an apparent discrepancy on a surface level reveals a deep evidence of the way the records do not contradict but dovetail perfectly, as we would expect of a Divinely inspired writing. But this is only apparent to those who respectfully search the entire scriptures, rather than bandying around a surface level contradiction with an eagerness which speaks more of their own fears the Bible is inspired than of deep factual persuasion.

And he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill, to work all works in brass. He came to king Solomon, and performed all his work-

This is similar language as to how Solomon had been filled by God with wisdom. But this man was filled with human wisdom. The contrast is similar to the fact that God's house had no natural light, whereas Solomon's did.

1Ki 7:15 For he fashioned the two pillars of brass, each eighteen cubits high: and a line of twelve cubits encircled both of them around-

"Fashioned" is as AV "cast", and reflects Egyptian influence. The paintings of Thebes show this casting being done in Egypt, and it clearly was copied by Solomon.

In connection with his wife being Pharaoh's daughter, he likely visited Egypt several times.

The two pillars with their pomegranates and lily-work seem to have matched the open flowers of the temple, and they have ominous connections with Absalom's pillar of self-glorification (2 Sam. 18:18). Worst of all, Solomon's throne seems to have been built with allusion to Yahweh's enthronement upon the praises of Israel in the Most Holy.

The two pillars are said to be 18 cubits high (1 Kings 7:15), but in 2 Chron. 3:15 they are 35 cubits high. What that means is that there were two cubits of 17.5 cubits high each, summarized as 18 cubits high in 1 Kings 7:15. We have another example of this kind of reckoning in the way that the height of the porch was 120 cubits, or 180 feet (2 Chron. 3:4). This is out of proportion to the length and breadth. Perhaps what is meant is that the height of each of the four walls has been added together, which would give a height of 30 cubits. This style is to be found in 2 Chron. 3:11, where the length of the wings of the cherubim is given as 20 cubits, but this was a way of saying that each of the four wings was five cubits long.

1Ki 7:16 He made two capitals of molten brass, to set on the tops of the pillars: the height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits-

The capitals were placed on the tops of the pillars. "Tops" is "heads", and the Hebrew for "capitals" suggests "crown". The idea is that everywhere in his house, Solomon was glorifying his own kingship; forgetting that it was by grace, and conditional upon his obedience. These bronze pillars replicated those before the temple (2 Kings 25:17; 2 Chron. 3:15). Solomon was modelling his house upon God's house. Although the height of the crowns in the pillars before his house was five cubits, but only three cubits for the pillars before God's house (2 Kings 25:17).

1Ki 7:17 There were nets of chequer work, and wreaths of chain work, for the capitals which were on the top of the pillars; seven for the one capital, and seven for the other capital-

"This decoration consisted of seven twists arranged as festoons, which were hung round the capitals of the pillars" (Keil). The language is more appropriate for metalwork than stone work.

1Ki 7:18 So he made the pillars; and there were two rows around on the one network, to cover the capitals that were on the top of the pillars: and he did so for the other capital-

LXX reads "pomegranates" for "pillars". I consider that any attempt to find spiritual significance in the pomegranates used in Solomon's building is misplaced, because I don't think he was at all thinking in that way. Rather is this another example of his simply copying what he had seen in Egypt, from where his queen came from. For such pomegranate designs are common in Egyptian architecture of the time, and Egypt was famed for pomegranates (Num. 20:5).

1Ki 7:19 The capitals that were on the top of the pillars in the porch were of carved lilies, four cubits-

Again, this reflects Egyptian influence on Solomon, rather than any great spiritual symbolism. For "the capitals of Egyptian pillars took the form of the lotus", and here he uses carved lilies, although they may effectively be the same as the lotus motif of

Egyptian architecture. It seems that this refers to another capital superimposed upon those we have just had described (:20). Again, we see how more effort was put into Solomon's own house than God's house. The lotus or lily was common the river Nile, and it opened every morning and closed every night, just as some of their gods were perceived as doing. We note that the lily / lotus motif is absent in Ezekiel's temple, where we have only cherubim and palm trees as a decorative motif. Even Solomon's use of the winged cherubim as a motif may be intended to imitate the common motif of winged griffins in contemporary Phoenician temples.

1Ki 7:20 There were capitals above also on the two pillars-

This would mean that there were in fact two capitals on each pillar, as noted on :19. There was only one such capital on the pillars erected before God's house. But Solomon was far more painstaking and ornate in building his own house, and it therefore took him nearly twice as long.

Close by the cushion which was beside the network: and the pomegranates were two hundred, in rows around on the other capital-

See on :18 for "pomegranates". There were 100 in each row, but on one row there were 96 facing the courts, meaning the other four were at the corners (Jer. 52:23). The internal corroboration between records written hundreds of years apart is impressive, and reflects Divine inspiration of the entire Old Testament.

1Ki 7:21 He set up the pillars at the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar-

I suggest there were two sets of pillars, one before Solomon's house and another before the temple. Now the focus of the record returns to the temple, as now we will also read of the huge laver Solomon built before the temple. But pillars before a temple was a reflection of pagan influence. "The Phoenicians used isolated metal columns as sacred ornaments, so that Hiram would be familiar with such a mode of ornamentation" (Rawlinson). "Whenever in coins or histories we get a representation of a Phoenician temple, it always has a pillar or pillars standing within or before it" (Stanley). It seems that the contact with Tyre had resulted in their religion coming to influence Solomon's design of the temple. And so it happens when we claim to serve God according to the religious ideas of pagans. This is another reason why I query whether in fact he did receive the designs of the temple from God as he claimed. Indeed it was a common feature of the surrounding temples that the king claimed to have been given the plans by his god, and I suggest Solomon and David were no different.

And called its name Jachin; and he set up the left pillar, and called its name Boaz-

"Jachin" means "He will establish", and Boaz "in Him [God] is strength", which is the idea in Is. 45:24. They were a statement that God would establish the line of Solomon, and perhaps Boaz is also a reference to his ancestor of that name. But that establishment of the Kingdom was conditional upon Solomon's obedience, according to the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7. But Solomon liked to think that by building these pillars, he had himself established his dynasty, and shown it to be established. Putting the two names together, we have 'He will establish by strength', and this seems to be deconstructed by the restoration prophecy of Zech. 4:6, given after these two pillars had been removed, never to be restored. "Boaz" may simply be a reference to David's ancestor Boaz. It was his line through David which David believed would be permanently established ['Jachin']. In this case, this would be similar to how

Babylonian temple columns were named according to the first word in a sentence, which pronounced eternal dynasty to the king. Jeremiah records the removal of the pillars by the Babylonians, as if to underscore how God did not in fact permanently establish the line of kings from Solomon and David. David's hope was that his "throne shall be established [*yikkon*] forever as the moon" (Ps. 89:38). Ps. 93:2 claims that his throne is *nakhon* ("firmly established"), from the same root as *jakhin*. But it wasn't. The eternal establishment was to be through his greater Son, and not through an unbroken line of kings from him. Yet this is how the pillars were understood, for in 2 Kings 11:14 we read of the king "standing by the pillar, as was the custom" to receive an official position.

The significance of the Jachin and Boaz pillars may however be little more than that like many features of the temple, they correspond closely to the design of other temples in the area. Free standing pillars before temples were common; Cleopatra's Needle in London may be a surviving example of such a free-standing obelisk. Quite possibly these pillars were Hiram's idea, because in Tyre two pillars stood outside the temple of Hercules. Solomon's temple was clearly influenced by his desire to be like the nations, and possibly reflect the influence of his idolatrous wives who were from those nations.

1Ki 7:22 On the top of the pillars was lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished-

The lily motif is stressed in the final description of the pillars, and I suggested on :19 that they were pagan lotus symbols.

1Ki 7:23 He made the molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and its height was five cubits; and a line of thirty cubits encircled it-

This gives the circumference of the laver as "thirty cubits", although it was ten cubits broad. Taking 'pi' to be 3.14, it is apparent that the circumference would have been 31.4 cubits; but the Spirit says, summing up, "thirty". Sometimes the Biblical record is vague, other times exact. This reflects how God is not seeking to cover His back against critics. He is of an altogether higher nature than that. There are times when the Spirit uses very approximate numbers rather than exact ("about the space of four hundred and fifty years", Acts 13:20 cp. 1 Kings 6:1). The reference to "seventy" in Judges 9:56 also doesn't seem exact. Seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11) becomes "seven years" (1 Kings 2:11); three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9) becomes "three months" (2 Kings 24:8). This is not how we are used to history being written; but we are reading the Hebrew genre of history, not our own.

1Ki 7:24 Under its brim around there were buds which encircled it, for ten cubits, encircling the sea: the buds were in two rows, cast when it was cast-

The size of this laver was unrealistic if it were to be useful. The huge size was therefore for show, and not because Solomon really wished there to be cleansing in practice. "Buds" is AV "knops". "Buds" is a guess at translation, for the Hebrew word is very obscure, literally "wild gourds", a poisonous plant (s.w. 2 Kings 4:39). It is unlikely this plant is in view. But there are observable similarities with the decoration of Egyptian holy places. Seeing that Solomon had married an Egyptian, and the Song of Solomon reflects Solomon's deep admiration for things Egyptian, it seems likely that even in the temple, Solomon allowed Gentile influence. And that was to be a theme of this temple until its destruction.

1Ki 7:25 It stood on twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south and three looking toward the east; and the sea was set on them above, and all their hinder parts were inward-
This massive laver was therefore a political statement, implying the twelve tribes of Israel were only to be cleansed by this huge laver. I discussed on 1 Kings 4 how Solomon sought to bring all Israel under his personal control. He constantly mixes spiritual appearance with his own unspiritual agendas.

1Ki 7:26 It was a handbreadth thick: and its brim was worked like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily: it held two thousand baths-
We several times read of the lily motif in Solomon's building. But the word can as well refer to the lotus. And "the lotus was the religious flower of the Indian and Egyptian religions". So we have a case of Solomon allowing himself to be influenced by the pagan religions of his wives and those he traded with, and importing it into his own version of Yahweh worship.

It was 10 cubits [5 meters] in diameter, 30 cubits in circumference and five cubits high- and placed upon ornamental oxen. This would have been at least 2.5 meters off the ground and probably higher if we count the 24 oxen beneath it. 2 Kings 16:17 describes how they "took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon the pavement of stones". Far too high for priests to have easily cleansed themselves or sacrifices. I have several times commented that some of the temple features were not at all useful in practice. A cedar wood coated altar, gold hinges and a gold floor, the Jachin and Boaz pillars... amongst others. The huge bronze sea or laver is quite likely another example. The huge size made it impractical to wash anything in. There is no mention of steps or ladders, and surely they would have been required. Such water reservoirs were typical of surrounding temples, and I suggest Solomon simply replicated them but on a larger scale. The Egyptian *Book of the Temple* describes a "purification lake" adorned with lotus / lily flowers. Just as with this huge laver. Surely Solomon was copying this. "The lotus held political and religious significance as one of the incarnations of the sun god, Khafre- who rises every morning from the primordial waters in Egypt- and accordingly served as a symbol of Upper Egypt and featured on most of its temples in the New Kingdom period". Ezekiel's Divinely inspired plans for a rebuilt temple carefully omit any equivalent of this "molten sea". Indeed there were similar symbolic water containers in various temples. A similar object was found at Amathus, Cyprus and currently resides at the Louvre Museum in Paris. A similar water vat existed at the Marduk temple in Babylon. No wonder Jeremiah prophesied that God was furious with the temple from the day it was built to the day He destroyed it. He agreed to dwell in it, but the whole thing was idolatrous from the start.

2000 baths here contrasts with the parallel record stating 3000 baths (2 Chron. 4:2-5). It has been suggested that the figure of 2000 refers to liquid, and 3000 to how much it could contain of dry material. A ration of liquid to dry volume of 3:2 is realistic. Given a circumference of 30 cubits, the diameter is $30 \div 2\pi = 4.77$ meters, and therefore the vessel's volume was $4/3\pi * 2.3853 = 28,400$ liters. A domestic bath tub takes 80 liters to fill. So this is the size of a small swimming pool. This is massive and far more water than necessary. There is also no explanation as to how the water entered the "sea" nor how it drained from it. And how was it changed, if it was defiled and dirty? And open water in such a hot climate would soon evaporate. All this leads me to suspect this was again mere showmanship and without any practical utility. Hence there is no record of it ever being used in practice.

All these pagan connections are too many to just insist this was what God had commanded. The record emphasizes that David merely claimed to have received the design of the temple from God. Clearly he was influenced by Gentile temples. And yet despite all this, God did dwell in the temple, the temple He says He hated from the day it was built (Jer. 32:31). So we conclude that God is so eager to dwell with man and somehow make the relationship work. Consider the background:

- David had misrepresented God's word about Solomon and the temple
- Solomon in turn had spun David's misinterpretations of God's word
- The temple was heavily influenced by paganism
- There was more mere religion than spirituality in the temple
- Pride and lack of awareness of sin was everywhere in it
- The temple was more about exalting the greatness of the man Solomon than God.

This all sounds very much like what passes for Christianity today. And yet God is still willing to try to dwell in that system and to fellowship with individuals who are within the system, just as He did with those who used Solomon's temple.

1Ki 7:27 He made the ten bases of brass; four cubits was the length of one base, and four cubits its breadth, and three cubits its height-

These bases or pedestals were for the ten smaller lavers which will now be described. The massive laver described above was for show, it was too large to realistically be used for ritual cleansing; in practice, the ten smaller lavers would have to be used.

1Ki 7:28 The work of the bases was like this: they had panels; and there were panels between the ledges-

These "ledges" appear to refer to poles at the four corners of each base, onto which the panels were fixed.

1Ki 7:29 and on the panels that were between the ledges were lions, oxen, and cherubim; and on the ledges there was a pedestal above; and beneath the lions and oxen were wreaths of hanging work-

The pedestal carrying the actual laver was fixed upon the four poles or shafts of :28, meaning that the panels didn't carry any of the weight but were purely decorative.

1Ki 7:30 Every base had four bronze wheels, and axles of brass; and the four feet of it had supports: beneath the basin were the supports molten, with wreaths at the side of each-

The language of wheels and axles recalls the cherubim visions of Ezekiel. The bases were as it were extensions of the cherubim. We note the lions and oxen of :29 were also associated with the cherubim of Ezekiel's visions. The "supports" seem to refer to "shoulders" (R.V. margin), through which the axles passed through.

1Ki 7:31 The mouth of it within the capital and above was a cubit: and its mouth was round after the work of a pedestal, a cubit and a half; and also on its mouth were engravings, and their panels were foursquare, not round-

The "mouth" appears to refer to a circular opening, into which the laver itself was hooked in.

1Ki 7:32 The four wheels were underneath the panels; and the axles of the wheels were in the base: and the height of a wheel was a cubit and half a cubit-

The axles "were in the base" in that they were cast as art of the base. If this is correct, then the wheels didn't actually turn. They had the impression of movement, but didn't actually move- in contrast to the actual cherubim of Ezekiel's vision, whose wheels moved because of the presence of the Spirit within them. This was lacking from Solomon's creation.

1Ki 7:33 The work of the wheels was like the work of a chariot wheel: their axles, and their rims, and their spokes, and their naves, were all molten-

Again we see the influence of Egypt. Chariots were forbidden for the king of Israel, but Solomon indulged in them. And this was reflected in how he apparently served God. This was a cherubim which couldn't move anywhere in practice but was totally ornamental and lifeless; see on :32.

1Ki 7:34 There were four supports at the four corners of each base: its supports were of the base itself-

This follows straight on from the description of the wheels in :33, and I suggest it means that the base and the "shoulders" where the axles were (:32) were all cast as part of the same item, and therefore, as discussed on :32,33, the structure couldn't actually move anywhere.

1Ki 7:35 In the top of the base was there a round compass half a cubit high; and on the top of the base its stays and its panels were of the same-

"Of the same" seems to mean they were cast as one piece; see on :32.

1Ki 7:36 On the plates of its stays, and on its panels, he engraved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, according to the space of each, with wreaths all around-

Perhaps the reference was to David's imagery of the righteous flourishing like the palm tree (Ps. 92:12). But Solomon had likened his Egyptian lover to a palm (Song 7:7,8), and the palm and open flowers feature in Egyptian architecture. See on 1 Kings 6:18. Seeing that Solomon had married an Egyptian, and the Song of Solomon reflects Solomon's deep admiration for things Egyptian, it seems likely that even in the temple, Solomon allowed Gentile influence, although mixing it with the imagery of the cherubim of Yahweh's manifestation. And that was to be a sad theme of this temple until its destruction. Cherubim clearly allude to the garden of Eden, and there are many echoes of Eden in the temple. The use of cedar and palm trees would represent the righteous, as is clear from Ps. 92:13-16 ["The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in Yahweh's house, they will flourish in our God's courts"]. The huge water tank / "molten sea" may allude to water coming out of Eden. But in this case we see Solomon assuming that he had as it were restored Eden. But without dealing with sin and without any Messianic sacrifice of the seed of the woman. The cherubim were to keep man out of Eden, but throughout the temple there is the message that man was now mixing freely with the cherubim.

1Ki 7:37 In this way, he made the ten bases: all of them had one casting, one measure, and one form-

They were all cast from the same one mould. We enquire however why there were ten such smaller lavers and not twelve, for the twelve tribes of Israel. Perhaps

Solomon thought that his favoured kingdom, of Judah and Benjamin, didn't require such cleansing.

1Ki 7:38 He made ten basins of brass: one basin contained forty baths; and every basin was four cubits; and on every one of the ten bases one basin-

Forty baths was about 340 gallons, 1287 litres. The measurement of "four cubits" could refer to the height, or to the diameter. The presence of so many lavers implied that Solomon expected huge numbers of animals to be sacrificed at one time, as he himself did. He had not at all picked up the spirit of his father David, who perceived that God was looking for broken hearts and not sacrifices (Ps. 51:17). The tabernacle had only one laver for all Israel.

1Ki 7:39 He set the bases, five on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house-

The right side was the south, the left side was the north.

And he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward, toward the south-

This confirms that the right side was the south. The description is as of a person standing facing the temple from the west side of it. But this was not where the entrance was. Solomon was describing it from his perspective and not that of a worshipper entering the temple from the east.

1Ki 7:40 Hiram made the basins, and the shovels, and the basins. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he worked for king Solomon in the house of Yahweh-

"Basins" is a very similar Hebrew word for "pots" (as in 2 Chron. 4:11). "Pots" is likely the best reading. There is much stress upon all the "work" done (:40,51). Solomon had quite missed the lessons learned by his father David [and his mother Bathsheba], that God wants broken, contrite hearts more than works and sacrifices.

1Ki 7:41 the two pillars, and the two bowls of the capitals that were on the top of the pillars; and the two networks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the top of the pillars-

The bowls on top of the pillars may have been because there were oil lamps burning there, as if pointing the way into the temple by night. The same word is used in Zech. 4:2,3 for a bowl of oil on top of a golden candlestick. We now have a summary of all the work done, as if Solomon itemized it all and boasted in the inventory. This glorification of human works and achievement revealed so much about his lack of true spiritual perception; see on :40.

1Ki 7:42 and the four hundred pomegranates for the two networks; two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars-

The Hebrew word for "network" is used multiple times in the descriptions of Solomon's work. But it is an unusual word, and is elsewhere translated "snare" (Job 18:8). There is throughout the record the hint that all is not how it should have been spiritually.

1Ki 7:43 and the ten bases, and the ten basins on the bases-

There was only one laver in the tabernacle, made of the brass mirrors of the repentant women of Ex. 38:8. There was to be a common experience of washing and cleansing

in using the same laver; and this was rather spoilt by having ten lavers and then one huge laver, so huge nobody could effectively use it.

1Ki 7:44 and the one sea, and the twelve oxen under the sea-

There is no record of this huge laver ever being used in practice. The urgent requirement for true cleansing was turned into mere external ritualism, something which was to be seen and admired rather than personally participated in.

1Ki 7:45 and the pots, and the shovels, and the basins: even all these vessels, which Hiram made for king Solomon, in the house of Yahweh, were of burnished brass-
The idea is of polished copper.

1Ki 7:46 The king cast them in the plain of the Jordan, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan-

"The king cast them" suggests Solomon's personal involvement with the work. This reflects how he admits in Ecclesiastes that he followed his obsession with building and architecture to a degree not possible for most men. His zeal was therefore more an expression of his own personality type and personal interests, than true love for God.

Zarethan where Solomon cast the lavers for the temple with their pagan motifs (1 Kings 7:46) is called Zaredathah in 2 Chron. 4:17, which is a form of Zeredah (1 Kings 11:26), the birthplace of Jeroboam son of Nebat. It doesn't therefore have good connections. We wonder if the golden calves were cast there too.

1Ki 7:47 Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because they were exceeding many: the weight of the brass could not be found out-

As noted on :41, Solomon itemized his work and boasted in the inventory. But he gave up weighing all the brass vessels. This glorification of human works and achievement revealed so much about his lack of true spiritual perception; see on :40.

1Ki 7:48 Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of Yahweh: the golden altar, and the table whereupon the show bread was, of gold-

"The golden altar" is the altar of incense. "That were in the house..." could suggest that this history was written or edited after the exile, when these things were no longer there in the temple.

1Ki 7:49 and the lampstands, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, of pure gold; and the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, of gold-

"Oracle" is the Hebrew word usually translated "word". It refers to the most holy place, but perhaps the idea is that God's word is ultimately where we are to find the presence of God represented by the ark.

1Ki 7:50 and the cups, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the fire pans, of pure gold; and the hinges, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, of the temple, of gold-

The inventory here is similar in style to that of the vessels of the tabernacle on Ex. 25-30. It seems Solomon wished to present what he had done in terms of building a new tabernacle, with himself thereby presented as Moses. And yet we have seen hints throughout the record that he built it with pagan influences throughout it. Hinges of gold are impractical as gold is a soft metal. Again as discussed on 1 Kings 6:30, we

perceive that Solomon's interest was not on practical utility / usage, but rather on external appearance and creating a legend that his temple even had gold hinges.

1 Kings 7 gives such a detailed inventory of the temple, but the later record describes how all these items, using the same terms, were stripped away. Shishak robbed the treasury (1 Kings 14:26). Ahaz stripped the stands and removed the bulls under the brazen sea (2 Kings 16:17). Hezekiah removed the gold from the doors (2 Kings 18:16). Nebuchadnezzar cut up the gold vessels that Solomon had made (2 Kings 24:13). The gold and silver were melted down and the bronze items broken up (2 Kings 25:13-17).

1Ki 7:51 Thus all the work that king Solomon worked in the house of Yahweh was finished-

There is much stress upon all the "work" done (:40,51). Solomon had quite missed the lessons learned by his father David [and his mother Bathsheba], that God wants broken, contrite hearts more than works and sacrifices.

Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated, the silver, the gold and the vessels, and put them in the treasuries of the house of Yahweh-

These vessels were those taken in 2 Sam. 8:10. They were devoted to God's service by David and then Solomon dedicated them to the temple. The same phrase "of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" is used of the vessels taken from Egypt and dedicated to the tabernacle (Ex. 11:2; 12:35; Josh. 6:19; 2 Sam. 8:10; 1 Kings 7:51). The generosity of others in Biblical history, their right perspective on the wealth taken from this world, was to inspire other believers in later history. And this is how the body of Christ should function today, with members inspiring others to spirituality.

Solomon's zealous organization of the temple worship was an exact fulfillment of the order laid down by his father David (1 Kings 7:51; 2 Chron. 7:6; 8:14). Solomon wanted God to bless the temple as a sign of His pleasure with David his father (e.g. 2 Chron. 6:42). Solomon's personal enthusiasm for service to God became subsumed by the huge psychological spiritual dominance of his parents. His zeal for the temple was almost purely a result of living out his father's expectation; he almost admits as much in 1 Kings 8:20: "I am risen up in the room of David my father... and have (therefore, in the context) built an house for the name of the Lord".

The promises God makes involve a solemn commitment by Him to us- the serious, binding nature of His oath to us is easy to forget. God swore to David "by my holiness" (Ps. 89:35). The Hebrew for "holiness" is the very same word translated "dedication". David's response to God's dedication to him was to dedicate [s.w.] all the silver and gold which he had won from this world, to the service of God's house (1 Kings 7:51; 1 Chron. 26:26; 2 Chron. 5:1). Our response to God's dedication to us should be a like dedication of what we have to Him. Covenant relationship with God requires much of both Him and us. The case of David is a nice illustration of the meaning of grace. David wanted to *do* something for God- build Him a house, spending his wealth to do so. God replied that no, He wanted to build *David* a house. And He started to, in the promises He gave David. And David's response to that grace is to still *do* something- to dedicate his wealth to God's house, as God had dedicated Himself to David's house. This is just how grace and works should be related in our experience.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 8

1Ki 8:1 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the princes of the families of the people of Israel, to king Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of Yahweh out of the city of David, which is Zion-

Solomon imitated David's bringing up of the ark to Zion (2 Sam. 6:2) in 1 Kings 8:1,4. He lived out his father's faith and devotion, but only on an external level. He in due course was to turn away from Yahweh to idols, and descend into the nihilism of Ecclesiastes. "The city of David which is Zion" refers not to Jerusalem but to David's palace or citadel which was within Jerusalem. The ark had been as it were in David's back yard, and was now brought probably a short distance into the temple. David had earlier claimed that Yahweh had chosen Zion as His dwelling place. But it seems that Solomon now readjusts that, because the ark is now brought from that place into the temple he had built.

1Ki 8:2 All the men of Israel assembled themselves to king Solomon at the feast, in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month-

This would have been the feast of tabernacles, which began on the 15th day of the seventh month and lasted seven days (Lev. 23:34). The building finished in the eighth month of Solomon's 11th year of reigning (1 Kings 6:37), so he waited almost a year before this ceremony of dedication. Perhaps for some reason he wanted to combine it specifically with the feast of tabernacles. See on :36. The irony is that the feast of tabernacles alludes to how God dwelt in a tent / tabernacle. David had offered to build God a house, but God's reply had been that He preferred dwelling in a tent to any house built by human hands. Now Solomon has built Him a house- and dedicates it on the feast of tents / tabernacles.

It has been observed: "1 Kings 8 is built around the number seven: Solomon summons the people on the seventh month (8:2), feasts last fourteen days (Heb.: seven days and seven days; 8:65), the "fathers" are mentioned seven times, Solomon calls David his "father" seven times, and Solomon enumerates seven prayer occasions".

Chronicles is more specific, that the feast of tabernacles coincided with the second week of Solomon's two week dedication feast. But the feast of tabernacles was only five days after the day of atonement. It seems Solomon was so obsessed with dedicating the temple that he omitted to celebrate the day of atonement, and this would reflect his general lack of awareness of grace and the problem of sin.

1 Kings 6:37 says that the actual building was finished in the eighth month of the eleventh year. The seventh month must have been in the year following. Indeed the LXX in :1 suggests this dedication took place at the end of the 20 years required to build the entire palace-temple complex. This delay in dedicating the temple again reflects how Solomon was unconcerned with being practically useful to God's people. The hint seems to be in 2 Chron. 7:11 that the dedication of the temple and the completion of Solomon's house was at the same time: "Thus Solomon finished the house of Yahweh, and the king's house. He successfully completed all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of Yahweh, and in his own house". This was after twenty years. Clearly Solomon saw his temple-palace complex as one building. The fact he waited so long to dedicate the temple shows it was all mere religion from his side, he had no genuine desire for the temple to be used by his people to draw closer to God.

1Ki 8:3 All the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark-

2 Chron. 5:4 says that the Levites took up the ark, whereas 1 Kings 8:3 says that the priests did. Both were true; for Levites weren't allowed into the most holy place (Num. 4:20). So the Levites did carry it, according to the law; but the priests carried it into the most holy place. Here we see how an apparent discrepancy on a surface level reveals a deep evidence of the way the records do not contradict but dovetail perfectly, as we would expect of a Divinely inspired writing. But this is only apparent to those who respectfully search the entire scriptures, rather than bandying around a surface level contradiction with an eagerness which speaks more of their own fears the Bible is inspired than of deep factual persuasion.

1Ki 8:4 They brought up the ark of Yahweh, and the Tent of Meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tent; all these the priests and the Levites brought up-

We note the irony- God had clearly stated He preferred to live in a tent and not in a building. And Solomon now arranges for the tent to be taken into the building he had made, contrary to God's wishes. There is no further mention of the tent within the temple, so we assume this was a purely symbolic act and the tent was destroyed. He thereby went directly against God's statements about His preference for a tent over a temple. The priests took these things on the final part of their journey, into the most holy place; as the Levites were forbidden from doing so (Num. 4:20). But the Levites took them the first part of their journey; see on :3.

1Ki 8:5 King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled to him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and cattle, that could not be counted nor numbered for multitude-

He offered huge numbers of sacrifices when the ark was brought into the temple (1 Kings 8:63), just as David had sacrificed as the ark was brought to Zion (2 Sam. 6:13 = 1 Kings 8:5). Yet he failed to feel and know the truth of David's conclusion that God doesn't essentially want sacrifice (Ps. 40:6). David had been forced to learn that lesson through the shame of his sin with Bathsheba- Solomon was so sure of his own righteousness that he never was driven to see the inadequacy of animal sacrifice in itself, and the need in the end for the direct receipt of God's grace. 2 Chron. 7:5 gives some figures: "Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep". 22,000 oxen are 16.5 million pounds of steak, worth about 90 million US dollars in 2024. And 12 million pounds of mutton. These figures are roughly the entire UK consumption of meat per year in 2024. Slaying these animals would have created a literal river of blood.

Solomon offered sacrifices "that could not be told nor numbered for multitude". This is evidently to be connected with the language of the promises to Abraham about the multiplication of the seed of Israel. It could be that Solomon thought that his generosity in giving of his wealth was what had brought about the fulfilment of these promises- he almost forced God to fulfil them, at least in his own mind, by his generosity.

1Ki 8:6 The priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Yahweh to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim-

The priests took these things on the final part of their journey, into the most holy

place; as the Levites were forbidden from doing so (Num. 4:20). But the Levites took them the first part of their journey; see on :3.

1Ki 8:7 For the cherubim spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and its poles above-

In the tabernacle the wings were "spread out on high" (Ex. 25:20; 27:9), but here their wings touch each other. Although Solomon claims he built everything according to Divine revelation, we wonder whether in fact he felt free to liberally reinterpret the tabernacle features. And he changes wings uplifted to God's glory to wings which are closed in upon each other; the mercy seat, or cover of the ark, is no longer exposed to Heaven, as it were, but now closed over.

1Ki 8:8 The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place before the inner sanctuary; but they were not seen outside-

This may reflect a design fault in the lengths of the staves. Although we are assured that a person looking from the outer sanctuary would not have seen them even when the entrance to the holy place was open. This kind of design fault would not have been present if indeed, as Solomon claimed, the specifications were given by God. I suggest this was just his claim, and he built the temple according to his own desire to have a go at architecture and building- which he admits in Ecclesiastes had been his passion and obsession, for a time. See on :64 for another possible design fault.

And there they are to this day-

This indicates that this record was written some time before the exile ["to this day"]. But other parts of the history suggest it was written after the exile. This means that some parts were rewritten or edited, under Divine inspiration, but others weren't.

1Ki 8:9 There was nothing in the ark except the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when Yahweh made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt-

Inside the ark was intended to be "the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded" (Heb. 9:4; Ex. 16:34; Num. 17:10). They had apparently been lost; so although they remained with the symbols of the covenant, they were lacking in the things which spoke of new spiritual life and the resurrection.

1Ki 8:10 When the priests had come out of the holy place, the cloud filled the house of Yahweh-

Ex. 40:34,35 uses the same terms for God's acceptance of and dwelling in the tabernacle. For all the pagan undertones in the temple, and Solomon's unspirituality, God was willing to still dwell within this structure; even though it was not what He wanted. Just as He had used the human kingship, when it was deeply offensive to Him. Chronicles adds that fire came down from Heaven and consumed the sacrifices- and yet their huge number was of itself a reflection of Solomon's refusal to accept what his parents had once learnt, that God doesn't want huge numbers of sacrifices but just a broken contrite heart. Yet God still accepts this lower level of spirituality, even misunderstanding of His grace. Just as He works with His people today who likewise forget or misunderstand His grace.

1Ki 8:11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of Yahweh filled the house of Yahweh-

This was as at the erection of the tabernacle. The idea was that Yahweh's glory was

far above the mere religion of the temple system. His glory was not just between the cherubim over the ark, but everywhere in His house. This was as if to downplay the importance attached to the ark. The allusion is to Lev. 16:3, where God says that "I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat". But the cloud was now filling the entire house. God came to Moses "in a thick cloud" (Ex. 19:9; 20:21) but now all the people were being treated as if they were Moses. The promise of 2 Samuel 7 was that God's Name would be in a new house of people; and his glory and His Name are closely connected. By doing this, God was seeking to nudge the people away from Solomon's religious approach towards a spiritual one. The record in 2 Chron. 5-7 describes praise, the interruption of the glory filling the temple, and then resumed praise. God as it were interrupted their religious ritual with a powerful reminder of His glory. We marvel that God did miraculously respond to such a prayer, full of misplaced ideals, willful misunderstandings of God's word by Solomon and his repetition and further spinning of David's similar willful misunderstandings, pride, political overtones of centralizing all spiritual power beneath Solomon in his palace-temple complex... and so forth. Just as God sees all this in the hearts, lives, thinking, churches... of His people. Yet still His presence is there, however reluctantly, however much His reservations, anger and displeasure with it all... yet still He so thirsts for relationship with man. And He as it were ran a risk by accepting the temple and sending His glory into it- the risk that He would appear to be thereby in agreement with Solomon's various misunderstandings and wrong attitudes. Any Divine acceptance of man has to run that risk. But it is only a risk for the superficial; because the Solomon record is clearly written in such a way as to beg comparison with other scriptures. The comparisons indicate so powerfully how wrong he was.

1Ki 8:12 Then Solomon said, Yahweh has said that He would dwell in the thick darkness-

Solomon like David (see on 2 Chron. 3:1; 2 Sam. 16:10) came to assume things about God in order to justify his passion for building a temple. He claims that God "said that He would dwell in the thick darkness", perhaps alluding to the darkness of the most holy place in which there was no natural light; but actually there's no record God ever said that. What He said was that He would dwell in the hearts of men and not in a house. I noted on 1 Kings 6 and 7 that Solomon's temple had plenty of windows allowing natural light, as if to suggest God had now re-thought this dwelling darkness.

What we say to the Lord Jesus in His ear in the bedroom in the darkness, will be openly spoken by Christ at the judgment (Lk. 12:2,3). God dwells in darkness (Ex. 20:21; 1 Kings 8:12). Speaking in the bedroom in secret with the knowledge we will be openly rewarded is the language of prayer (Mt. 6:6). Our private relationship with the Lord now, praying to Him in our bedroom, meditating about Him there, will then be spoken out loud.

1Ki 8:13 I have surely built You a house, a place for You to dwell in forever-

Solomon totally misses the point of God's response to David's desire to build Him a house; God would build David a house, involving Him dwelling in the "place" of the humble human heart. And "forever" was conditional upon the obedience of David's son / seed. But here Solomon effectively dictates to God that those promises are now fulfilled in him- because he has built a temple for God.

1Ki 8:14 The king turned his face about-

From God to the people. The rest of this chapter is therefore Solomon praying facing

the people rather than God. He was effectively praying to himself, praying to be seen of men. The Lord's criticism of such prayers seems to have in mind Solomon's example here. I suggest that here we have another example of the record making implicit criticism of Solomon rather than being specific, at least not until 1 Kings 11. Solomon was praying with his back to the sanctuary, and this is exactly what was condemned later in Ez. 8:16. The record there seems to allude to Solomon's position: "At the inner court of Yahweh's house... there, at the door of Yahweh's temple, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs toward Yahweh's temple, and their faces toward the east".

And blessed all the assembly of Israel: and all the assembly of Israel stood- This blessing of Israel suggests Solomon was acting as the high priest, although he was not of the tribe of Levi. David had done this kind of thing, but from careful reflection upon the spirit of the law, whose letter he says in Ps. 119 he studied constantly. And David came to this sense through careful reflection upon God's grace to him, and through the experience of Uzzah's death as a result of taking 'living the spirit of the law' too far. Solomon's blessing of the people seems to be in his subsequent statements that the temple would bring them blessing. He ignored the connections between blessing and forgiveness by grace which his father had been forced to, after his sin with Solomon's mother ["blessed are they whose sins are forgiven... blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity"]. He sees the 'blessing' of external religion rather than internal peace with God by grace.

1Ki 8:15 He said, Blessed is Yahweh, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to David my father, and has with His hand fulfilled it, saying-

As discussed on :13, the promises to David were not at all totally fulfilled at that point, just because Solomon had built a temple. They were conditional upon Solomon's obedience to the law, which from a young man he had not shown. We think of his marriage to Rehoboam's Ammonitess mother, and to Pharaoh's daughter. As we will see on :16, what Solomon claims God said was not what He said; Solomon twists God's words. And that highlights the blasphemy of his claim here that God actually spoke the words Solomon claimed "with His mouth". God did not say those words.

1Ki 8:16 'Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house that My name might be there; but I chose David to be over My people Israel'-

This is a typical misrepresentation of God's word. What God had said through Nathan was that He had not chosen anywhere for a temple to be built, but had lived as it were a mobile life in the tent of the tabernacle. And therefore, God would build David a house in the sense of a family of believers sharing David's faith. They would manifest Yahweh's Name in the sense of His characteristics, the fruit of the Spirit, as the NT would put it. For God's Name in this sense cannot be in a physical building or city.

Solomon frequently references the exodus from Egypt with the implication that the completion of the temple meant that their journeys were over (:16,21,51,53). But there is no Divine word to this effect. When they entered Canaan, there was no special ceremony to celebrate the end of their journeys. There are allusions to the wilderness journeys throughout the Bible, suggesting God sees His people like Abraham, on a journey that will only end in the establishment of His Kingdom on earth at the last day. Solomon claims God spoke of how "I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house that My name might be there". But what He said was that He was

always a God on the move. That is why Ex. 20:24 speaks as if God would have various places where He put His Name: "In every place where I record My name I will come down to you and I will bless you".

The implication is that God "chose no city" for a temple apart from Jerusalem. The LXX and some Hebrew manuscripts make this explicit, as does the parallel in 2 Chron. 6:5,6: "From the day that I brought out my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city in any one tribe of Israel to build a house, so that my name should be there: but I chose Jerusalem that my name should be there, and I chose David to be over my people Israel" (LXX). But this is Solomon's twisting of God's words to David. He stated that He would not need a temple because His manner had always been that He "moved around in a tent and in a tabernacle" (2 Sam. 7:6). He would appoint a place not for the ark but for His people- in the future Messianic Kingdom which His begotten Son would establish: "I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place" (2 Sam. 7:10). And the One chosen to be over His 'house' or people would be David's future Messianic son, God's begotten Son, to be born well after David had died.

1Ki 8:17 Now it was with the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel-

This much was true, but it is sandwiched between various untruths and misrepresentations in :16 and :18-20.

1Ki 8:18 But Yahweh said to David my father, 'Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart-

This is not recorded in the historical account, and given Solomon's tendency to misrepresent God's word we wonder whether this was said by God at all. Because God's response had been that He didn't want a house. He wanted to build a non physical house for David. Those reasons He gave for declining David's offer are not at all in the spirit of what God is now reported to have said.

1Ki 8:19 Nevertheless, you shall not build the house; but your son who shall come forth out of your body, he shall build the house for My name'-

As noted on :18, this would have been contrary to the spirit of the reasons God gave for declining David's offer. He had explained that He had never asked for any permanent sanctuary to be built for Him, and tent life was His style, as He doesn't live in buildings but in hearts. And instead of building a house for Yahweh, David was instead to focus upon the wonderful grace of Yahweh's plan to turn his Messianic seed and all "in him" into an eternal spiritual house for His abode. Yet Solomon presents God as having been in eager agreement with the idea, but simply had some reservations about David doing it, and instead asked Solomon to build it. That would have been a contradiction of the reasoning God gave for saying He didn't want a physical house built for Him.

1Ki 8:20 Yahweh has established His word that He spoke; for I have risen up in the place of David my father, and I sit on the throne of Israel, as Yahweh promised, and have built the house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel-

The establishment of the promises to David was to be conditional upon David's son walking in God's ways. But now Solomon wrongly presents the promises to David as having come to total fulfilment in him, just because he had built a temple for God.

Solomon speaks about him being King in Jerusalem (Ecc. 1:1,12; Prov. 1:1) as if this was the ultimate fulfilment of the Davidic promises. Consider the implications of 2 Chron. 1:9: "O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth... give me now wisdom, that I may go out and come in before (i.e. lead) this people". Solomon was asking for wisdom because he thought that he was the Messiah, and he saw wisdom as a Messianic characteristic. He failed to realize that the promises to Abraham and David were only being primarily fulfilled in him (e.g. 1 Kings 4:20); he thought that he was the ultimate fulfilment of them (1 Kings 8:20 states this in so many words). His lack of faith and vision of the future Kingdom lead him to this proud and arrogant conclusion (cp. building up our own 'Kingdom' in this life through our lack of vision of the Kingdom of God).

1Ki 8:21 There I have set a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of Yahweh which He made with our fathers when He brought them out of the land of Egypt- By saying this, Solomon was careful to omit mentioning that the pit of manna and Aaron's rod were now no longer within the ark. See on :9.

Solomon's argument about the ark comes to a climax in 2 Chron. 6 where he bids the ark to enter its place of rest. He reasons as if he has built a place for the ark, which was as it were homeless. But the ark was designed to be kept in the tabernacle, a tent. There was no need for a temple for it. And the ark didn't remain permanently in the temple; for many years later Josiah commanded "the Levites... Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel built" (2 Chron. 35:3). And God emphasizes that in the restoration and the true Messianic kingdom, the ark will no longer be important: "People will no longer talk about my ark. They will no longer think about it or remember it; they will not even need it, nor will they make another one. When that time comes, Jerusalem will be called 'The Throne of the LORD,' and all nations will gather there to worship me" (Jer. 3:16,17). God's plans for a rebuilt temple in Ez. 40-48 make no mention of an ark, nor is the ark listed in the inventory of things taken into captivity in Babylon (2 Kings 25:13-17; Ezra 1:7-11).

"There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb ... the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:9,21). Those tablets, on which were the ten commandments, were the covenant. The old covenant is therefore the ten commandments, including the Sabbath- and this has been replaced by the new covenant, which does not require Sabbath keeping.

1Ki 8:22 Solomon stood before the altar of Yahweh in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven-

This altar appears to be the special bronze scaffold Solomon erected especially for the occasion (2 Chron. 6:13 "for Solomon had made a bronze scaffold, five cubits long, five cubits broad and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and on it he stood, and kneeled down on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven"). Solomon was hardly praying in his closet! It seems the Lord was alluding to Solomon in Mt. 6:6, interpreting what he does here in a very negative light, and a reflection of Solomon's pride rather than his spirituality.

1Ki 8:23 and he said, Yahweh, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above nor on earth beneath; who keeps covenant and grace with Your servants who walk before You with all their heart-

David spoke of seeking and praising God's grace with his "whole heart" (Ps. 9:1;

119:58; 138:1). Solomon uses the phrase, but speaks of being *obedient* with the "whole heart" (1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chron. 6:14) and applying the "whole heart" to the intellectual search for God (Ecc. 1:13; 8:9). There is a difference. The idea of whole hearted devotion to God was picked up by Solomon, but instead of giving the whole heart to the praise of God's grace, he instead advocated giving the whole heart to ritualistic obedience and intellectual search for God. This has been the trap fallen into by many Protestant groups whose obsession with "truth" has obscured the wonder of God's grace.

1Ki 8:24 who has kept with Your servant David my father that which You promised him. Yes, You spoke with Your mouth, and have fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day-

Again we note the blasphemy of Solomon claiming God had spoken things with His mouth about Solomon and his temple, which He never said. Solomon misses the conditional nature of God keeping covenant grace with His people; He kept it if they were obedient (Dt. 7:9,12), which David was not. Yet God still kept His word with David. That was by grace, but the grace of it is missed by Solomon. He failed to meditate upon the promises beyond what they seemed to offer him in the here and now; and the result was that he felt they were *totally* fulfilled in him (1 Kings 8:20,24). He dogmatically declared to Shimei: "And King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever" (1 Kings 2:45). And in all this, of course, we see our warning.

1Ki 8:25 Now therefore, may Yahweh, the God of Israel, keep with Your servant David my father that which You have promised him saying, 'There shall not fail you a man in My sight to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children take heed to their way, to walk before Me as you have walked before Me'-

The promises to David originally focused upon one individual, whom the New Testament interprets as the Lord Jesus. But David here in Ps. 89:30; 132:12 and Solomon in 1 Kings 8:25 chose to understand the "seed" as the Davidic dynasty down the generations. This loss of focus upon the future Lord Jesus was what led David and Solomon to focus instead upon their own dynasty, rather than upon the future individual son of David who would reign eternally upon David's throne. His personal immortality came to be interpreted as the eternal continuance of the Davidic dynasty as kings of Israel throughout future generations.

Another example of Solomon misquoting God is in 2 Chron. 6:6. Solomon claims that God said: "I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name might be there". God had chosen no resting place, although it would have been politically convenient for Solomon if the city of Jerusalem as a city was where God had chosen to dwell. 2 Chron. 6:41 portrays the temple as God's resting place: "Now therefore arise, Yahweh God, into Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength". And the whole point of God's response to David about the temple was that He is not a God at rest and neither are His people. The people suffered under Solomon's taskmasters building his treasure cities just as they did under Pharaoh; they hardly found rest under his reign let alone through the building of a temple on the backs of their labour and taxation sacrifices. The people were drafted into labour gangs, whereas the building of the tabernacle and resourcing of it was purely voluntary (Ex. 25). And God's Name was to be in a house of people, for a Name / personality / characteristics cannot dwell in a house of stone and cedar and gold. It was this misunderstanding that led the Jews to lament how the destruction of the temple had actually destroyed the dwelling place of

God's Name: "They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground, they have profaned the dwelling place of Your Name" (Ps. 74:7). The truth was that God's Name dwelt in the hearts and personalities of His true people. And it was God who destroyed the physical temple to try to get them to realize this (Lam. 2:6,7). But Solomon kept thinking his own way until he persuaded himself that in fact this was what God had said. David had charged Solomon with the words which God had spoken to him about Solomon: "If your children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul" (1 Kings 2:4). But Solomon subtly changes this when he reminds God of how He had supposedly told David: "There shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne of Israel; so that they children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me" (1 Kings 8:25). Two things become apparent here:

- The conditionality of the promise to David about Solomon is totally overlooked. "*If* your children..." becomes "so that...", with the implication that David would always have descendants on the throne who would walk obediently before God. The possibility of personal failure had been removed by Solomon from his own perception of God.

- God's desire that Solomon should "walk before me in truth" was changed to "walk before me as you [David] walked before me". This defined walking before God personally as having the relationship with God which your father had. And so often we have made the same mistake. The call to personally follow the Lord has become displaced by a following Him through others.

Notice how Solomon says these words to God Himself. Solomon had persuaded himself that this truly was what God had asked of David and himself, and so he comes out with these words to God.

1Ki 8:26 Now therefore, God of Israel, please let Your word be verified, which You spoke to Your servant David my father-

Solomon keeps saying that his zealous work for the temple was the result of God's promise to David having fulfillment in him (1 Kings 8:24-26), and to some extent this was true. David earnestly prayed for Solomon to be the Messianic King (e.g. Ps. 72), and therefore David asked for Solomon to be given a truly wise heart (1 Chron. 29:19). These prayers were answered in a very limited sense- in that Solomon was given great wisdom, and his Kingdom was one of the greatest types of Christ's future Kingdom. Our prayers for others really can have an effect upon them, otherwise there would be no point in the concept of praying for others. But of course each individual has an element of spiritual freewill; we can't force others to be spiritual by our prayers; yet on the other hand, our prayers can influence their spirituality. David's prayers for Solomon is the classic example of this. Those prayers were heard most definitely, in that God helped Solomon marvellously, giving him every opportunity to develop a superb spirituality; but he failed to have the genuine personal desire to be like this in his heart, in his heart he was back in Egypt, and therefore ultimately David's desire for Solomon to be the wondrous Messianic King of his dreams had to go unfulfilled.

1Ki 8:27 But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens can't contain You; how much less this house that I have built!-
It was exactly because of this that God didn't want a physical house built for Him. Yet

Solomon has misrepresented God as saying He *did* want such a house. So these words are fake humility from Solomon, seeking to cover his proud obsession with building projects beneath an appearance of humility. This statement of Solomon's is not in fact quite as humble as it may seem- for his argument is that God lives in Heaven, but Heaven cannot contain Him. And so he has built a house for God, but even that cannot contain Him. He totally misses God's redefinition of a "house" as a family of people manifesting His Name, made possible through the work of His future begotten Son.

1Ki 8:28 Yet have respect for the prayer of Your servant, and for his supplication, Yahweh my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You this day-

I noted on :14 that Solomon is praying all this facing the people, to be seen of men. This prayer would have been better said facing toward God. His showmanship is apparent.

1Ki 8:29 that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day toward the place of which You have said, 'My name shall be there;' to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place-

God never said that. It is Solomon's twist of the word of promise to David, that if his son / seed were obedient, then "He shall build an house for My Name". But that house was to be built up from persons, and had no reference to any physical building; indeed, the very opposite. God's eyes are open upon His children wherever they are, as David had learned whilst far from the sanctuary and on the run from Saul. Nehemiah felt God's eyes were open upon him even when the temple was in ruins (Neh. 1:6).

Literally, "pray with the face toward... the house"; Solomon later in the prayer will urge Israel to do this. The hypocrisy was that Solomon was praying facing Israel and with his face away from the temple. But he reasons that prayer must be made facing towards the temple.

God had stated many times in Deuteronomy that in the place wherever He placed His Name, His presence, His special ownership, there His people were to come and worship. But as He explained to David when rejecting the idea of a temple, that place had always changed from time to time, because Yahweh is a God on the move. Solomon twists Yahweh's statements to mean that He was going to name a place where His Name would eternally be, and that place had now been chosen- in Jerusalem at the temple of Solomon. But God had in fact said that wherever, in whatever place He placed His Name, there the people should offer sacrifice. He agreed to place His Name in Jerusalem at the temple, but within the context of His being a God always on the move, a tent dwelling God. He had earlier placed His Name at Shiloh, "My place which was at Shiloh, where I set My name at the first" (Jer. 7:12). The place where He places His Name was variable and it was not a case of Him choosing such a place for His Name and it therefore eternally being there.

God did choose Zion in a sense when He went along with the plan to build the temple there. But this doesn't mean He chose it for all time from then on. Zech. 1:17 says He will again choose Zion, implying that for now He has not chosen it, and as it were unchosen it. Solomon and David liked to assume that God had looked all over the earth and chosen the hill of Zion for an eternal dwelling from their time onwards. But

He was to tear down their temple in fury, He was angry with it from the day it was built till the day He tore it down.

1Ki 8:30 Listen to the supplication of Your servant, and of Your people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place. Yes, hear in heaven, Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive-

The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25 cp. 1 Kings 8:30; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple, and is therefore at times referred to as the heavenlies in the New Testament. But Solomon was not reasoning on this level at this point. Rather was he claiming that the temple building would somehow make prayer more powerful before God. But that is simply untrue; no physical building can act as some kind of mediator between God and man. This is not to say that the faithful did not later pray toward the temple; for both Daniel and Jonah did. But it was not because they thought the temple somehow gave their prayers more power and standing before God because of its existence. For in Daniel's time, and perhaps Jonah's, the temple was in ruins. Or we can simply see this as Divine accommodation to man. There was no need to pray towards the temple neither did it add anything to the efficacy of prayer. But those men did it and God accepted that. Just as He may accept some who reverence a cross and place it above their bed, even though that may not be God's ideal intention.

1Ki 8:31 If a man sins against his neighbour, and an oath is laid on him to cause him to swear, and he comes and swears before Your altar in this house-

Verses 31-51 contain seven possible cases of sin for which the temple could bring forgiveness; and seven cases of possible Divine judgment. The number seven suggests Solomon saw all sin and all possible judgment as being dealt with through the temple. Whereas his parents ought to have learnt for all time that forgiveness doesn't depend upon ritual but God's grace alone and the contrite hearts of sinners. God's awareness of who was telling the truth was not, however, predicated upon the altar being situated within a physical building. God's presence and omniscience is not somehow from then on conditional upon the temple.

The rabbis interpret this verse as specifically concerning a man who is suspected of sinning against his neighbour through adultery with the man's wife. The male equivalent for the trial of jealousy for a woman suspected of adultery (Num. 5). Solomon is asking God to judge the man if guilty and swearing by the temple was to be some kind of way of forcing truth to come out. Given the background of Solomon's parents, we marvel at how Solomon just didn't "get" the huge grace shown to his father. Who had not been judged according to his just deserts in this matter.

1Ki 8:32 then hear in heaven, and do, and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his own head, and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness-

"Hear in heaven" is repeated throughout these seven possible cases of sin and judgment. Solomon seemed to think that Yahweh would hear in Heaven because of the temple. He thereby introduces a level between God and man- the temple. This is a classic case of religion rather than personal spirituality. In Prov. 24:24 and other Proverbs, Solomon teaches that this is how men should judge, lest they be cursed. He says that God condemns the wicked but justifies the righteous, and so should we. But by having this position, he shows his total lack of appreciation of God's grace to his father David. For David was worthy of condemnation, but by grace, he the wicked

was justified, counted righteous, when he was not (Ps. 32:2 cp. Rom. 4:4-6). This lack of appreciation of grace arose from how it seems Solomon totally whitewashed the sin of his father David with his mother Bathsheba. And it resulted in his lack of grace, and failure throughout Proverbs to appreciate that human behaviour is nuanced, and is not simply divided between spotlessly righteous behaviour and terrible sinfulness.

1Ki 8:33 When Your people Israel are struck down before the enemy, because they have sinned against You; if they turn again to You, and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication to You in this house-

Again, Solomon devalues the power of prayerful repentance and confession of God's Name; for he implies that this is made somehow more powerful through praying to the God "in this house". But Solomon is as it were bringing God down from heaven to earth by suggesting He is somehow located "in this house". Whereas He is in heaven, as he contradictorily admits in :34. It was because of this mindset that there was such a collapse of faith in Judah when they saw the temple in ruins. It meant, according to Solomon's logic, the death of God.

1Ki 8:34 then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them again to the land which You gave to their fathers-

See on :33. The restoration to their land was to be because they, or those who remained in the land, would pray to God in the temple (:33). Solomon is hereby assuming that even if Israel sin and go into captivity, the temple will be an eternal house for God which will always be there. He is so very wrong. The temple was not eternal and was destroyed; but the exiles could still pray to God, quite independently of the existence of the temple. The destruction of the temple was for multiple reasons, but perhaps one of them was to rid God's people of these wrong ideas about God's presence in the temple building. And God answers this idea that the temple was to be eternal in 1 Kings 9:7,8.

1Ki 8:35 When the sky is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You; if they pray toward this place, and confess Your name, and turn from their sin, when You afflict them-

Solomon inserts parts of his father's Bathsheba psalms in his prayers for how all Israel could be forgiven if they "confess thy name... when thou afflictest them... saying, We have sinned... forgive thy people... and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed" (1 Kings 8:35,47,50 = Ps. 32:5 etc.). On the basis of David's pattern, all God's people can find forgiveness, if they make a like confession. Indeed, this has long been recognized by Jewish commentators; and many of the Psalms understood by them as relevant to the Nazi holocaust are Bathsheba Psalms. "Out of the depths" they cried like David; and at the entrance to Bergen-Belsen it stands written: "My sorrow is continually before me" (Ps. 38:17), in recognition of having received punishment for sin [note how these kind of plaques contain no trace of hatred or calling for Divine retribution upon the persecutors].

But Solomon, as ever, is mixing truth with error. Because the turning again to God was not dependent upon praying towards the temple building. It was to be destroyed, and the direction of their prayers was to be towards "the God of heaven" and not some ghost in a ruined temple. This phrase "the God of heaven" or similar is often found in the restoration histories, indicating that God's people had been forced to learn this lesson.

1Ki 8:36 then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, and of Your people Israel, when You teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land, which You have given to Your people for an inheritance-

The reference to rain was appropriate in the immediate context because as explained on :2, Solomon was speaking in the month of Ethanim, literally, the rain month, and likely the latter rains were pouring down at this time as he was speaking. His implication would be that this rain was part of the promised blessing for obedience because of the temple. Perhaps this was why, as noted on :2, Solomon had purposefully arranged the dedication festival at this time.

1Ki 8:37 If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight, mildew, locust or caterpillar; if their enemy besieges them in their cities; whatever plague, whatever sickness there is-

These things clearly allude to the curses for breaking the covenant in Dt. 28. But those curses were to be lifted by repentance and renewed faithfulness to the covenant, and their lifting was not predicated upon the existence of the physical temple and praying in it or towards it.

1Ki 8:38 whatever prayer and supplication is made by any man, or by all Your people Israel, who shall each know the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house-

As Pharaoh's heart was plagued (Ex. 9:14), so was Israel's (1 Kings 8:38); as Egypt was a reed, so were Israel (1 Kings 14:15). As Pharaoh-hophra was given into the hand of his enemies, so would Israel be (Jer. 44:30). She would be "Condemned with the world...". But the phrase 'spread forth hands' is used often in the Bible, but followed by 'to the Lord'. Solomon is praying with hands spread forth towards heaven (:22); but he is confusing prayer towards God with prayer towards the temple. He is drawing an inappropriate parallel between God and the temple.

1Ki 8:39 then hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and render to every man according to all his ways, whose heart You know; (for You, even You only, know the hearts of all the children of men;)-

This reference to God dwelling in heaven makes a nonsense of the idea of building a house for God to inhabit on earth. And this was exactly why God had not wanted David to build the temple. So Solomon is here merely giving lip service to these ideas.

Descriptions of God's dwelling place clearly indicate that He has a personal location: "God is in heaven" (Ecc. 5:2); "He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth" (Ps. 102:19,20); "Hear in heaven your dwelling place". Yet more specifically than this, we read that God has a "throne" (2 Chron. 9:8; Ps. 11:4; Is. 6:1; 66:1). Such language is hard to apply to an undefined essence which exists somewhere in heavenly realms.

1Ki 8:40 that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers-

This is repeating the idea of Ps. 130:4: "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared". Solomon reasons that the experience of forgiveness [on behalf of his temple] will make the people fear Yahweh. And that is so; if we realize the awesome nature of forgiveness, we will fear / respect the God who grants it on a scale and of a

nature so beyond our forgiveness of others. "All the days that they live in the land" could hint that Solomon wrongly thought that the people would live eternally in the land, because he was the Messianic king and the temple had now been built.

1Ki 8:41 Moreover concerning the foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, when he shall come out of a far country for Your name's sake-

The acceptance of the Gentile within the community of Israel was not simply predicated upon the existence of the temple. Ruth was the classic case of coming out of a Gentile country for the sake of Yahweh's Name. And her acceptance was not at all predicated upon any temple building, because there was none in existence at her time.

1Ki 8:42 (for they shall hear of Your great name, and of Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he shall come and pray toward this house-

There seems implicit in the reasoning here that the fame of Yahweh's temple would spread to the surrounding nations, and some would wish to come and worship in it. But proselytes were not to be attracted to Yahweh because of any physical temple, but because of who He is- the things implicit in His Name. No matter how cool and slick the external presentation, this is not what legitimately converts people to the true God.

1Ki 8:43 hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to You for; that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name-

As discussed on :42, God's response to Gentile proselytes, and their turning to Him, is not predicated upon the existence of a physical building. Solomon asks God to answer prayers of Gentiles made toward the temple so that the Gentiles would know that Yahweh's Name was really there- in "this house which I have built". The agenda of Solomon's pride is evident. God had told David that He didn't need a temple for His Name because His intention was that David's descendant, Messiah, would create a house of people who would bear God's Name, His characteristics, the fruits of His Spirit.

1Ki 8:44 If Your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way You shall send them, and they pray to Yahweh toward the city which You have chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Your name-

Solomon is alluding to Dt. 20:1, but Israel were told that when they went out to battle (s.w.), they were to remember that Yahweh was present with them. Solomon has distorted this idea, by suggesting that Yahweh's presence was specifically in the temple, and the people were to pray towards it there. When in reality, His presence was with His people on the battle front and in their hearts.

1Ki 8:45 then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause-

"Maintain their cause" is the same phrase translated "do judgment / justice". But Israel were to do justice (Lev. 18:4 and often, as David did, 2 Sam. 8:15), and in response, Yahweh would do justice for them (Dt. 10:18). But Solomon overlooks this conditional aspect in Israel's relationship with God, as he did in his own life. He thought that merely praying to a temple would somehow obligate God to 'do judgment' for His people. This is the mentality of mere religion, and not of

relationship with God. Under the old covenant, victory against enemies was predicated upon obedience to and faith in the covenant; whereas here Solomon suggests that mere prayer to the temple will as it were do the trick. Again and again, we see form eclipsing content, the religious displacing the spiritual.

1Ki 8:46 If they sin against You (for there is no man who doesn't sin), and You are angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near-

Solomon often emphasized the importance of keeping one's heart (Prov. 2:10-16; 3:5,6; 4:23-5:5; 6:23-26); he had foreseen that the essential sin of God's people was "the plague of his own heart" (1 Kings 8:46), and he imagined how for this sin God's people would later pray towards the temple. And yet his wives turned away *his* heart, for all this awareness that the heart must be kept. It was as if the more he knew the truth of something, the more he wanted to do the very opposite. And this is exactly true of our natures. Perhaps with Solomon he reasoned that in *his* case, foreign wives wouldn't turn away *his* heart. Just as our flesh thinks 'Yes, but it can't happen to *me*'. Perhaps too he reasoned that if the temple somehow could bring forgiveness for the plague of the heart, his heart was incorruptible because of the temple.

1Ki 8:47 yet if they shall repent in the land where they are carried captive, and turn again, and make supplication to You in the land of those who carried them captive, saying, 'We have sinned, and have done perversely; we have dealt wickedly'-

Again, Solomon assumes that even if Israel were to go into captivity, the temple would still stand, and prayer toward it would bring the restoration. But the temple was destroyed, so that they would be forced to quit this kind of religious tokenism and turn to God in Heaven with their hearts and souls. Daniel prayed these words (Dan. 9:5), but there was no temple then standing to add efficacy to them. And they were prayed in Ps. 106:6 before any temple stood.

1Ki 8:48 if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to You towards their land, which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name-

The old covenant clearly taught that all Israel would be exiled from their land if they broke the covenant. Solomon's dedication of the temple seemed to assume that only the wicked would be exiled from the land, and the temple would stand eternally; to express repentance in exile, they just needed to pray towards it. But all Israel were sent into exile, and his temple was razed to the ground. But Solomon's belief that "The upright will dwell in the land; the perfect will eternally remain in it" (Prov. 2:21) meant that he totally refused to accept the extent of judgment predicted in the curses of Dt. 28. All Israel would be exiled from their land. He liked to assume that his Kingdom would eternally endure; because of his lack of faith in the nature of the future Kingdom, and his mistaken imagination that he was the eternal Messianic king. He refused to recognize that his father David in Ps. 72 had wrongly imagined that he would be that eternal king, and disregarded the conditionality of the promises made to him. And God answers this idea that the temple was to be eternal in 1 Kings 9:7,8.

1Ki 8:49 then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven, your dwelling place, and maintain their cause-

When exiled from Absalom, David had prayed toward God's "holy hill" of Zion, and

had been regathered there (Ps. 3:4). David had fled Jerusalem and the "holy hill" of the temple mount, which was then under Absalom's control. But he believed Yahweh was still there, present as it were in the temple, and answering his prayer. He perhaps alludes to the promises that if Israel sinned and were exiled, they could always pray to God and hope for regathering to His holy hill (Dt. 30:1-4; Neh. 1:9). Solomon now develops these thoughts further, in teaching that Israel in their dispersion were to pray to God toward Jerusalem, His "holy hill" of Zion (1 Kings 8:48,49). We see therefore how Solomon would have reflected upon his father David's experience; David had prayed towards God's "holy hill" when in exile from it, and had been heard. Solomon may well have been in David's retinue at the time, and would have experienced the wonder of return to Zion because of his father's prayer towards God in Zion.

1Ki 8:50 and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions in which they have transgressed against You; and give them compassion before those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them-

God's giving of compassion to His people depended upon their holiness before Him (s.w. Dt. 13:17). But Solomon implies that it will be predicated upon the temple he had built. Form was replacing content, external religion was trumping true spirituality, physical symbolism was obscuring true repentance. The irony is that when Judah were in exile God gave them this compassion in the eyes of their captors. But they were not very penitent, nor was there any temple standing for them to pray towards. This fairly obvious observation is surely to highlight the bankruptcy of Solomon's thoughts here. He has no understanding of grace.

1Ki 8:51 (for they are Your people, and Your inheritance, which You brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron)-

This is the language of Dt. 4:20, which taught that because God had brought Israel out of the "iron furnace" of Egypt, therefore they should thereby be motivated to quit all idolatry. But here Solomon uses this great deliverance as a way of almost manipulating God to save His sinful people- if they prayed toward or in the temple he had built. He alludes to scripture throughout this prayer, but nearly always out of context and to justify his own narrative- that Israel's forgiveness, blessing and salvation was predicated upon the temple Solomon had built.

1Ki 8:52 that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant-

God's eyes are open upon His children wherever they are, as David had learned whilst far from the sanctuary and on the run from Saul. Nehemiah felt God's eyes were open upon him even when the temple was in ruins (Neh. 1:6).

And to the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them whenever they cry to You-

Solomon saw himself as Moses, fully representative of Israel, and thereby their saviour (1 Kings 11:1,5-7 cp. 33; 8:52; and note the ye... thee confusion of 1 Kings 9:4-7); his prayer was their prayer (2 Chron. 6:21); his worship was theirs (2 Chron. 1:3,5).

His prayer of 2 Chron.6:33 speaks as if the heavens where God lived were actually the temple; he bid men pray towards the temple where God lived, rather than to God in Heaven. Yet theoretically he recognized the magnitude of God (2 Chron. 6:18); yet the vastness of God, both in power and Spirituality, meant little to him; it failed to humble him as it should have done. It is a feature of human nature to be able

to perceive truth and yet act the very opposite. His enthusiasm for his own works lead him to lose a true relationship with God. The idea of salvation by grace became lost on him, loving response to God's forgiveness was not on his agenda, true humility was unnecessary for him, given his certainty that he was King as God intended. He reasoned that God would hear his prayers because they were uttered in the temple of his own hands, rather than because of any personal faith (1 Kings 8:52). Indeed, Solomon legalistically demands that God maintain [as in a court of law] the legal cause or "right" of His people if they pray towards the temple (1 Kings 8:45,49). Legalism and faith are opposed to each other, and Solomon's usage and conception of the temple was legalistic rather than faith based. When dedicating the temple, Solomon asks God to incline the hearts of Israel to be obedient to His commandments (1 Kings 8:57); and whilst God can and does do this, Solomon's implication seems to be that any disobedience would therefore effectively be God's fault for not making His people obedient. He failed to see the need for personal election to obey God's ways.

1Ki 8:53 For You separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be Your inheritance, as You spoke by Moses Your servant, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt, Lord Yahweh-

Solomon's argument is that since God had made Israel His people, then they would always be His people and inheritance. All they needed to do if they broke their relationship with God was to pray before the temple. Solomon saw the temple as the failsafe method of keeping Israel always as God's inheritance and special people, regardless of their sins. But the truth was that God was to disinherit His people, and return them to the nations whose gods they worshipped. And no temple was going to stop that happening. Solomon likewise assumed that he was the chosen seed of David, and his having built the temple meant that sin was no ultimate problem between Yahweh and himself. He thereby overlooked the conditional nature of God's promised relationship with him. And so many have used religious symbolism likewise, to release them from any sense of personal responsibility towards God.

1Ki 8:54 It was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication to Yahweh, he arose from before the altar of Yahweh, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread forth toward heaven-

We get the impression that his prayer was but showmanship, and a parade of a fake humility. See on :14.

1Ki 8:55 He stood, and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice saying- This public prayer for the sake of appearance, facing men rather than God (see on :14), makes us think that the "loud voice" of prayer and blessing was hypocritical. Solomon uses the very phrase in Prov. 27:14: "He that blesses his friend with a loud voice... it shall be counted a curse to him". But he refused to perceive the personal truth of the Proverbs he spoke. A loud voice (s.w.) doesn't mean God has heard the speaker (Ez. 8:18); the phrase is used of the priests of Baal he mistakenly believed this.

1Ki 8:56 Blessed be Yahweh, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by Moses His servant-

God's words not falling / failing means that they were fulfilled (1 Sam. 3:19).

Solomon is making the same mistake as preterism, claiming that all the prophetic word had been fulfilled. He decided this on the mere basis that he had built a temple, which he wished to see as the fulfilment of the promises to David, which he now wished to understand as meaning the promises to Moses had been totally fulfilled as well. It was this lack of any perspective of future fulfilment, of the Messianic Kingdom to come and the resurrection of the dead, which led Solomon to fail to appreciate God's grace. He also therefore had no sense of personal failure and the wonder of acceptance by grace, because he thought he had been given full acceptance right now.

The record is clear that Solomon did not have total "rest". Damascus was taken from him and he never regained it; he was surrounded by 'adversaries', his people were restless and groaning under his abusive taxing of them for labour and harvests... And he is forcing his own interpretation of Dt. 12:10,11 as referring to the temple he had built: "When you go over the Jordan, and dwell in the land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you, so that you dwell in safety, then to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, to cause His name to dwell there, you must bring all that I command you". The Hebrew *maqom* translated 'place' can mean simply a locality, yet Solomon likes to insist that it means a 'place' as in a building. Yet *maqom* in its 400 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible usually refers simply to a locality and not some 'holy place'. And God has used the term in describing the situation which would come about through David's future son who would be God's begotten son: "I will appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more. Neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the first" (1 Chron. 17:9). That future appointed "place" was not the temple; for God in this context says He doesn't want a temple, but will instead give His future people a "place" in eternity through the great Son. It is this "place" which the Lord has in view when He says that His death on the cross is "to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:2,3). "I will appoint a place" is the same Hebrew as in God's 'appointing a place' for the innocent murderer to flee to for refuge (Ex. 21:13), and that "place" was a city of refuge not a temple. And again, that "place" is understood in the New Testament as the Lord Jesus. The place appointed was one where Yahweh's Name would be placed (Dt. 12:21; 14:24 etc.). It is far too literalistic to assume that the letters YHWH would be placed in a physical place. Surely we are to understand the Name as His characteristics, to be placed supremely in the "place" of His Son, through whom a family / house of people would arise bearing that Name. God's response to David's plan to build a temple had been to state that through His Son, He would "plant" Israel never to be moved again, and this language is repeated about the Lord in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Is. 66:1,2 is crystal clear that God's Name can never "rest" in a physical place, but in humbled hearts after the pattern of David after his sin with Bathsheba: "And what place shall be My rest? For all these things has My hand made, and so all these things came to be, says Yahweh: but to this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a broken spirit, and who trembles at My word". However, there are references to God's Name dwelling in Zion in the Kingdom age. It will be then "the place of the name of Yahweh of Armies, Mount Zion" (Is. 18:7), "for Yahweh dwells in Zion" (Joel 3:21), in that His Name is supremely in the Lord Jesus who will rule from Zion. Isaiah uses the term in his personal speech, perhaps reflecting his own misadjusted perspective that somehow Yahweh was physically dwelling in Zion: "I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Yahweh of Armies, who dwells in Mount Zion" (Is. 8:18).

1Ki 8:57 May Yahweh our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. Let Him not leave us, nor forsake us-

This can be translated not so much as a request but as a joyful statement of present reality. He felt that his prayer and his temple would somehow guarantee the permanent presence of God. God would not leave or forsake Israel because Solomon assumed that the temple had God's presence, and it would be eternal; for he had interpreted God's promise to build an eternal house as fulfilled in his building of the temple.

1Ki 8:58 that He may incline our hearts to Him, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes and his ordinances which He commanded our fathers-

We're wrong to think that God passionlessly waits for us to repent or pray to Him, and then He will forgive or act for us. He loves us, simply so; and with all love's manipulation of circumstances, seeks to pour out His love upon us. Thus repentance itself is a gift which God gives and is not totally upon human initiative (Dt. 4:29-31; 30:1-10; 1 Kings 8:58).

As noted on Ps. 119:36; 141:4, David believed that God could act deep within the psychology or heart of man, to incline us toward righteousness and away from evil. This is how the Holy Spirit works today. Solomon believed the same (s.w. 1 Kings 8:58), but only in theory; for his Gentile wives inclined or turned away his heart from God (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). God will not turn our hearts anywhere we ourselves don't want to go. Solomon often appeals for us to incline our hearts to wisdom (s.w. Prov. 2:2; 4:20; 5:1; 22:17), but he himself was inclined to apostasy (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). All his emphasis is upon the need to incline ourselves, whereas his father David trusted in the work of the Spirit to incline his heart to good and away from evil (Ps. 141:4; 119:36 etc.).

1Ki 8:59 Let these my words, with which I have made supplication before Yahweh, be near to Yahweh our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant, and the cause of His people Israel, as each day shall require-

Just as Solomon considered the existence of the temple as the guarantee that God would ultimately be with His people, so he similarly argues that his prayer was some kind of magic incantation which would mean that God would day by day for ever and eternally maintain the cause of His people. But his whole logic is 'religious' rather than spiritual.

1Ki 8:60 that all the peoples of the earth may know that Yahweh, He is God. There is none else-

Solomon had a genuine desire for the surrounding nations to accept Yahweh, just as his father David did. But it was all tied up with his own pride; people coming to admire Solomon's temple and thereby himself. For as mentioned above, he thought that the physical temple would be the basis of their attraction and loyalty to Yahweh.

1Ki 8:61 Let your heart therefore be perfect with Yahweh our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as you do at this day-

Solomon considered that the fulfilment of the promises to Moses and David (which he was mistaken in thinking had fully happened just because he had built a temple) was because Israel "at this day" had a perfect heart with Yahweh. They didn't, but just as

he assume his own perfect obedience, so he assumed theirs. Unlike David, he had not been forced by God to engage with the issues of his own sinfulness. And I discussed on 1 Kings 7:1 how even at this point, Solomon himself was far from wholehearted in his devotion to God; 1 Kings 11:4 specifically says he wasn't.

1Ki 8:62 The king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before Yahweh-
We again see the connection between Solomon and "all Israel", whom he considered to be as perfect as he was; see on :61.

1Ki 8:63 Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to Yahweh, twenty two thousand head of cattle, and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of Yahweh-
The peace offering was to be eaten the same day it was killed, and nothing of it was to left until the morning (Lev. 7:15). There is no way Solomon could have personally eaten this massive amount of meat, and so again we see his interest being merely in external religion rather than personal spirituality. And a peace offering was a personal statement between the offerer and God, celebrating their peace with God. There is no way Solomon could legitimately do this for the people. The usual pattern of sacrifice was sin offering (obtaining forgiveness), burnt offering (promising complete dedication to God) and then peace offering, celebrating the resultant peace with God then experienced. But Solomon has no sense of personal sin (see on :61), and considered himself dedicated to Yahweh by reason of being David's son. And so he only offers the peace offerings. The huge numbers of sacrifices were not at all what God wanted. But unlike David, he had not been brought to realize that God wants broken, repentant hearts and not offerings (Ps. 51:16). Mic. 6:7 perhaps references Solomon's huge numbers of offerings, again commenting that God doesn't want them; just as He didn't want a physical temple. And yet God went along with Solomon, as He does with us so often, even on the basis of our misplaced idealism. For His glory appeared within the temple and He in that sense agreed to dwell there, just as He agreed to work through a human kingship, even though it meant a degree of rejection of Him as Israel's king.

1Ki 8:64 The same day the king made the middle of the court holy that was before the house of Yahweh; for there he offered the burnt offering, and the meal offering, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before Yahweh was too little to receive the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the fat of the peace offerings-

The huge numbers of animals required more altars, which were presumably placed in the middle court. Although we wonder on what basis Solomon as a non-Levite had the right to declare the court holy. We also wonder as to whether the huge laver, and the ten smaller lavers, were only built with a view to this opening dedication. For the huge laver was too large for normal usage, and there was surely no need for 10 lavers when the tabernacle had only had one. We wonder whether this sudden erection of more altars was also as it were a design fault, and indicates that what he was doing was not according to God's command, but rather his flawed human initiative. See on :8 for another possible design fault.

1Ki 8:65 So Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt, before Yahweh our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days-

The dedication coincided with the seven day feast of tabernacles (see on :1), and to that was added this seven day feast of dedication. There were representatives from the very borders of the land promised to Abraham, implying these areas had been settled by Israelites; or perhaps those who attended from those places were Gentile proselytes. However if "the feast" was the latter seven days, then we observe that the day of Atonement wasn't kept, as this was only a few days before the feast of tabernacles. Indeed they ate and drank joyfully on Yom Kippur when they should have been afflicting their souls for their sins. Again we see Solomon assuming that personal confession of sin could be eclipsed by focus upon merely external religion.

1Ki 8:66 On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that Yahweh had shown to David His servant, and to Israel His people-

The people rejoiced that the promises to David had been fulfilled in the temple and in the prosperity of the nation. But they had only uncritically accepted Solomon's narrative. For this was not at all the fulfilment of the promises to David. They "blessed the king" because they assumed it was Solomon who had brought about this fulfilment; and that was exactly what he thought. And they had bought into that false narrative.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 9

1Ki 9:1 It happened, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of Yahweh, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do- His building of the temple was "all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do" (1 Kings 9:1). There is a semantic connection between the Hebrew words for "desire" and "pleased" - the point of which is to emphasize that Solomon's work for God was only an expression of his own zest for self-fulfilment; he served God in ways which only confirmed his own natural inclinations. Appreciating the spirit and blood of Christ, his own weakness, the grace of God, and the subsequent desire to live a life of self sacrifice, of carrying a cross in ways we wouldn't naturally chose- this was all foreign to Solomon. And is it so foreign to us? Solomon's materialism and self-fulfilment are sure warnings to our age.

1Ki 9:2 that Yahweh appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon-

Clearly God was aware that Solomon was going wrong, refusing to realize the conditional nature of the promises made to David about his son, and not personally applying the wisdom given to him in the first vision. So God's response to Solomon's arrogant, mistaken prayer of 1 Kings 8 was in fact to appear to him and warn him that he needed to be obedient, or else the promises would not in fact apply to him. The clear implication was that Solomon's statements in his prayer that the promises were fulfilled in him... were wrong.

1Ki 9:3 Yahweh said to him, I have heard your prayer and your supplication, that you have made before Me. I have made this house holy, which you have built, to put My name there forever; and My eyes and My heart shall be there constantly-

"I have heard your prayer" means this vision was an answer to the dedication prayer. So if God answered the dedication prayer after 20 years (:1), we can conclude that the dedication occurred at the end of the 20 years building the palace / temple

complex. As discussed regarding the features and lack of utility in the temple design, we conclude the temple was showmanship and not motivated by a desire to help people worship God. Otherwise Solomon would have dedicated it much earlier.

"I have heard your prayer and your supplication" responds to Solomon's request that God would hear his personal "prayer and supplication" (1 Kings 8:28). But he several times asks in that prayer for God to hear the "prayer and supplication" of the people who prayed towards or in the temple (1 Kings 8:29,38,45,49,54). But God carefully doesn't respond to this. The parallel record in 2 Chron. 7:14 says that "If My people who are called by My name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin". Solomon had reasoned that because God's Name was on the temple, therefore the people should pray towards it and be heard. God's response is that His Name is upon His people, because His Name / characteristics dwell in persons not in bricks. And the promised seed was to be build a house of such people. We could argue that the people called by God's Name were not all the people of Israel, but only those who had His Name on their hearts, the faithful minority. And indeed at the exile, it was the prayers of this group [Daniel etc.] that led to God's restoration of the people. God says that the people were to "seek / search for My face"- not pray towards Jerusalem or a temple, but go through the struggle of searching for God after sin. They were to seek personal encounter and relationship with God- His face. They were to "humble themselves", literally 'bow the knee' before Him- not turn their bodies in the direction of Jerusalem. They should "turn from their wicked ways" and not turn their bodies towards the temple.

God is careful to respond that He will forgive them if they pray- and carefully omits reference to the temple, "in this house". Solomon says 'If they do [ABC] and then [DEF] happens and they pray *in / towards this place*, then please do [GHI]'. God responds according to the same rubric, repeating what Solomon says, but carefully omitting the central point- if they pray in / towards the temple. The omission is glaring. And it is tantamount to ignoring what was for Solomon the central object of his prayer- to legitimize the temple as the source of efficacy for prayer. His 'religion' was replaced by God's focus on personal spirituality and His response to that.

Jonah learnt this- in the belly of a great fish, he needed forgiveness. He had no access to the temple and didn't know which direction to pray towards. Rather like a navigation system telling you at night to "head north" when you have no idea of where north is. He says that he prayed towards the temple, following Solomon's words rather than God's correction of them. But the grace of it all is that God heard him anyway.

There soon follows a worked example of this. 2 Chron. 12:6,7 records that Rehoboam, Solomon's son, was attacked by Shishak of Egypt: "Then the princes of Israel and the king *humbled themselves*; and they said, Yahweh is righteous. When Yahweh saw that they *humbled themselves*, the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah, saying, They have *humbled themselves*. I will not destroy them; but I will grant them some deliverance. My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak". The allusion is to God's words in 2 Chron. 7:14, which is His reply to Solomon's claim that if Israel prayed to the temple, then God would save them in battle. He says simply that if Israel humble themselves in battle [He makes no mention of the temple], then He will save them. And the situation with Shishak was an example of that. We note that even at that stage, God had in mind to destroy the temple and Zion / Jerusalem. Solomon and David's dogmatism that it would last eternally are thus shown to be misplaced right from the start of the temple's 430 year

history [the same period of time as Israel were in Egypt, Ex. 12:40,41; Gal. 3:17]. Ezekiel foretold 430 years of judgment upon Israel and Judah (Ez. 4:1-6).

I would translate and paraphrase :3-6 as follows: "I have hallowed this house, which you have built in order that I would put My Name there for ever. My eyes and heart will be there all the days that you walk before Me as David your father walked... [If you serve Me with totally perfect obedience to Me] then I will establish you [as the Messianic son I promised to David]... but if you turn from following Me [which God foreknew Solomon would] then... [I will destroy this place and My Name and presence won't be there any more]". Remember that God said these words furiously angry that Solomon had built the temple; Jeremiah records that God was furiously angry with it from the day it was built until the day He tore it down.

God's Name was there for ever in the sense that naming something with your name means ownership. God agreed to accept Jerusalem as His special place, despite His position that He is a God on the move. 2 Chron. 7 could imply that God was willing to go along with it as part of His plan to lead the people towards His Kingdom in the future, when He would eternally dwell there: "I have chosen and sanctified this house that my name may be there for ever". "That" doesn't mean His Name was there for ever from that point. Because He destroyed the dwelling place of His Name, as later lamented. Or we can allow :7 to explain this. If Solomon turned away from God, then the Name would not dwell there for ever. If he was perfectly obedient, as God's envisaged future Son would be, then it would. Solomon's response should have been that he could not be perfectly obedient, and his focus should have been on the promised future seed who would have an eternal Kingdom.

Solomon prayed that God's eyes [in Heaven] might be open toward the house; God responds that His eyes and heart are there in the house. The distance Solomon presupposes between earth and heaven is hereby deconstructed by God's reply.

The 2 Chron. 7 record records God saying that He accepted the temple not so much as a place to dwell in (as Solomon assumed it was) but as a place facilitating sacrifice for the glorification of His Name through these things; He emphasized that He dwelt amongst *His people* (1 Kings 6:13; 2 Chron. 7:12-16).

It has been argued that the Hebrew *olahm*, "forever", really means 'a period'. But I am unpersuaded of that argument in every case. Rather I would think that the context in this case requires that we understand God to be saying that He would indeed dwell in the temple "forever", and His particular sensitivity would be found in that place, His eyes and heart. But as He makes clear in :4-7, that was all conditional upon obedience. This highlights the tragedy- that eternity was at stake. So much depends upon human freewill decisions; for that is how much He respects us and our freedom of choice.

Despite the willful misinterpretations of God's word to David about not wanting a temple, God reluctantly [I would say] goes along with the thinking. But He emphasises that the house is that "which you have built". His focus was on building a house of people through His future begotten Son. 2 Chron. 7:12 goes further: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place to Myself for a house of sacrifice". The thousands of sacrifices were not what God wanted, and yet He accepted them. He wanted an altar made of earth kicked together or of unhewn stones. Solomon's temple and altars were totally the opposite of this ideal, yet still God accepted it all as a "house of sacrifice", with 2 Chron. 7:9 describing the dedication as in fact "the dedication of the altar" (see notes there). He condescends and goes along with man to a huge extent.

1Ki 9:4 As for you, if you will walk before Me, as David your father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and will keep My statutes and My ordinances-

This was a hard act to follow, for David was chosen as being a man after God's own heart. Solomon considered that he was acceptable with God just because of his father, whereas God wanted him to personally attain his father's spirituality. We note in passing God's high estimation of David, despite David's serious but out of character failings.

God constantly warned Solomon about the conditionality of the promises, before the building started (2 Sam. 7:14), during it (1 Kings 6:11-13) and immediately after completing it (1 Kings 9:2-9). Solomon reinterprets this conditional promise in Prov. 20:7: "A righteous man walks in integrity; blessed are his children after him". Solomon has here his own agenda of self justification in view. The man who 'walked in integrity' is without doubt David (s.w. 1 Kings 9:4; Ps. 26:1,11; 101:2). Solomon assumed that because his father had walked in integrity, then he as his child would automatically be blessed. But he was choosing to misunderstand the conditional nature of the promises to him in 1 Kings 9:4; if he walked himself in integrity "as David your father walked", then he would be the prophetically blessed son of David.

1Ki 9:5 then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, according as I promised to David your father saying, 'There shall not fail you a man on the throne of Israel'-

This is the same quotation made in Ps. 132:12. But God is picking up on Solomon's claim in 1 Kings 8:24 that God had already fulfilled this ("Who has kept with Your servant David my father that which You promised him. Yes, You spoke with Your mouth, and have fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day"). He is pointing out that this promise was conditional, and Solomon had overlooked that. The promise of "a man" suggests one individual; but Solomon was wrong in assuming this referred to himself. God is saying: 'You want to have an eternal line of kings reigning in your temple-palace complex? If you personally are perfect from now on, OK, the promised seed can be you'. Solomon should have reviewed the commands for total obedience in :4 and fallen to the earth in penitence, saying something like 'No, I'm a sinner, and likely to fail in future as well. How foolish I have been. I will now refocus upon the promised future seed You promised David and His Kingdom, not mine'.

1Ki 9:6 But if you turn away from following Me, you or your children, and don't keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but shall go and serve other gods, and worship them-

This is what Solomon did finally do, and already at this stage he had married Gentile women, whom the law of Moses had warned would lead his heart away from Yahweh to "other gods". But that apparently inevitable process could still be arrested- if Solomon responded in humility to this appeal. We wait with eager ears to hear Solomon's response when the appeal ends in :9. But there is silence; see on :9.

Solomon was fully representative of Israel (1 Kings 11:1,5-7 cp. 33; 8:52; and note the ye... thee confusion of 1 Kings 9:4-7 AV); his prayer was their prayer (2 Chron. 6:21); his worship was theirs (2 Chron. 1:3,5). And his apostasy was also theirs.

1Ki 9:7 then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this

house, which I have made holy for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all peoples-

Solomon had wrongly reasoned in 1 Kings 8 that the grandeur of the temple would attract Gentiles to become proselytes to Yahweh. But God warns him that the very opposite could happen, and the ruined temple would become the biggest possible disadvertisement for Yahweh and His people. Solomon had prayed, and in that prayer taught Israel, that if they sinned even in captivity, then all they had to do was pray towards the temple and they would be forgiven. He saw in that building some kind of atonement for sins. He lost sight of the importance of the blood that made atonement; he replaced the blood of Christ with a work of his own hands. God's response to the dedication of the temple here corrects what Solomon has just said. He says that if Israel sin then He will cast the temple too out of His sight; which is rather different to how Solomon instructed the people to gain forgiveness for the sake of the temple if they were in dispersion. He saw the temple as a talisman- the need for real, meaningful change and repentance and spiritual mindedness to enable the dwelling of God went unperceived. He failed to perceive the real possibility of the eternal potential he and Israel could miss. They really could be cast out of God's sight in condemnation. Jonah recognized "I am cast out of Your sight" (Jon. 2:4), the very language of condemnation used at his time (2 Kings 17:20; 21:2; 23:27; Jer. 7:15). Being cast out of God's sight, away from His eyes, is just the opposite of what Solomon had prayed for, that God's eyes should be eternally open towards the Temple.

1Ki 9:8 Though this house is so high, yet shall everyone who passes by it be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, 'Why has Yahweh done thus to this land, and to this house?' -

This is God's commentary upon the implications in Solomon's prayer that the temple and God's presence within it was to be eternal (see on 1 Kings 8:34,48). Solomon had willfully misinterpreted the promises to David to mean that the temple was the fulfilment of the promise that the seed would build an eternal house. That house David had built was not the house in view, and could easily be destroyed and even become a curse rather than a blessing- if Solomon were disobedient. Clearly Solomon was disobedient, and so the promise that people would "hiss" at the temple would obviously be fulfilled (1 Kings 9:8). Yet Jeremiah laments bitterly that men were 'hissing' at the ruined temple (Lam. 2:15,16) and complains God has been unreasonable. Jeremiah had clearly failed to accept the real extent of Judah's sin, and had shared in David and Solomon's willful misunderstanding that the temple would be eternal. He failed to accept that Divine judgment is just, because he devalued human sin. And that is the root cause for all human complaint about suffering in this world.

1Ki 9:9 and they shall answer, 'Because they forsook Yahweh their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold of other gods, and worshiped them, and served them. Therefore Yahweh has brought all this evil on them' -

We wait with eager ears to hear Solomon's response when the appeal ends; but there is silence. Solomon had blanked out from his perception any idea that he might fail or was less than perfect. His narrative was that he was the son of David, and the promises about David's son were now fulfilled in him. And he refused to allow anything, not even an appeal from God, disturb that internal narrative.

1Ki 9:10 It happened at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two

houses, the house of Yahweh and the king's house-

Psalms 127 is prefaced with the information that it is a Psalm for Solomon- perhaps given by some nameless prophet (Gad? Nathan?) to warn him of where he was going. Verse 1 reminds him that God must be the builder of any house, or else the builders labour in vain. There is good reason to think that Solomon utterly failed to appreciate this. The records stress time and again that *Solomon* built the temple (1 Kings 6:2,14; 9:10,25; 10:4; 1 Chron.6:10,32; 2 Chron. 8:1,12; 9:3; Acts 7:47); yet the house referred to in the Davidic promises was to be built by God, through David's Messianic Son, the Lord Jesus. Zechariah prophesied at the time of the rebuilding of the physical temple. It is significant, in this context, that Zech. 6:12 reminds Israel that the true temple of God will be built by the Branch, the Lord Jesus.

The question is whether all these building projects happened chronologically, one after another, or whether they in fact were all going on at the same time. If chronologically, we would expect a note to that effect at this point. Instead we are left to conclude that the building of the temple, of his own house, of "the house of the forest of Lebanon" and the "house for Pharaoh's daughter (whom Solomon had taken as wife)" (:8) all happened at the same time. We could conclude that he was distracted from building God's house by his other building projects, and that's why the building of the temple took seven years. This may appear to be contradicted by the statements in 1 Kings 9:10 and 2 Chron. 8:1: "It happened at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of Yahweh and the king's house...". However the context of those verses goes on to state that Solomon had given twenty cities to Hiram in return for his labour and materials for the building of the houses. So we could legitimately read those passages as meaning that at the end of the twenty year period over which the two houses had been built and twenty cities given to Hiram... that Hiram became dissatisfied. The recurrence of the number twenty could hint that he was paid one city a year for twenty years.

1Ki 9:11 (now Hiram the king of Tyre had supplied 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-

As noted on :1, all this building work was Solomon's "desire" or will, not necessarily God's; and he was really doing what *he* wanted in his fulfilment of his architectural fantasies, as he admits in Ecclesiastes, rather than serving God's will. For God had made it clear to David that a fancy temple with gold and cedar was not at all His will or desire. The gift of Israelite cities to a Gentile was not what a true king of Israel should have done, who valued the promises of Israel's eternal inheritance of the promised land. Solomon had come to see all God's promises as fulfilled in him and his amazing city and temple in Jerusalem. And so he devalued the rest of the promises, especially their future, eternal dimension. And Solomon clearly ignored the principle that the land was Yahweh's; it was not for him to sell it for gold and timber. It would seem that now after twenty years (:10) of extensive building projects, Solomon was broke. And his obsession with building led him to sell parts of Yahweh's land. Again we note that it was the wealth of the north which was extracted and used to build Jerusalem, just as the labour force of the north was used for Solomon's work in Judah. For it was possibly around this time that Jeroboam was put in charge of the forced labour brigades from Ephraim and Manasseh in order to fortify Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:28). And it was around this time, 950 BC, that Shishak came to power in Egypt, quite possibly posing a threat to Solomon to the extent he fortified Jerusalem against it. So much for Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter for

political ends [if indeed that was ever a major factor in the marriage]. About five years after his death, Egypt invaded Judah in the reign of his son Rehoboam. Likewise his love affairs with women from Moab and Ammon (1 Kings 11:1,7) and worshipping their gods didn't mean Moab and Ammon would not later attack Israel.

1Ki 9:12 Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they didn't please him-

Solomon's sacrifice of principle, as explained on :11, didn't achieve his intended aim of getting Hiram even more onside with him. Sacrifice of principle and the true hope of Israel never works out. These cities were inhabited by Canaanites whom Israel hadn't subdued at the time of this 'gift' (2 Sam. 24:7; 2 Chron. 8:2), and so Solomon was giving to Hiram a bunch of problems. These cities were not really under Solomon's authority anyway, he had not subdued the Canaanites there, so passing them to Hiram was giving him a noose around his neck rather than a true present. As an island state, Tyre needed land to produce food- and this land wasn't fertile, it seems.

1Ki 9:13 He said, What cities are these which you have given me, my brother? He called them the land of Cabul to this day-

"Cabul" can mean 'pawned', and the idea may be that although in some sense they did belong to Solomon, effectively they didn't because they were inhabited by Canaanites. Hence Hiram returned them to Solomon (2 Chron. 8:2), with all the damage in relationship that goes with returning a rejected gift. 2 Chron. 8:2 says that after this Solomon colonized the cities and sent Israelites to live there. But as will be noted on 1 Kings 9:21, this was not particularly in obedience to the Divine commands to subjugate the Canaanites, but rather than Solomon was desperate for huge amounts of slave labour with which to fulfil his building projects.

1Ki 9:14 Hiram sent to the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold-

The sense is that he "had sent" this money to Solomon. It seems Solomon became so obsessed with his building projects that he borrowed this money to finance them, and then tried to pay off the debt by giving Hiram the worthless cities of Cabul which were not at all any recompense. We see therefore that all was not quite as opulent and prosperous in Solomon's kingdom as may appear. See on :21.

1Ki 9:15 This is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised, to build the house of Yahweh, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer-

Solomon figuratively chastised the people with whips in the form of the excessive tax he raised in order to build store cities (1 Kings 9:15,19), in which to store all his accumulation. Surely this is behind the Lord's parable of the rich fool, devoid of wisdom in practice, who built ever bigger barns because of his lack of understanding about the future Kingdom. The Hebrew for "store cities" (2 Chron. 8:6) is also translated "to heap up", strengthening the connection with the rich fool (Lk. 12:15-28). That parable stresses the self-centeredness of the fool- just circle all the occurrences of the word "I". A similar over-use of personal pronouns in Ecc. 2:4-8 makes the same point. Ecc. 2:26 records how Solomon reflected that the sinner "heaped up" treasures- using the same word as for his "store cities". He saw his error, but wasn't bothered to do anything about it.

1Ki 9:16 Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites who lived in the city, and given it for a present to his daughter, Solomon's wife-

The LXX interprets this as a marriage gift, and the Hebrew for "present" implies this. We know from Jud. 1:15 that it was not unknown for the father of the bride to give a dowry payment to the groom. Gezer was a Philistine city, and it has been suggested that they had sailed to the coast of Egypt and were acting as pirates, also pillaging the Egyptian coastline. Hence Pharaoh's attack upon them.

1Ki 9:17 Solomon built Gezer, and Beth Horon the lower-

Gezer had been a Philistine or Canaanite city (:16), and as with the colonization of the wilderness outpost of Tamar (:18) and the Canaanite held cities in Galilee (2 Chron. 8:2; 1 Kings 9:13), this building of cities in these areas would only have made sense if Israelites were then sent to live there. This would therefore have resulted in a huge forced deportation of Israelites away from their homes and tribal areas to populate remote areas surrounded by recently vanquished Canaanites. This would not have been popular.

1Ki 9:18 and Baalath, and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land-

See on :17. Baalath was in Dan near Gezer (Josh. 19:44), and was built and then populated by Israelites for defensive reasons. Tadmor (AV) is now an oasis in the Syrian desert, on the caravan route from Damascus to the Euphrates. There was no point in building it as a city unless it was to be inhabited by Israelites. But this would have been unpopular, as it meant uprooting Israelites out of their homes and tribal areas and sending them to live in remote outpost. This would have meant Solomon again despised the tribal allotments, which to God were significant. He did the same in his arrangement of the tax administration of the nation, as explained on 1 Kings 4.

1Ki 9:19 and all the storage cities that Solomon had, and the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen-

The building of store cities by slave labour is exactly what Pharaoh did to the Israelites (Ex. 1:11). The impression is given that he followed Egypt in this way, as well as marrying Pharaoh's daughter and incorporating Egyptian stylism into the temple building, as noted on 1 Kings 8. His love of horses and chariots likewise reflects his love of Egypt, despite it being forbidden for Israel's king in Deuteronomy.

Solomon's lack of sensitivity to God's word led him to be tragically insensitive to people; in short, he showed no love. The way Solomon raised a "levy" or tribute from Israel, whereby the men of Israel had to serve him one month out of three and 'bear burdens', with 3,300 taskmasters over them (1 Kings 5:13-15), who 'bore rule' over (Heb. 'trampled down') the people (1 Kings 5:16)... is all reminiscent of Samuel's warning about the kind of King which Israel would have. And the language also recalls their bondage in Egypt; note that the levy was also in order to build treasure cities for Solomon, just as Pharaoh did. The Hebrew word for "levy" in 1 Kings 5:13 strictly means 'a burden causing to faint', and is rendered "taskmaster" in the record of Israel's suffering in Egypt (Ex. 1:11). One even wonders if Solomon's father-in-law- who also happened to be a Pharaoh of Egypt- influenced him (consciously or unconsciously) to act like the Exodus Pharaoh.

And that which Solomon desired to build for his pleasure in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion-

Solomon *loved* building (Ecc. 2:4-6)- he built cities and buildings because it was “the desire of Solomon which he desired” (1 Kings 9:19 AVmg.), i.e. one of his dominant desires. So when we read that it was the desire of Solomon to build the temple (1 Kings 9:1,11), he was merely serving God in a way that naturally appealed to him anyway. And when he had finished that desire when the temple was completed (9:1), he was in the same position as when in Ecclesiastes he describes how he indulged every desire up to the very end, and then was left with the emptiness of vanity.

The fortification of Lebanon was because of the threat from Rezin in Damascus (1 Kings 11:24).

1Ki 9:20 As for all the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the children of Israel- Of the seven nations earlier listed as inhabiting Canaan, only these five had apparently survived. Two had been absorbed into the Israelite population or destroyed. They were clearly distinct from the "children of Israel". Instead of trying to absorb them into Israel or destroy them, Solomon was so desperate for workers that he capitalized on that situation and demanded they provide him with slaves for his building works, as opposed to the Israelite labour which was classified as 'servants' (:22).

1Ki 9:21 their children who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel were not able utterly to destroy, of them Solomon raised a levy of bondservants to this day-

This suggests that Solomon made the same mistake as Israel in earlier days- he was a satisficer, he himself married into those tribes, and he wasn't obedient to the clear covenant of the land which was binding upon him. Solomon's motivation for now bringing the Canaanites into servitude was not spiritual. Rather, as with his borrowing of money from Hiram (see on :14), his obsession with his building plans was such that he needed huge amounts of money and resources to carry them through. And so he colonized the Canaanite areas and made them send him slaves to work on his quarrying and building projects; and this was why, as noted on :13 and 2 Chron. 8:2, he was keen to colonize the area of 'Cabul', in order to also provide more dogs body workers for his architectural obsessions.

1Ki 9:22 But of the children of Israel Solomon made no bondservants; but they were the men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots and of his horsemen-

This sounds very much like the fulfilment of Samuel's warning as to how a human king would abuse the Israelites. He made the Canaanites slaves (:21), but he made the Israelites his servants, to the point of whipping them with whips, as they later complained after his death. The difference between being his slaves and his servants was therefore not that significant.

Solomon had obsessive tendencies. We know that he became addicted to finding pleasure in women, and Ecc. 2 shows him racing down the road of obsession with architecture, alcohol, food, gold etc. The historical narratives so often mention his gold and silver (e.g. 2 Chron. 9:13-21,24,27). This repetition reflects Solomon's obsession. The same fact explains the record's repetition of Solomon's enthusiasm for horses (1 Kings 10:25-29; 4:26,28; 9:19,22; 2 Chron. 1:14,16,17; 8:6,9; 9:24,25,28). Yet amassing of gold, silver and horses was explicitly forbidden for the King of Israel

(Dt. 17:17). There is a powerful point to be made here: we can deceive ourselves that God is blessing us, when actually we are breaching explicit commands. Would Solomon had understood the concept of self-examination.

1Ki 9:23 These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, who bore rule over the people who laboured in the work-

The number of these overseers varies from 3,300 when the temple was being built (1 Kings 5:16) to 550 in 1 Kings 9:23 and then 250 in the Chronicles record. I suggested on 1 Kings 9:14,21 that all was not well in Solomon's apparently opulent kingdom. His building obsessions had led him to borrow money from Hiram to find it, and to excessively tax both Israel and the Canaanites amongst them to provide workers. And so the decreasing numbers of overseers may reflect his declining human resources, despite making every effort to try to pressgang more labourers he got fewer and fewer on the jobs in practice.

1Ki 9:24 But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David to her house which Solomon had built for her: then he built Millo-

If this is the woman of the Song of Solomon, then we can deduce they had a stormy relationship. It apparently ends at the end of Song 8 (see notes there), and yet with the hints of resumption. So perhaps it was not a blessed marriage, and Solomon ended up building her a separate house to live in outside his immediate citadel.

1Ki 9:25 Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he built to Yahweh three times a year, burning incense with them, on the altar that was before Yahweh. So he finished the house-

"Three times a year" surely refers to the three main feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. No longer were the "high places" like Gibeon used, but worship was centralized in Jerusalem. This was indeed as the law of Moses intended, but Solomon appears to have used this as part of his policy of centralization of power in Jerusalem which we discussed on 1 Kings 4. We note that Solomon seems to have officiated as a priest as David did. David had done this kind of thing, but from careful reflection upon the spirit of the law, whose letter he says in Ps. 119 he studied constantly. And David came to this sense through careful reflection upon God's grace to him, and through the experience of Uzzah's death as a result of taking 'living the spirit of the law' too far. But Solomon does it from a wrong assumption that he is the Messianic king-priest.

1Ki 9:26 King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom-

The navy appears to have either been owned by Hiram or at least included his ships (2 Chron. 8:18). It is spoken of as Solomon's in the same way as he is spoken of as being the personal builder of the temple, when clearly his subordinates did the actual work. See on :27.

1Ki 9:27 Hiram sent in the navy his servants, sailors who had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon-

Transporting ships overland was relatively common; there are several accounts of Alexander the Great doing so. Perhaps Hiram had transported his ships there overland through Israel, and Solomon decided to have them build ships for him at their port of departure, so that his traders could accompany the men of Tyre. The ships were

perhaps "sent" in the form of wooden structures which were then assembled at the port.

1Ki 9:28 They came to Ophir, and fetched from there gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon-

Chronicles says 450, but perhaps the 30 talents difference were paid to Hiram for his transport services, as the navy of :27 appears to have either been owned by Hiram or at least included his ships (2 Chron. 8:18). "Ophir" may have been a generic name for areas to the east, including southern Arabia (famed for gold in Ps. 72:15; Ez. 27:22) and India; Ophir was in Arabia according to Gen. 10:29. Sheba was nearby and was famed for gold, so it was through this trading that the Queen of Sheba heard of the wisdom of Solomon. The next verse (1 Kings 10:1) goes on to speak of her, connecting her with this gold trade with Ophir.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 10

1Ki 10:1 When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of Yahweh, she came to test him with hard questions-

The record so far in 1 Kings has presented Solomon and his kingdom as deeply and increasingly hypocritical and covered with a mere veneer of spirituality. He was increasingly in debt as a result of his extravagance, to the point of having paid Hiram with 20 Israelite cities. The visit of the Queen of Sheba is likewise recorded in the same vein. A special display of opulence and wisdom is put on for her, and she falls for it. Yet as a result, she comes to believe in the one true God and the Lord taught that she will finally be in God's Kingdom. One function of the story is to tell us the readers how Solomon appeared, we see him through her eyes- although the previous chapters have shown the thoughtful reader that in fact what she saw was fake.

She came to Solomon not because of the magnificence of the temple, but because she had heard of the Name of Yahweh and wanted to know more. This again undercuts Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8. His idea was that the magnificence of the temple would attract Gentiles, and that Yahweh's Name was somehow in the temple. But God had told David that He didn't want a physical house, but rather a house of people who manifested His Name in the sense of His characteristics. The Queen of Sheba is attracted by the Name of Yahweh in this sense. Just as it is the things of Yahweh's Name and not any physical religious structure that will attract the spiritually minded enquirers of any age.

As explained on 1 Kings 9:28, she would have first encountered Solomon's servants when they came to Sheba in search of gold, for which Sheba was famous. "Hard questions" is the word for "riddle". And it seems Solomon answered her riddles using his book of Proverbs. For he uses the word in Prov. 1:5,6 about how his Divinely inspired Proverbs were the answers to such "riddles" of the wise: "These proverbs can even add to the knowledge of the wise and give guidance to the educated, so that they can understand the hidden meanings of proverbs and the problems [s.w. "riddles", "hard questions"] that the wise raise" (GNB). He may have this wise queen of Sheba in mind, as it was her who raised these "riddles" / "problems" with him.

1Ki 10:2 She came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that carried spices, and very much gold and precious stones; and when she had come to Solomon, she talked with him of all that was in her heart-

This woman obviously had genuine questions which were more than mere intellectual tests of Solomon (:1). She presumably accompanied the latest shipment to Solomon of the things Israel traded with Sheba for, although we note she came by land with camels rather than by sea. It seems from the closing verses of 1 Kings 9 that the Israelites usually traded with Sheba by sea. "Great train" is elsewhere translated "great army", as if the wealth of what was being brought was so great that it needed major military escort. The same terms "spices... gold... precious stones" is used of what the queen of Sheba brought to Solomon, and what was brought to Hezekiah after his healing (2 Chron. 32:27). Perhaps the conversion of the queen of Sheba to Israel's God meant that her people continued to be sympathetic to Judah even in Hezekiah's time, and they were the source of these things in his time.

David had prayed that Solomon would be the Messianic king who would receive gold and gifts from the ruler of Sheba (Ps. 72:10,15), and this appeared an exact fulfilment of that. But although :1 implies the visit was of her initiative, we wonder whether Solomon's obsession with living out his father's expectations led him to actually invite her, in order to fulfil the words of Ps. 72 and as it were force a fulfilment in him. For they had been trading partners before this, as 1 Kings 9 makes clear. And yet the majority of Ps. 72 was not fulfilled by Solomon, and will only come true in the Lord Jesus.

1Ki 10:3 Solomon told her all her questions: there was not anything hidden from the king which he didn't tell her-

The idea is as in GNB "there was nothing too difficult for him to explain". "Told her" translates the word used for solving riddles (Jud. 14:13) and interpreting dreams (Gen. 41:24; Dan. 5:12). See on :1.

1Ki 10:4 When the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built-

The next verse suggests the "house" she was amazed at was not so much the temple, as his own house which had taken nearly twice as long to build and was of a grander nature than the temple. Yet he had prayed in 1 Kings 8 that the temple would be the source of wonder for the Gentile world, and would of itself bring about the creation of proselytes for Yahweh. But in reality it was replaced by his own house. We note how she was impressed by 'seeing' his wisdom; she had heard it in theory (:1), but it is the word made flesh which has the power of personal conversion in practice.

1Ki 10:5 and the food of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their clothing, and his cup bearers, and his ascent by which he went up to the house of Yahweh; there was no more spirit in her-

"The sitting of his servants" refers only to those privileged to sit at the king's table. The people generally were enslaved to Solomon and complained of his abuse. This was all a specially arranged demonstration that 'took in' the Queen. "There was no more spirit in her" is the phrase is used in Josh. 5:1 to mean resignation in defeat. Perhaps she imagined herself to be the greatest monarch in the region, but now accepts that Solomon is far greater than her. And thus she becomes representative of all Christian believers as they behind the Lord Jesus, according to how He speaks of her and her final acceptance at the day of judgment.

The way the Queen of Sheba was given a guided tour of Solomon's wealth makes ominous connection with Hezekiah's proud parading of his blessings to the Babylonian ambassadors. I noted another connection with Hezekiah on :2. The "ascent" was the king's personal entry into the temple (2 Kings 16:18) and Hezekiah is

also associated with this in that he wrote the songs of degrees after his healing. They allude to how the sun went back on the sundial of Ahaz, which appears to have been a development of these grandiose steps of the king's entrance to the temple into a sundial. It is this very striking "ascent" which is described in :12. These connections with Hezekiah suggest why the book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon but apparently rewritten by Hezekiah, as frequently discussed in my commentary on Ecclesiastes.

1Ki 10:6 She said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in my own land of your acts, and of your wisdom-

The actual content of Solomon's wisdom, perhaps in the form of the writings we now have as the book of Proverbs, had already been taken to her. She had heard the words by "report", but "didn't believe the words" (:7) until she actually saw the word made flesh. And this is typical of so many people. It is why God speaks His word to us now "in His Son", and why our witness will be the more effective if we make the word flesh in our lives.

1Ki 10:7 However I didn't believe the words, until I came, and my eyes had seen it. Behold, the half was not told me! Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame which I heard-

As explained on :6, it is hard for people to believe mere words. They have to see the word made flesh. This is why simply distributing propositional truths on various media will not of itself convert many people. The word must be made flesh, and then it is believed. This is why the person of the Lord Jesus, the word made flesh, must be absolutely and utterly paramount in our teaching of the Gospel. And it is why public lecturing about various Gospel truths will never convert as many people as witnessing that word in the flesh. It is encounter with real persons which converts real persons, rather than encounter with words and ideas. That is not to say God's word is not alive and powerful of itself. But people are people, they are weak, and often they have lacked access to God's word in its written form. It is the word made flesh in believers of that word which will be the most powerful witness in practice.

1Ki 10:8 Happy are your men-

It is as if she wishes to see David's words about the blessedness or happiness of the righteous nation and people being fulfilled, or perhaps it was Solomon trying to fulfil those words (Ps. 1:1; 33:12 etc.). But it seems this was all an impression Solomon was giving her, for many things were "rotten in the state of Denmark" as noted throughout 1 Kings 8,9. LXX gives "wives" for "men", as if she was struck by the happiness of the wives in his harem, which was unusual. But surely this too was only an appearance, because Ecclesiastes betrays an unhappy family life in Solomon's experience. Were the 1000 women in his harem happy? Surely this was a staged impression, which the queen fell for.

Happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you, who hear your wisdom-

The next generation were to complain that Solomon had chastised the people with whips (1 Kings 12:11). The happiness of the people which the Queen of Sheba observed was therefore just an impression Solomon arranged for her to receive.

1Ki 10:9 Blessed is Yahweh your God, who delighted in you, to set you on the throne of Israel. Because Yahweh loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do

justice and righteousness-

The Lord taught that this woman would appear at the day of judgment and be justified. She came to Solomon because of what she had heard about the name of Yahweh (:1). So she was attracted already to Yahweh. We see how God works through insincere people, hypocritical approaches to religion etc. in order to bring people to Himself. And we enquire how much true doctrine she knew and which of her native false doctrines she retained... Those who think that detailed purity of doctrine is required for covenant relationship with God would need to be reading here that she jettisoned her previous beliefs and accepted a course of instruction in Yahweh. But there is a deafening silence regarding that.

These are identical words as in 1 Kings 5:7, of Hiram's response. We are given the impression that they became proselytes because they used the Yahweh Name; although polytheists could take the name of other gods, such as Yahweh, without it meaning they had accepted them as their own gods.

Because of God's enthusiasm for human response to His ways, the exalted language in which He describes believers, even in their weakness, is a further essay in His humility. The way the Father runs to the prodigal and falls on his neck in tears is a superb essay in this (Lk. 15:20). Thus God "delighted" in Solomon (1 Kings 10:9)- translating a Hebrew word meaning literally 'to bend down to'. It's used about men in love (Gen. 34:19; Dt. 21:14; 25:7), and about Jonathan's deferential attitude to David (1 Sam. 19:2).

1Ki 10:10 She gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold-

This was about one third of his annual income (:14), which could imply she was more wealthy than he was.

And of spices very great store, and precious stones. There came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon-

This note seems to imply that spices were never again imported into Israel, the implication being as Josephus states (*Antiquities*, 8.6.6), "that the cultivation of the balsam in Palestine dates from this visit; the plant having been one of the queen's gifts".

1Ki 10:11 The navy also of Hiram-

Built and operated by him on Solomon's behalf (1 Kings 9:26-28). The ships are called Hiram's because he supplied the wood for building it, and the sailors.

That brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir a great quantity of almug trees and precious stones-

"Almug" appears to refer to sandalwood, "the Hebraized form of the Deccan word for sandal". This points to "Ophir" as being in the east, possibly as far as the Indian coast where these trees grow.

1Ki 10:12 The king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of Yahweh, and for the king's house, harps also and stringed instruments for the singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen, to this day-

"Pillars" is "steps" in 2 Chron. 9:11, so the idea is of a magnificent staircase with elaborate banisters. This appears to be the king's "ascent" into the temple which so amazed the queen of Sheba (:5). This verse is referring back before her visit, because the almug trees were brought for the temple and for the king's house, which were already built by the time she visited.

1Ki 10:13 King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned, and went to her own land, she and her servants-

It is unclear whether this was a genuine gift, or whether it was part of a trade deal. For she had brought a huge caravan of gifts, and in return Solomon gave her what she asked for, as well as his own presents ("his royal bounty").

According to Ethiopian tradition, Solomon slept with the queen of Sheba and she bore Solomon a son called Melimelek. It is possible to interpret Ps. 45 as a reference to Solomon's relationship with the Queen of Sheba.

1Ki 10:14 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold-

This number occurs in the description of the mark of the beast in Rev. 13:18. It is one of the biggest hints that in fact Solomon's kingdom was the kingdom of the flesh, and not at all God's Kingdom as had been promised to David. The apostate religious system called "Babylon" in Revelation is evidently presented in the language of Solomon - at the time his kingdom was apparently flourishing, due to his righteousness. 1 Kings 10:14 = Rev. 13:17,18; 1 Kings 10:23 = Rev. 18:11,12,15; 1 Kings 11:1,2 = Rev. 17:1,2; 1 Kings 10:22 = Rev. 18:17,19; 1 Kings 10:23 = Rev. 18:3,17; 1 Kings 10:21,22 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 10:11 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 10:22 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 10:10,25 = Rev. 18:13; 1 Kings 10:23 = Rev. 18:3,9; 1 Kings 10:28 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 9:22 = Rev. 18:13. These allusions of themselves suggest Solomon's spirituality was a mere appearance. The latter day system which his kingdom looked ahead to may therefore be Jewish or Jerusalem based, with elements of apparent obedience to God.

2 Chron. 3:8 says that Solomon used 600 talents of gold on the temple. Seeing he received 666 talents / year, plus the large income from :16, this means that it was not particularly generous. One talent is 26 kilograms (57 pounds). 1 kilogram of gold is currently worth about 80,000 US\$ [2024]. Despite Solomon's highly successful trading income, he still brutally taxed his people. He became obsessed with wealth and funding his massive building projects.

Or we could conclude that the figure of 666 talents of gold came to Solomon just in one year. He had 120 talents from Hiram (1 Kings 9:14), 420 talents from Ophir (1 Kings 9:28) and 120 talents from the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10: 10). This makes 660 talents, leaving six talents added by the record. If we enquire why the record states 666, it could be because God wanted to associate this number with Solomon. The number 6 is less than 7, the number of perfection. It is the number of the man who fell short.

1Ki 10:15 besides that which the traders brought, and the traffic of the merchants, and of all the kings of the mixed people, and of the governors of the country-
LXX understand this as tribute, the taxes he charged on trading with his ships or through his territory; and in addition there was the income from the taxation system described in 1 Kings 4.

1Ki 10:16 King Solomon made two hundred bucklers of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of gold went to one buckler-

LXX "spears"; the Hebrew idea is of a large shield. David had taken shields of gold in 2 Sam. 8:7, and it seems Solomon was as ever seeking to imitate his father, at least

externally, by making shields of gold. It was this almost pitiable imitation of his father which led to his undoing; for he was never his own man, never personally engaging with God. And when he finally matured in much later life, he had no faith in God at all, and turned to idols.

1Ki 10:17 he made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon-

2 Chron. 9:16 says they weighed 300 shekels each, meaning that one mina was 100 shekels; although the definitions seemed to vary over time (Ez. 45:12). There were 60 shekels to one talent. But this hanging of shields on the walls was exactly what was done in Tyre (Ez. 27:11,12), so as noted earlier, it seems Solomon was copying Tyre as well as other Gentiles. Song 4:4 speaks of 1000 shields hanging "on the tower of David". This may be an exaggerated number, or it could be that these shields combined with those David had taken (see on :16) were 1000 in number.

Is. 2:6-13 condemns Israel for their pride whilst making many allusions to Solomon: "Full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures... full of horses... chariots... idols... the work of their own hands... the cedars of Lebanon" (i.e.

Solomon's armoury of 1 Kings 7:2,3; 10:17). The amount of cedar used for Solomon's house as well as the temple would have probably resulted in the deforestation of parts of Lebanon in order to provide this number of mature cedar trees. To cover an area of 100 x 50 cubits (1 Kings 7:2) with a roof of cedar (1 Kings 7:3) would have required 5000 square cubits of cedar wood if it were a flat roof, and more if the roof was angled; although it could be that not all the area was covered, i.e. there may have been a courtyard. But if it was, then we can better understand why it was called "the house of the forest of Lebanon" (1 Kings 10:17; Is. 22:8). About a whole forest of Lebanon would have been felled and transported to Jerusalem for all this building work.

1Ki 10:18 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the finest gold-

"Ivory" is literally "tooth" as in :22. It was likely made of wood overlaid with ivory and then gold, just as the 'house of ivory' (1 Kings 22:39) and 'bed of ivory' (Am. 6:4) were likewise not made of solid ivory. Ivory thrones were typical of the kings of Assyria, and we wonder if again this is evidence of pagan influence upon Solomon. God had promised to establish David's throne for ever, and Solomon wrongly assumed this was fulfilled in him and therefore he glorified his literal throne. This is typical of his total lack of spiritual perspective.

1Ki 10:19 There were six steps to the throne, and the top of the throne was round behind; and there were stays on either side by the place of the seat, and two lions standing beside the stays-

The six steps stressed the elevation of the throne. It is God's throne which alone is exalted (Is. 6:1). But Solomon justified his self exaltation on the basis that he had been exalted by God, and his throne was God's throne. He repeatedly refused to accept the conditionality of what had been promised to him. The two lions were surely part of the 12 lions of :20. Clearly two of the 12 lions [tribes of Israel] were seen as more exalted. This implies the supremacy of Judah over the ten tribes- and yet this kind of human point scoring was built in to what was supposed to be a replica of God's throne. Solomon was quite unawed by God's glory. For if he had been, he would have realized that before Him, all the tribes were equal.

1Ki 10:20 Twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other on the six steps: there was nothing like it made in any kingdom-

This extraordinary throne received so much attention from Solomon because he was convinced that the promises about David's throne being eternal were fulfilled in him. And so he effectively portrayed it as God's throne, with the 12 lions representing the tribes of Israel ruled over by him. After the division of the kingdom, the throne would have been a sad piece of furniture. But the 12 lions were found on each side of the steps, making 24. This is a number associated with the throne room of God, with 24 elders or division of Angels before it (Rev. 4:4; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4). Perhaps Solomon was aware of this, and so he was making his throne an imitation of God's. The lion was specifically the symbol of Judah (Gen. 49:9); again, Solomon was inserting a subtext of Judah's domination of the rest of Israel. All Israel were to fall under the overall characterization of Judah.

The way Solomon built a huge physical throne, defended by impressive lions of his own creation (1 Kings 10:19,20), rather indicates how he missed the entire point-of ruling on *God's* throne, over a dynasty or 'throne' which God would perpetuate by grace; rather than establishing or creating the throne himself.

1Ki 10:21 All king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon-

However, Solomon only received 666 talents of gold / year (:13); and Alexander's pillage of Ectabana was estimated at 120,000 talents of gold. So Solomon's wealth was not so great, relatively speaking. But it appeared like that, relative to the earlier poverty of a subsistence farming economy like Israel had been before Solomon.

“He that loves silver (as Solomon did, Ecc. 2:8; 1 Kings 10:21-29) shall not be satisfied with silver (as he wasn't- see Ecc. 2); nor he that loves abundance (s.w. used about the abundance of Solomon's wives, 2 Chron. 11:23) with increase. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them (cp. the large numbers at his table, 1 Kings 4:27)” (Ecc. 5:10,11). The Hebrew word translated “not be satisfied” occurs around 25 times in the Proverbs, with Solomon warning of how the way of the flesh couldn't satisfy. Solomon said all this with an eye on himself. He preached it to others, he felt deeply the truth of it, but he saw no personal way out of it. All he had was the accurate knowledge of his situation, but no real motivation to change- like the alcoholic or drug abuser who knows every aspect of the harm of his habit.

1Ki 10:22 For the king had at sea a navy of Tarshish with the navy of Hiram: once every three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks-

The abundance of gold and silver is explained on the basis of the fact that Solomon had a "navy of Tarshish" along with that of Hiram. And along with the gold and silver therefore came ivory, apes and peacocks. The association of these five items together points to trading with areas to the south and east of Israel. There is no way that "Tarshish" can refer to Britain because these items are simply not found there in abundance, and apes and elephants [for the ivory] are hardly natives of Britain. The word for "peacocks" appears to be a Hebraized form of an Indian word. The location of the trading partners is consistently areas to the south and east of Israel, not to the west. "Tarshish" may not in this context refer to a particular location. Rather is it a play on the meaning of the word, 'endurance / long distance', and refers to long

distance trading vessels; just as in the 19th century, such vessels were known as "Indiamen", even if they were not bound for India. Likewise minibuses in the USSR were known as "Latvias" but that didn't mean they were located in Latvia nor were going there.

Comparing 2 Chron. 8:18 and 1 Kings 9:26, it seems that the navy of Solomon was initially based around the navy of Hiram. Hiram had transported his ships to the sea overland through Israel, and Solomon decided to have them build ships for him at their port of departure, so that his traders could accompany the men of Tyre. The ships were perhaps "sent" in the form of wooden structures which were then assembled at the port. But then Solomon began to have the men of Tyre build him his own ships, so that his navy was separate to that of Hiram. But they journeyed together, trading up and down the gulf and as far as India; returning every three years to port and transporting their valuable profits overland back to Israel and thence to Tyre. Each visit to a port would have taken some time, and they would have gained the gold, silver etc. through trading rather than thieving. So they would have bought good from one place and sold them at another, and after three years they had accumulated boats full of gold and silver which amounted to their profits.

1Ki 10:23 So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom-

These are the kings of the earth / land promised to Abraham, which is the same reference of :24. These are the kings of :26 LXX "and he ruled over all the kings from the river to the land of the Philistines, and to the borders of Egypt". The river Euphrates and the borders of Egypt were the *eretz* promised to Abraham.

1Ki 10:24 All the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart-

This refers to the earth / land promised to Abraham, the *eretz* of :23. As with the queen of Sheba, we note that they wanted to hear his wisdom from his actual mouth, in his presence; rather than just hear the ideas, which could easily enough have been relayed by word of mouth or even in writing. But for most people, the word has to become flesh to be persuasive. And so it is that God speaks to us in His Son, having earlier spoken solely through His written word. And our preaching of the word is likewise so far more effective through it being made flesh in us, as it was in the Lord, rather than being solely communicated through the written medium.

1Ki 10:25 They brought every man his tribute, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and clothing, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year-

The first mention of mules in the Bible is associated with Absalom's murder of Amnon his brother (2 Sam. 13:29). They were cross bred in disobedience to Lev. 19:19. We get the impression that a generally slack attitude to what might have been considered minor matters of the law was associated with the major sin of murder. This is the problem when we start to think that some parts of God's laws can just be ignored. David was fond of them, having his own mule (1 Kings 1:33), and Solomon was willing to receive them as tribute (1 Kings 10:25).

1Ki 10:26 Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, that he placed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem-

Solomon had obsessive tendencies. We know that he became addicted to finding

pleasure in women, and Ecc. 2 shows him racing down the road of obsession with architecture, alcohol, food, gold etc. The historical narratives so often mention his gold and silver (e.g. 2 Chron. 9:13-21,24,27). This repetition reflects Solomon's obsession. The same fact explains the record's repetition of Solomon's enthusiasm for horses (1 Kings 10:25-29; 4:26,28; 9:19,22; 2 Chron. 1:14,16,17; 8:6,9; 9:24,25,28). Yet amassing of gold, silver and horses was explicitly forbidden for the King of Israel (Dt. 17:17). There is a powerful point to be made here: we can deceive ourselves that God is blessing us, when actually we are breaching explicit commands. Would Solomon had understood the concept of self-examination.

LXX adds: "and he ruled over all the kings from the river to the land of the Philistines, and to the borders of Egypt".

1Ki 10:27 The king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the lowland, for abundance-

This could mean that he planted cedars in Israel, perhaps transplanting them from Lebanon; for his wisdom included being given wisdom about plants. And that wisdom was for the sake of the blessing and wise leadership of God's people Israel.

1Ki 10:28 The horses which Solomon had were brought out of Egypt; and the king's merchants received them in droves, each drove at a price-

Solomon started off as a middleman in the horse trade, buying horses from Egypt and selling them to the Hittite and Syrian kings (2 Chron. 1:16,17; 1 Kings 10:25,29); but he was playing with fire, and he soon came to flout the spirit of the command not to buy horses from Egypt. It's rather like the brother who works in a video store starting to watch the blue movies which he handles daily. Solomon would have justified it initially by saying that the horses were not for himself; just as we saw he justified his Egyptian wife by the thought that Joseph also married an Egyptian girl. It is twice stressed (:28,29) that Solomon had the horses "brought out of Egypt". His men went there to get them. That is the force of "brought out" rather than the horses being 'sent' to him. This is in specific disobedience to the law of the king in Dt. 17:16: "He must not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, so that he may multiply horses, because Yahweh has said to you, You shall not go back that way again". As often noted, this connection is implicit rather than explicitly highlighted. We are to draw the dots and see in Solomon a man who had no personal sense of responsibility to God nor personal obedience. He thought he was above all law. Because of his father and heritage. Just as many small time Christians consider themselves to be.

1Ki 10:29 A chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred and fifty; and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, they brought them out by their traders-

The description of Solomon's trading with Egypt is described with an unusual phrase- he brought forth chariots and horses out of Egypt by his hand. But the Hebrew phrase 'to bring forth by the hand' is used so very often to described how God's might hand brought forth His people from Egypt- destroying the horses and chariots of Egypt in the process (Ex. 7:4,5; 13:3,14,16; 14:8; 32:11 and so often). This is such a major theme in Biblical history that the inspired choice of words is surely intentional and allusive in 1 Kings 10:29- for Solomon did the very opposite to what God did for His people. Solomon's hand brought forth and glorified the chariots and horses of Egypt, bringing them all the way from Egypt to Canaan. Solomon is thus being subtly set up

as an anti-God figure- although apparently, all was well, the promises of blessing were being fulfilled etc.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 11

1Ki 11:1 Now king Solomon loved many foreign women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites-

Solomon's desire for such a huge number of women, especially foreign women, must be understood in the context of why kings or great men married many wives. They did so in order to build up their own "house", and in Solomon's case he clearly desired to have a huge multi-national house / family to continue his name. He totally and willfully misunderstood the promises to David, and wished to establish himself as the Messianic seed who would build a huge and eternal "house" of people. But that seed was to be God's begotten Son, born after David "slept with his fathers".

Solomon's plan failed. We read of only one son of his, Rehoboam. No other sons are mentioned. We read of two sons-in-law. And that's it. That's all we hear of his [possibly] 2000 kids. Each of the 1000 women must have produced at least one child. We note that Rehoboam his son had eighteen wives and sixty concubines and fathered twenty-eight sons and sixty

daughters; an average of over one child / wife (2 Chron. 11:21). The amount of food required for the palace per day, listed earlier in the account, is appropriate for a king with 1000 wives and say 2000 children. But this "house" he was building came to nothing. The countries of origin of his wives, especially Egypt, turned against Israel. And his wives turned him away from Yahweh.

We read of how he married women from Egypt and the other surrounding nations; LXX adds Syrian and Amorite wives. But we will go on to read how it was exactly all those nations that supported his adversaries and were a thorn in his side throughout his reign. His marriages didn't succeed politically, and certainly they didn't enable him to establish a multi-ethnic eternal kingdom of God with him as the ruler. His entire attempt to establish such a kingdom is portrayed here as a miserable failure- just as all attempts to get the kingdom now will fail. We are living now for the future Kingdom, not trying to create it through our own houses or achievements. 1 Kings 11:24,25 shows that Solomon was surrounded by enemies, he lost Damascus and Hadad an anti-Solomon king reigned there; "and he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon", which means right from the start of Solomon's reign. So what then are we to make of the descriptions of Solomon as reigning peacefully over the land promised to Abraham? I suggest this is a case of focalization and perspective. We are being told that this was how Solomon made it appear. Just as the function of the Queen of Sheba's visit is to show us how Solomon made things appear. This was all how he wanted to perceive it; but the record leaves us to join the dots and see a quite different picture in reality. And so with all those for whom it seems it all worked out to have a fantastic 'kingdom of God' style life now- they present it as if it did, it might appear to have worked out for them, whilst most admit they wasted their lives trying to attain it. But even for those for whom it appeared to work out- it didn't. Just as it didn't for Solomon. It never does and never can do.

We ponder how it can be stressed that Solomon "loved" his 1000 wives. This is just psychologically impossible. I suggest again this is a case of perspective and focalisation. This is what Solomon liked to think and the appearance he gave.

Yet at the very time he was marrying them, he wrote in his wisdom that the words of wisdom would preserve / keep / defend a Jewish man from being damaged by them (Prov. 2:16; 6:24; 7:5). The connection would seem to suggest that Solomon reasoned that because he had wisdom, because he had 'the truth', he could therefore enjoy these "strange women" without them corrupting *his* heart; because *he* had wisdom. Thus he thought that mere possession of Divine truth was some kind of insurance policy against moral sin being counted to him. And so many have gone down this road; so many who knew more true theology than many have at the same time made an awful mess of their personal lives, just as Solomon did. This is why the higher one goes in the echelons of Christian organizations, the greater the learning and knowledge a person has, the more powerful is the tendency towards gross hypocrisy in moral terms. The point is, of course, that all the knowledge of God which we quite rightly seek after must be *personally applied*. The very possession of it and teaching of it to others can of itself make a man or woman demotivated to personally apply it.

1Ki 11:2 of the nations concerning which Yahweh said to the children of Israel, You shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods. Solomon joined to these in love-

The implication is that Solomon took those wives thinking 'Well, I know the law says they will surely turn away my heart, but actually they won't, I can handle it'; and he didn't handle it. Solomon seems to have realized, in the bitterness of Ecclesiastes, that he had made the same mistake as Samson: "I find more bitter than death [i.e. it would be better to be dead than be in this position] the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her" (Ecc. 7:26). The Song of Solomon has Solomon admitting that he has been "taken" by the beauty of that Gentile girl. He utterly refuses to personalize God's truth. These were surely Samson's thoughts in those eyeless weeks in Gaza: better to have died than to have been snared by Gentile women.

Solomon "clave unto these in love", surely alluding to God's definition of marriage as a leaving father and mother and cleaving to a wife. Solomon really loved those women; they weren't just political strings to his bow. They would not have turned away his *heart* if they were only political relationships. 1000 seems a rather exorbitant number of political alliances to have in any case. And Ecc. 2:8 RV says that Solomon sought "the delights of the sons of men, concubines of all sorts". He took sex to its maximum extent- he had every possible type of woman in his harem. Every hair colour, size, type. "Whatsoever mine eyes desired [this is language elsewhere used about sexual desire] I kept not from them" (Ecc. 2:10). And yet still, he never found one... counting one by one, as he put it: "Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found" (Ecc. 7:27,28). If ever there is a warning against immorality, it is here. The more relationships one has- and our world glorifies this- the less ultimate satisfaction there can be. God's way has to be best.

1Ki 11:3 He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart-

"Princesses" means they were all of noble birth. International marriages were nearly always limited to royal families. Solomon married into the nobility of the surrounding

nations, and yet he actually "loved" them in that he was also emotionally involved with them. Yet this didn't work out politically, because those nations all attacked Israel soon afterwards. This lack of self examination and confidence that he could not spiritually fail is reflected in 1 Kings 11:2,3, where we are reminded that God had said that foreign wives would "surely... turn away your heart after their gods". How "surely" this would happen was not believed by Solomon. "He had seven hundred wives... and his wives turned away his heart". He started marrying these foreign wives when he was young; presumably he reasoned that they could never turn away *his* heart because he was the Son of David, the Messianic King. In Prov. 6:27 he soberly warns against the strange (i.e. Gentile) woman, observing that a man cannot take this kind of fire into his bosom and not be burned by it. Yet this is exactly what he was doing at the time he wrote that. His public removal of his Egyptian wife from the house of David "because the places are holy" (2 Chron. 8:11) is therefore to be seen as spiritual pride, appearing to do the right thing, when his heart was far from it.

Solomon's heart was "turned away", or 'influenced' by his wives towards idols (1 Kings 11:3). Yet Solomon uses this very idea of the heart being turned or influenced in Prov. 2:2; 22:17 about the need to turn our hearts towards God's word. He taught, but did the very opposite. And perhaps Prov. 21:1 explains why he did this- he says there that Yahweh turns the heart of the King wherever He wishes- and so perhaps he thought that control of our thinking and inclinations is unnecessary, because somehow God will do it for us. And there's a lesson there for us, who may assume at times that God will somehow control our hearts for us, rather than our making a conscious effort towards mind control.

Many passages make the connection between marriage out of the covenant, and adopting idolatry: Ex. 34:12-16; Dt. 7:2-9; Jud. 3:6,7; 1 Kings 11:2,3; Mal. 2:11; 2 Cor. 6:14. Dt. 7:4 RV dogmatically predicts that a Gentile man will definitely turn away the heart of his Hebrew son-in-law... So certain is it that marriage to Gentiles leads to accepting their idols that Ezra 9:1,2 reasons that Israel hadn't separated from idols *because* they had married Gentiles. Time and again, those who marry out of the covenant claim that they feel strong enough to cope with it, that marriage is only a human thing, and that their spiritual relationship with God is between them and God, and unaffected by their worldly partner. Yet this is exactly the opposite of what God's word says. It's not true that you can marry into the world and be unaffected in your own spirituality.

1Ki 11:4 For it happened, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God, as was the heart of David his father-

"Turned away" is the word used by Solomon in warning his son about the dangers of bad women: "With persuasive words she led him astray" (Prov. 7:21). "Led him astray" is the very term used of how Solomon's wives turned his heart astray from God (1 Kings 11:4,9). The more Solomon knew Divine truth, the more he seems to have considered himself free to ignore it and in fact do the very opposite. He clearly thought that mere possession of that truth was the basis for his justification, and dismissed any idea of self examination or awareness that he might in fact personally fail in obedience.

God said that He accepted the temple not so much as a place to dwell in (as Solomon assumed it was) but as a place facilitating sacrifice, prayer etc., for the glorification of His Name through these things; He emphasized that He dwelt amongst *His people* (1 Kings 6:13; 2 Chron. 7:12-16). There are several other places where

God's response to Solomon's words seems to be corrective rather than affirmatory. Thus Solomon says that God will hear the prayers of His people because *the temple* is called by God's Name; but God's response is that "my people, which are called by my name" would pray to Him themselves and be heard, quite apart from the temple (2 Chron. 6:33 cp. 7:14). He sees them as bearing His Name rather than the temple building, as Solomon perceived it. God goes on to parallel the temple and His people in 2 Chron. 7:21,22, saying that if He punishes the temple He will punish the people. Solomon seems to have thought that the temple would still stand favourably in God's eyes even if the people were punished. The record records that the temple was "perfected" whereas Solomon's heart wasn't perfect [s.w.] (1 Kings 11:4 cp. 2 Chron. 8:16).

There are copious connections between Solomon's writings: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song; and also between them and the historical record of his life. These serve to demonstrate how he clearly contradicted the principles of the Gospel which he taught both to Israel and the world. One of the clearest examples of this is in Prov. 7:16,17, which describes the bed of the strange (i.e. Gentile) woman with which she allures the simple young Israelite: "I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon". Yet these are the very descriptions of the bed Solomon shared with Miss Egypt (Song 3:6-10). The young man's heart was made to go astray because of her (Prov. 7:25), and her house led him to death (Prov. 7:27). Miss Egypt caused Solomon's heart to go astray (1 Kings 11:1-4), he built her a house, and her house became an idol temple which destroyed Solomon's faith. Yet Solomon warned the young men of Israel all about this in Prov. 7; and he even pointed out that such a woman would have all the outward trappings of Yahweh worship; she would claim an enthusiasm for keeping peace offerings and vows (Prov. 7:14). Solomon was the young man whose picture he was painting. In Ecc. 9:12 he says that he suffered the fate of all men in that soon he would die, he would suddenly be caught like a bird in a snare, although he knew not his time. These are the very ideas of Prov. 7:23 concerning the snaring of the simple young man by the Gentile woman: "As a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life".

1Ki 11:5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites-

Solomon went off to other gods because his heart was not "perfect", not at peace [Heb.- not at *shalom*] with the one true God- so says 1 Kings 11:4,5. We see here the upward spiral of spirituality- knowing we are forgiven, being comfortable and at peace with God, means we will not go after the idols of this world. For there is an endless searching for peace in the human heart. If we don't accept the forgiveness and peace that can come from God alone, we will seek peace in false ways. And that's just what Solomon did- for all his wisdom, he didn't personally know peace with God. Head knowledge doesn't give peace- for that is experiential.

"Milcom" is a form of Moloch. Solomon had married all those women in order to build up a huge "house" of children. But now he would have sacrificed some of them as required by Moloch worship. The root of the word Molech is the same as that of the Hebrew word for 'king'. Solomon's wives chose their god as king instead of Solomon or Yahweh.

1Ki 11:6 Solomon did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and didn't go fully after Yahweh, as did David his father-

Solomon didn't go "fully" after Yahweh (1 Kings 11:6)- and yet this same Hebrew word is often on his lips in describing how God has "fulfilled" His promises to David through Solomon. Thus he saw the promises of God as some kind of unconditional offer of blessing- rather than grasping that their fulfillments to us actually demand a 'fulfillment' from us. So for all Solomon's references to the promises to David, he didn't see that they required something from him. And we can be so very similar, knowing God's promises and rejoicing in their fulfillment, without perceiving that this of itself requires response from us.

Having spoken of the need to tolerate our brother, the Lord Jesus repeated His common theme: that there is no third road: "For a good tree brings not forth corrupt fruit; neither does a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Lk. 6:41-43). There's no third position. Either we love our brother, and bring forth good fruit; or we don't get down to it, and bring forth bad fruit. We can't sometimes bring forth good, sometimes bad. At heart, we are either loving or selfishly hateful. Anything less than following Yahweh with all our heart is seen as doing evil in His eyes (1 Kings 11:6).

1Ki 11:7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the mountain that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon-

Solomon could calmly warn others in Prov. 5:8 "don't go near the house of the Gentile woman". But he built his Gentile woman a house and then a house for her gods. The mount "before Jerusalem" is how the mount of Olives is elsewhere described. Hence it is called "the Mount of Corruption" (2 Kings 23:13). The mount of Olives faces the temple mount, so Solomon was as it were provoking Yahweh by this.

What a contrast with Ps. 125:2 "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so Yahweh surrounds His people from this time forth and forever". The hills around Jerusalem are not huge mountains. They are small hills, and this is the picture of God's protection; not hugely visible, but there. But the mountains around Jerusalem became the "high places" of idolatry (1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13; 2 Chron. 21:11); what should have been the symbols of Yahweh's protection became perverted.

1Ki 11:8 So he did for all his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed to their gods-

I suggest on Ecc. 5:1,2 that we are reading there Solomon's regret that David had taken the oath about building the temple, because he is now rejecting the temple cult. He built "houses" of worship for the gods of his wives, and worshipped them instead of Yahweh (1 Kings 11:4-8), worshipping in those temples rather than in Yahweh's temple. So we can understand his reflections in Ecc. 5 as meaning that he was regretting David had vowed to build the temple, leaving him to fulfil it; and his references there to Yahweh dwelling in the temple are therefore to be read as sarcastic. The Song of Solomon emphasizes how the Egyptian girl smells of incense, incense made moreover from spices not native to Israel- and Solomon loved her smell.

1Ki 11:9 Yahweh was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from Yahweh, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice-

As noted on Ps. 119:36; 141:4, David believed that God could act deep within the psychology or heart of man, to incline us toward righteousness and away from evil.

This is how the Holy Spirit works today. Solomon believed the same (s.w. 1 Kings 8:58), but only in theory; for his Gentile wives inclined or turned away his heart from God (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). God will not turn our hearts anywhere we ourselves don't want to go. Solomon often appeals for us to incline our hearts to wisdom (s.w. Prov. 2:2; 4:20; 5:1; 22:17), but he himself was inclined to apostasy (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). All his emphasis is upon the need to incline ourselves, whereas his father David trusted in the work of the Spirit to incline his heart to good and away from evil (Ps. 141:4; 119:36 etc.).

1Ki 11:10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he didn't keep that which Yahweh commanded-

God is clearly stating that Solomon had failed to meet the conditions required for him to be the Messianic son of David according to the promises of 2 Sam. 7. This made all Solomon's reasoning about the nature of the temple null and void. Not keeping that which was commanded by Yahweh is the language of the breaking of the covenant in Dt. 28:45, and therefore "all these curses shall come upon you". But by grace they didn't come upon Solomon, because of God's great respect for his father David. Considering the extent of God's wrath with Solomon (:9), this of itself reflects the high opinion God had of David. His various out of character failures did not ultimately change God's very high and fond opinion of a man who gave his heart to Him.

1Ki 11:11 Therefore Yahweh said to Solomon, Because this is done by you, and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant-

The same punishment which came upon Saul was to come upon Solomon (s.w. 1 Sam. 15:28). And yet Solomon's Proverbs are full of indirect allusions to Saul, presenting him as the archetypal fool. Now, Solomon is told that he will suffer the same fate as Saul.

Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve nor observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to *his* wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to *God's* ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

Solomon muses in Ecclesiastes as to how he has seen servants as kings, as an example of how futile life is. He surely alludes to this threatened judgment upon him—that much of his own kingdom will be given to his servant. But he shrugs it off, just like people shrug off judgment to come and hide behind 'life is pointless, nothing really matters' in their weak moments, and as is glorified in popular art.

There is a Hebraism whereby something being 'with' someone means they have an intention to do something. Thus "This is done by you" (1 Kings 11:11) is literally "Forasmuch as this is with you". Job 10:13 likewise: "And these things hast thou hid

in thine heart, I know that this is with thee" (see too Job 9:35). Likewise in Jn. 1:2, the word was "with" God not literally but in the sense of a plan and intention being "with" a person.

1Ki 11:12 Notwithstanding I will not do it in your days, for David your father's sake; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son-

As observed on :10, this reflects God's abiding high opinion of David. As we try to attach meaning to event in life, we soon perceive that everything is so multi factorial. There are so many factors involved. Solomon's reaping the results of his sins was ameliorated for him in this life, because of his father. Rehoboam his son suffered the effects of his father's sins, whereas Solomon suffered the effects of his father's righteousness. The ultimate equilibrium in each human life is not ultimately discernible; and things are this way in order to humble us and exercise our faith in the simple fact that God is the judge, and He is ultimately just. Even if that justice is not immediately discernible in life. There was a similar postponement of judgment for Ahab (1 Kings 21:29).

The delay was surely because God desperately hoped Solomon would repent, and gave him his whole life to do so.

1Ki 11:13 However I will not tear away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to your son, for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen-

The extent of grace explains countless apparent contradictions and paradoxes throughout God's relationships with men- e.g. God repeatedly said that He would leave David with "one tribe" (1 Kings 11:13). But actually by grace He gave David and Judah two and a half tribes. As discussed on :12, Solomon's reaping the results of his sins was ameliorated for him in this life, because of his father. The 'choosing' of Jerusalem doesn't simply mean God chose it in the sense of selecting it from all the other cities of the earth. For Zech. 1:17; 2:12 speak of God choosing Jerusalem *again* at the restoration, implying His choice of it had somehow been annulled. So we need to understand 'choosing' as meaning 'choosing to manifest His presence there' at some future point eternally. And because of that, God had some fondness for Jerusalem even now.

It's as if Solomon's judgment has two mitigating elements: the postponement of the execution of the sentence until the reign of his son (:12), and a limitation of the territory to be lost (:13). We enquire why this was. There is no indication that there was anything in Solomon's behaviour that called for this. The answer seems to be that the mitigation was because of God's fond memories of David. Yet David himself was very weak spiritually in the later part of his life. We see here God's kindness and the way true love is after the death of the beloved. God doesn't forget His beloved in the way we tend to after their death.

1Ki 11:14 Yahweh raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom-

Hadad's and Rezon's opposition belong to the early years of Solomon's reign but we only now read of them. The lack of chronological order is because the record gives us the picture of how glorious Solomon thought his kingdom to be, reigning in peace without opposition over the land promised to Abraham. We see it through his eyes. But now the record shows us how things really were.

The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament uses the Greek word *diabolos* to translate the Hebrew 'Satan'. Hence Devil and Satan are effectively parallel in meaning. Thus we read in the Septuagint of David being an adversary [Heb. *Satan*, Gk. *diabolos*] in 1 Sam. 29:4 ["turns against us"]; the sons of Zeruiah (2 Sam. 19:22), Hadad, Rezon and other opponents to Solomon (1 Kings 5:4; 11:14,23,25). We face a simple choice- if we believe that every reference to 'Satan' or 'Devil' refers to an evil cosmic being, then we have to assume that these people weren't people at all, and that even good men like David were evil. The far more natural reading of these passages is surely that 'Satan' is simply a word meaning 'adversary', and can be applied to people [good and bad], and even God Himself- it carries no pejorative, sinister meaning as a word. We note too that Yahweh raised up this 'satan'. The 'satan' was not outside God's control; there is no radical evil in the cosmos. For God is almighty.

1Ki 11:15 For it happened, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the army was gone up to bury the slain, and had struck every male in Edom-
 Psalm 60 speaks of this campaign- there was a great defeat of Israel and then a victory once they turned to God. The extent of the initial defeat may be hinted at in 1 Kings 11:15,16: "When David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the army was gone up to bury the slain, and had struck every male in Edom (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom)". This seems to say that Joab went to bury the slain of Israel, and at that slain in a great defeat, and at that time he remained six months subduing the Edomites with the victory which Psalm 60 later celebrates.

1Ki 11:16 (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom)-
 The cutting off of every male must be understood in the context of :14, which says that Hadad was of the king's seed in Edom. I suggest it means that all the royal family of Edom were cut off, but Hadad was the only one who managed to escape. So "every male", rather like "all Israel", is not to be read as globally "every" and "all".

1Ki 11:17 that Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt, Hadad being yet a little child-
 "His father's servants" suggests Hadad was the son of the king of Edom who had been killed by David's men. The flight to Egypt could be seen as looking ahead to the experience of the Lord Jesus, because as explained on :28, Jeroboam was set up as a potential Messianic figure. Had he succeeded as intended, then the flight to Egypt would have become clear in its typical significance. We marvel at the detailed effort God puts in to setting up so much potential which so often comes to nothing.

1Ki 11:18 They arose out of Midian-
 This would be better read as "Maon", the area where Nabal was from (1 Sam. 25:2), and is near Paran. Nabal's people were perhaps like him, against David.

And came to Paran; and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, and appointed him food, and gave him land-

Even in the time of David, when the Edomites were subdued, Pharaoh was very open to supporting the enemies of Israel. This is why Solomon's marriage to his daughter at the start of his reign, not so long after Hadad's establishment in Egypt, was foolhardy.

At best it put his wife in an impossibly compromised position of conflicting loyalties, which we sense beginning even during their romance as recorded in the Song of Solomon. For there she so wishes that she and Solomon could live together in Egypt, and decide wholeheartedly for the sake of their romance to be Egyptians and live there in her homeland.

1Ki 11:19 Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen-

Solomon had married Pharaoh's daughter, and so Hadad may have ended up related to Solomon by marriage. This would have put Solomon's wife in an impossible position of conflicting loyalties. That may be one reason Solomon moved her out of the palace area and built her a separate house. See on :18.

1Ki 11:20 The sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house; and Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the sons of Pharaoh-

This was very high honour, meaning that Hadad's son was effectively amongst the contenders for the Egyptian throne as one of the "sons of Pharaoh". None less than the queen Tahpenes had performed the weaning ceremony which was seen as so significant (Gen. 21:8). Solomon was crazy to fall in love with the daughter of Pharaoh, and to hope that this would be a powerful political alliance.

1Ki 11:21 When Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to my own country-

Hadad wanted to return to Edom and revive Edomite nationalism, so as to become king again once he had thrown off the yoke of Israel in that area. He did much "mischief" to Israel and Solomon (:25). And yet it was at this very time around the death of David and Joab that Solomon was marrying Pharaoh's daughter. This was clearly Pharaoh using marriage for political means. And on Solomon's side, it was following his passions for the Egyptian woman, when both spiritually and politically this was not going to be a good move. Hence Pharaoh was supporting the Edomite insurrection against Solomon, because his son was leading it, at the same time as entering relationship with Solomon. And Solomon's unwisdom therefore resulted in the Hadad issue being a problem for him throughout his life.

1Ki 11:22 Then Pharaoh said to him, But what have you lacked with me, that behold, you seek to go to your own country? He answered, Nothing, however please only let me depart-

Pharaoh had just married off his daughter to Solomon and so he was not initially enthusiastic for his adopted son's desire to lead an insurrection against Solomon in Edom. All this complex web is the stuff of human politics and not love marriage.

1Ki 11:23 God raised up an adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah-

The later king of Syria Benhadad was the grandson of Hezion (1 Kings 15:18), a name which uses similar characters to Rezon who led the first attempted revival of Zobah and Damascus (1 Kings 11:23) after David's victories against them in 2 Sam. 8:3-8. Rezon perhaps didn't so much as flee from Hadadezer, but rather fled from the area at the time when David had conquered Hadadezer.

1Ki 11:24 He gathered men to him, and became captain over a troop, when David killed them of Zobah: and they went to Damascus, and lived therein, and reigned in Damascus-

2 Sam. 8:3-8 says that David had subdued both Zobah and Damascus, to the point of placing a garrison in Damascus (2 Sam. 8:6). But for all his worship of his father and attempt to give the impression of a territory totally under his control, Solomon failed to maintain what David had done. For he had clearly lost control of Damascus and the Israelite garrison had had to retreat. The loss of Damascus meant that northern Israel was under threat from the Syrians. But we never read of Solomon fortifying the area much. Instead, all the massive program of fortification and security was done around Jerusalem and Judah. Solomon is never recorded as even trying to recover Damascus. He was solely focused upon himself in Jerusalem; and thus set up the desire of the northern tribes to secede from his rulership.

1Ki 11:25 He was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the mischief of Hadad: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria-

When reviewing the references to *ha-Satan* ("the adversary") in the Old Testament, it's significant that a number of them occur in the context of the life of David. There was an incident where David behaved deceitfully with the Philistines with whom he once lived, and he is described as being "a Satan" to them (1 Sam. 29:4). That's another example of where the word 'Satan' doesn't necessarily have an evil connotation- a good man can be an adversary, just as Peter was (Mt. 16:21-23) and God Himself can be (2 Sam. 22:4). But we find that David and his dynasty were afflicted with Satans, adversaries, from then on. The word is used about human beings who were adversarial to them in 2 Sam. 19:22; 1 Kings 5:4,18; 11:14-22,25; Ps. 109:6,20 (Heb. "They say, "Appoint a wicked man against him, let an accuser [*Satan*] stand on his right hand"). David's enemies are described by a word related to 'satan' in Ps. 38:20; 71:13; 109:4. Note that it is stated that *God* stirred up men to be 'Satans' to David and Solomon- whatever view we take of 'Satan', clearly it or he is under the direct control of God and not in free opposition to Him.

1Ki 11:26 Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah-

Zarethan where Solomon cast the lavers for the temple with their pagan motifs (1 Kings 7:46) is called Zaredathah in 2 Chron. 4:17, which is a form of Zeredah (1 Kings 11:26), the birthplace of Jeroboam son of Nebat. It doesn't therefore have good connections. We wonder if the golden calves were cast there too.

A servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, he also opposed the king-

Solomon alludes to Jeroboam in Prov. 14:35: "The king's favour is toward a servant who deals wisely, but his wrath is toward one who causes shame". Although what Solomon writes is true and inspired, he clearly has in view his favour and then wrath against his servant Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:26). Solomon uses his own feelings against Jeroboam as a basis for a global truth about kings and their servants. His Proverbs were indeed inspired, but there was a human element behind his words, ever seeking to use God's truths in order to justify himself.

Solomon was so confident that he was or would be the Messiah that he seems to have felt that he was beyond the possibility of sinning; real self-examination and the sense of the possibility of failure just didn't exist for him. He says that the land of Israel is "blessed" because her king is the son of a noble, and she will be cursed if her

ruler is a servant (Ecc. 10:16,17 RVmg.). Solomon proudly presented himself as the son of King David- and he makes a clear swipe at Jeroboam, the pretender to the throne who was a servant (1 Kings 11:26). By reasoning like this, Solomon sets himself in direct opposition to the spirit of Jesus, who declared that the servant is to be the King of all.

1Ki 11:27 This was the reason why he opposed the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breach of the city of David his father-

Jeroboam may have fallen out with Solomon over these building projects because he saw that the northern tribes were being forced to provide tax and labour which they couldn't afford. He therefore garnered the support of the northern tribes for his position. Yet Rehoboam sent the hated Adoniram, the chief gatherer of these taxes, to try to bring the northern tribes again under him. The whole situation was set up for division. And Solomon was the prime cause of it.

Solomon began repairing the breaches (cp. Jud. 21:15), but this contrasts with how Solomon's later behaviour led to the rending apart of David's kingdom. Perhaps the breaches in the wall David had built had happened during some unrecorded invasion or attack upon Jerusalem. "Millo" means 'rampart' and refers to the fortifications built around the citadel where David's palace was. But "the breach" is singular, and "repair" can be 'to close up'. The reference may be to Solomon building a wall between the mounts of Zion and Moriah, i.e. across the Tyropean valley, extending David's city walls in order to include the temple within them.

"Opposed" is Heb. 'lifted up his hand against'. It is the same word translated "exalted" when we read that God exalted / lifted up Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:7), so that ultimately he became king of the ten tribes. His opposition or lifting up his hand against Solomon was therefore of God and confirmed by God.

1Ki 11:28 The man Jeroboam was a brave man; and Solomon saw the young man that he was industrious, and he put him in charge of all the labour of the house of Joseph-

That is, the tribe of Ephraim, the largest tribe, who would have been the most resentful and resistant to sending their men to work on the new capital of Judah. And so this largest and most difficult group of workers were put under Jeroboam's control, indicating the senior nature of his role.

The final comment upon Jeroboam is that he was not as God's servant David (1 Kings 14:7-9). And yet he was set up with that potential possibility. Consider:

Jeroboam (1Kings 11) - David

Man of valour v. 28- As David 1 Sam. 16:18 RV;

Young man v. 28 - 1 Sam. 17:58

Ruler over all v. 28 - 1 Sam. 18:5

I will take you and you shall reign over Israel v. 37 - 2 Sam. 7:8

Build a house v. 38 - 2 Sam. 7:11

v. 40 - 1 Sam. 19:2,10

And it works the other way, too. Prophecies of doom can be turned round by our repentance. Nineveh avoiding certain destruction on account of their repentance is a clear example.

1Ki 11:29 It happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; now Ahijah had put on a new garment; and they two were alone in the field-

God never essentially recognized that division; for there was one Israel, one body. Indeed, He said that the division was the greatest tragedy to come upon His people (Is. 7:17). The way the new garment of Ahijah was torn up to symbolize the division, reflects the utter waste (1 Kings 11:29). For an outer cloke was a garment a man could wear for life; to have a new one was something significant. Significantly, the road to Jericho which features in the parable of the good Samaritan was the very dividing line between Judah and Ephraim (Josh. 16:1). The significance of this may be in the implication within the parable that Israel fell among thieves, needing the Messianic grace and rescue, as a result of their division into two kingdoms. And so many other spiritual lives have been shipwrecked over the rocks of division. Indeed, the Greek words for "division" and "stumbling block" are related; divisions are a stumbling block to so many, even if they externally remain within their faith communities.

I suggest that the events predicted by Ahijah the Shilonite (the family of David and the tribe of Judah losing kingship over all Israel) are the fulfilment of Gen. 49:10 "The scepter will not depart from Judah" [he will not be banished from his kingdom] "until he comes to Shiloh". When Judah came to Shiloh to crown Rehoboam there, and there the "peoples [of Israel] will gather to him" to crown him, there the kingship or scepter over the ten tribes was lost. Shechem and Shiloh are close to each other and mentioned together twice: "Behold, there is a sacrifice before the Lord in Shiloh... on the east side of the highway that goes up from Beth-El to Shechem" (Jud. 21:19). Likewise in Jer. 41:5: "from Shechem (and) from Shiloh". The one who comes to Shiloh, the one from Shiloh, may refer not to Messiah but to Ahijah the Shilonite, the one from Shiloh, who prophesied how the kingship would depart from Judah. Ahijah is called "the Shilonite", the man from Shiloh, five times in the record. Quite some emphasis. If "until Shiloh come" refers to the Lord Jesus, it is hard to understand how the kingship departs from Judah when He comes, seeing He Himself is the lion from Judah. And it is hard to understand why He should be called "Shiloh" and the passage never apparently applied to Him in later scripture. The diadem / sceptre did depart from Judah, as Ezekiel 21:25-27 makes clear- and well before the Lord Jesus came. So to make "Shiloh" simply equal to Messiah just doesn't work.

1Ki 11:30 Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it in twelve pieces-

If we read the "him" as Ahijah [the LXX make this explicit], which seems logical seeing he had dressed himself with that garment (:29), then this gives the impression of mourning. For tearing one's garment meant mourning. God truly sorrowed at the judgment of Solomon and the division of the kingdom- a division which Solomon had created by taxing the north to fund the south, and thereby causing disillusion with the temple as a place of worship. So the Divine judgment of division was in fact only confirming Solomon in what he had himself done and set up. All Divine judgment and condemnation is really only giving men what they themselves lived out in their lives. This is why 2 Kings 17:21 says that it was Israel who tore away from David, whereas Ahijah gives the perspective that it was God who tore them away: "For Israel [tore] away from the House of David, and they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king". The same word is used as in 1 Kings 11:30 for the tearing of Ahijah's garment. "Garment" is *shalmah* and "Solomon" is *shlomo*- the same consonants in each word. The rending of the garment / kingdom was a rending of Solomon. It was judgment for what he had done. His huge efforts to create a massive kingdom / house had come to nothing and in fact the kingdom would be torn.

We ask why the robe was torn into twelve rather than into two. Possibly Solomon's twelve taxation districts are alluded to. Or perhaps the twelve sons of Jacob- the family was now to be divided.

The Lord's robe was not to be torn, *schizein*. There was to be no schism in it. Ahijah tore his garment into twelve pieces to symbolize the division of Israel (1 Kings 11:30,31). The Lord's coat being unrent may therefore be another reflection of how His death brought about unity amongst His people (Jn. 11:52; 17:21,22). Before Him, there, we simply cannot be divided amongst ourselves. Likewise the net through which the Lord gathers His people was unbroken (Jn. 21:11). Note how all these references are in John- as if he perceived this theme of unity through the cross.

1Ki 11:31 He said to Jeroboam, Take ten pieces; for thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to you-

The word "tear" is used several times in this chapter, and it is the word used multiple times when describing the rending of garments in grief and distress. The same idea is in view; but whose was the grief, and who as it were rent their garments? It was God. His intense grief was because of the division of His people. This judgment hurt Himself, and was not simply thrown by Him at His people without personal grief. And His grief about the division of His people continues to this day.

Jeroboam is asked to take the ten pieces, to accept the gift of the Kingdom from God. But the prophet Abijah condemns Jeroboam for this: "Jeroboam... rebelled against his master" (2 Chron. 13:6), which was a sin because "the Lord God of Israel gave David kingship over Israel forever—to him and his sons—by a covenant of salt" (2 Chron. 13:5). His kingdom was "the kingdom of the Lord, which is in the charge of the sons of David" (2 Chron. 13:8). We have a window here into the complex way God works. He gave the kingship to David's line "for ever", but conditionally. It was His intention that it would only be an eternal line in that a future descendant of David, God's begotten Son the Lord Jesus, would reign eternally. But David and Solomon liked to interpret this as meaning that their line of kings would endure eternally. God went along with this by telling Solomon that this was conditional upon his perfect obedience and not turning away from Him. Solomon failed in this. So God gave the kingdom to Jeroboam, but Jeroboam also sinned in taking it... And so God works oftentimes with man.

1Ki 11:32 (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)-

As noted earlier, by grace, David was given not just one tribe but two and a half tribes. The whole Bible is really the story of God's endless grace in ameliorating the just judgments He has given; perhaps partly because, as explained on :31, they are so painful to Himself.

1Ki 11:33 because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon. They have not walked in My ways, to do that which is right in My eyes, and to keep My statutes and My ordinances, as David his father did-

Notice the "they", of Israel, who were effectively guilty of the very same apostasy as Solomon. Solomon was fully representative of Israel (1 Kings 11:1,5-7 cp. 33; 8:52; and note the ye... thee confusion of 1 Kings 9:4-7 AV); his prayer was their prayer (2 Chron. 6:21); his worship was theirs (2 Chron. 1:3,5).

1Ki 11:34 However 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, who kept My commandments and My statutes-

"Make him prince" suggests that in God's eyes, Solomon was demoted from king to prince. Solomon of course acted as if he were still king, as if God's appearance to him hadn't really happened; but his status changed in God's sight.

1Ki 11:35 but I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it to you, even ten tribes-

If Rehoboam had listened to the advice of the older men and relaxed Solomon's oppressive taxation system, then Israel would likely have remained loyal to him. But he didn't take that good advice, because it was "of the Lord" to fulfill prophecies like this (1 Kings 12:15). There is a hand greater than our own, a factor beyond our freewill receipt and processing of information, which works to fulfil God's will. And that is why we cannot judge human behaviour, because it reflects such a complex of factors which only God knows.

1Ki 11:36 To his son will I give one tribe, that David My servant may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Me to put My name there-

"That David may have..." can mean to the effect 'So that potentially David may have...'. This was God's intended purpose, but its fulfilment was precluded by the unfaithfulness of the seed. He did not choose Jerusalem for ever; because it was to be destroyed, and was only to be chosen "again" at the restoration (Zech. 2:12). The lamp in Jerusalem was the budding of the horn of David (Ps. 132:17). And this was to finally come true in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, David's great son. But that lamp could have "always" burned in Jerusalem- potentially. But the various potential fulfillments failed to realize the potential.

1Ki 11:37 I will take you, and you shall reign according to all that your soul desires, and shall be king over Israel-

This seems to be saying that Jeroboam had absolute freewill, he could reign as he wished- but God had set him up with the amazing potential of being the seed through whom He would rule Israel (:38).

1Ki 11:38 It shall be, if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in My ways, and do that which is right in My eyes, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as David My servant did; that I will be with you, and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you-

This indicates the presence of some basic spirituality within him. In 1 Kings 11:35 God tells Jeroboam that He would take the ten tribes from the house of David, and give them to Jeroboam. This is exactly the language of God speaking about righteous David, who was given the Kingdom which God took away from Saul. So initially, Jeroboam had some of David's characteristics; it seems rather strange for God to take away the ten tribes from one sinner and give them to another sinner. At that time, Jeroboam's potential spirituality was reasonably to the fore. If Jeroboam had continued in God's ways, God would have established Jeroboam as king over His Kingdom (1 Kings 11:38). So Jeroboam was being given a chance to make the right choices. He had the potential to do so. This echoes God saying to Moses 'I will make

of you a great nation' because of the apostasy of others. Thus Jeroboam is faintly connected with Moses. However, as noted on 1 Kings 12:27, Jeroboam simply didn't have the faith to believe in this wonderful grace; that he, son of a whore (1 Kings 12:24 LXX) could be empowered by God to be the Divinely chosen king of Israel and the fulfilment of the promises to David.

1Ki 11:39 I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not forever'-

This could imply that Jeroboam would only rule as the king of Israel for the period during which God would afflict David's seed. Or we could take this as meaning that the seed of David would be afflicted "for this", for the sake of Solomon's sin. But in this case we wonder why they are called "the seed of David". I suggest that "the seed of David" therefore refers to Solomon specifically, and that this final prophecy doesn't chronologically follow :38. It could be that God's potential plan was that Solomon was to be afflicted for a period, during which Jeroboam and not Rehoboam was to reign, and then Solomon would repent and be fit to rule. But Solomon refused to respond, as did Jeroboam, and so this potential plan wasn't realized.

1Ki 11:40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam-

Solomon's response to the message about the kingdom being rent from him was apparently to cynically comment that there is a time to rend... but he couldn't care less (Ecc. 3:7). We see here how little Solomon respected God's word. He thought that by murdering someone he could stop the fulfilment of the prophecies. He was acting just like Saul, who tried to kill David when told that David was to have the kingdom.

But Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon-

Even politically, his marriages with all those Gentile women didn't seem to achieve him the support he desired from their home countries; Egypt gave refuge to Jeroboam, Solomon's main rival (1 Kings 11:40), even though he always acquiesced to his wives and even in his very old age he still didn't destroy the idol temples he built for them (2 Kings 23:13).

1Ki 11:41 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, aren't they written in the book of the acts of Solomon?-

This book may have been a compilation from various prophetic writings, for the equivalent in 2 Chron. 9:29 is "the history of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam".

1Ki 11:42 The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years-

Saul, David and Solomon are all said to have reigned for "forty years", but the similarity is such that we wonder whether this isn't a symbolic period. For numbers were not used in Semitic literature in the precise way which we are accustomed to. Thus three consecutive kings of Babylon, Saosduchius, Chiniladanus, and Nabopolassar are each recorded as having reigned 21 years.

1Ki 11:43 Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place-

The description of death as sleeping with fathers is clear evidence that death is seen as a sleep, unconsciousness, and not as the start of an immortal soul going to heaven or 'hell'. Good and bad, David and Solomon, are gathered together in death. The division

between them will only therefore come at the resurrection of the dead, and the granting of immortality at the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 12

1Ki 12:1 Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king-

The LXX addition on :24 adds: "And Jeroboam went to Shechem in mount Ephraim, and assembled there the tribes of Israel; and Roboam the son of Solomon went up thither". This would explain why this gathering to instate Rehoboam as king was held in Shechem and not in Jerusalem. And yet although Jeroboam was present with supporters, it appears that "all Israel" favoured the idea of Rehoboam as king. The old men truly advised him that if he would only ease the taxation, all Israel would remain loyal to him (:7). It could even be that the ten tribes had invited Rehoboam from Jerusalem to their great meeting place in Shechem specifically because they wanted him to be king. But this had to change, according to God's judgment upon Solomon- the ten tribes had to be removed from the control of his dynasty.

We enquire why Rehoboam chose Shechem rather than Jerusalem as the place for his coronation, as it was the leading city of Ephraim. I suggest he realized how his father had alienated Ephraim and he wanted to reconcile with them. This points up how his abusive language to the men of Ephraim was indeed "of the Lord", for it goes against his own intentions. Likewise Jeroboam came with the rest of Israel to Shechem offering to serve him (2 Chron. 10:3), as if Jeroboam at that point had no designs on the throne but was suddenly as it were catapulted onto it- all clearly of God. It was all "of the Lord" (:15). This is how the Spirit works in our lives, over and above our own power and conscious intentions, and yet confirming us in where we really want to go.

1Ki 12:2 It happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam therefore lived in Egypt-

It seems this verse and :3 should follow 1 Kings 11:43 as in LXX and some Hebrew manuscripts.

1Ki 12:3 and they sent and called him), that Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam saying-

We note that Jeroboam didn't immediately begin by demanding the throne, but rather led the people in asking Rehoboam to reduce his father's excessive taxation system. But his return from Egypt, and his awareness of the prophecy about him ruling over Israel, surely meant he had in view the possibility of Rehoboam rejecting the request.

In a distorted way, Jeroboam was almost a type of Christ; for as made clear at the end of 1 Kings 11, he could have been the Messianic ruler over Israel had he chosen Yahweh's way. I'd suggest that many wicked Old Testament characters *could* have been types of Christ if they had lived righteously, and the record indirectly indicates this. Jeroboam fled to Egypt because of the persecution of Solomon, as did the Lord. When Solomon died, "they sent and called him", connecting with the record of the Lord Jesus going to Egypt and coming back after Herod's death. Jeroboam came back on the third day (:12) and offered freedom from bondage to Israel, as did Christ on his resurrection. In 1 Kings 13:10 we read of the prophet who came to prophesy about Jeroboam; we are told that he didn't return the way he came, but went back another

way. That's an echo of the wise men, who came to see Jesus, and returned another way.

1Ki 12:4 Your father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make the grievous service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, lighter, and we will serve you-

Ephraim had been specifically targetted as a provider of labour and tax revenues (1 Kings 11:28). The influence of Egypt upon Solomon is reflected by the way in which he is described as making the people serve him with "hard bondage" (2 Chron. 10:4; 1 Kings 12:4). This is the very Hebrew phrase used to describe what the Egyptians did to Israel (Ex. 1:14; 6:9; Dt. 26:6). Solomon put his people under a yoke (2 Chron. 10:4), just as Egypt did to them (Lev. 26:13). And so we see the progression.

Solomon loved an Egyptian woman, came to serve her gods, traded with Egypt... and the attitude of Egypt to God's people became Solomon's attitude to them. There is something unique about God's people; and yet the closer we come to the world, the more we come to see our own community, God's special family, just as this world sees us. The world's attitude to us can so easily become our attitude to our brethren- no longer seeing them as the specially chosen little children of God, sensitive to them as our very own brothers and sisters. And indeed, the attitude of the world to people must not be ours. For the world is narcissistic, they fail to see the value and meaning of the human person.

The very possession of wisdom and teaching of it to others can of itself make a man or woman demotivated to personally apply it. He foretold that the people would sign when a wicked man ruled them (Prov. 29:2 RV)- and they did "sigh" because of the heavy burdens he placed upon them (1 Kings 12:4). He imposed the "yoke" of tribute upon the people (2 Chron. 10:4), whereas he himself had warned that a king that imposes tribute on his people "overthrows" a country (Prov. 29:4 RV mg.). He saw it all as true- and yet it was far from him personally.

1Ki 12:5 He said to them, Depart for three days, then come back to me. The people departed-

The three days may have been in order to allow the advisers to be summoned from Jerusalem.

1Ki 12:6 King Rehoboam took advice with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What advice do you give me to return answer to this people?-

If Solomon was 41 at this time and the "young men" were those who had grown up with him, these men would have been really quite "old", old enough to have lived through much of David's reign and to have been influenced by his spirituality. Or the word may be used here to simply refer to the elders, whereas Rehoboam had also surrounded himself with his own peer group as advisers.

In this context, we may consider Solomon's frequent proverbs about the wisdom of having advisors, and his words in Prov. 20:18: "Plans are established by advice". Solomon's advice to his son sounds all well and good; but Rehoboam was given two different paths of advice by his advisors. Again, Solomon's words are true, but simplistic. Because as Rehoboam's case shows, the issue is not so much having advisors *per se*, but deciding which advisors to listen to. Solomon too had advisors, but did what he wanted, making this Proverb somewhat hollow when applied to himself.

We note Rehoboam's term "this people" (:6,9). He felt a separation between himself and them; they were not 'his people' nor did he see them as Yahweh's people. They were just an entity that disturbed his kingly enjoyment- exactly his father's attitude. And we see lived out the principle that according to how we perceive people, so we treat them.

1Ki 12:7 They said, If you will be a servant to this people this day, and will serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever-

See on :1. The general will of Israel was for Rehoboam and not Jeroboam, but the taxation issue was crucial.

The paradox of servant leadership is found here- if Rehoboam had been a servant of his people, then he would have ruled over them. In all ways, the Lord is our pattern. He was a servant of all, and so should we be. His servanthood dominated His consciousness. He said that He came not [so much as] to be ministered unto, but so as to minister, with the end that He gave His life for others (Mk. 10:45).

1Ki 12:8 But he ignored the advice of the old men which they had given him, and took advice with the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him- Rehoboam didn't like the advice of the older men, and so he asked advice from his own peer group. Asking advice is so often just a mask for seeking confirmation in the way we have ourselves already decided. And we also are reminded here of how strong is our desire to be seen by our peer group as in line with their thinking. The power of God's word is negated by all such psychological games.

It is true that as we go through life, we ought to realize that harsh responses and demands upon others are not really the way to go. These "young men" were perhaps the boys he had grown up with in Solomon's harem, his half brothers. They, like him, would not have been pure Israelites as their mothers were Gentiles, and they didn't have the long term well being of the nation at heart. Rehoboam was 41 at this stage. Perhaps then we can understand this as meaning that he had appointed young men as his advisers, who had been raised near him (the Hebrew *eth* translated "with" is a very wide word). They were young, but the Hebrew doesn't have to mean he had grown up with them. Rather they were young men who had been raised as he had been, in the same harem, which would hardly have been much of a place of wisdom.

1Ki 12:9 He said to them, What advice do you give, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me saying, 'Make the yoke that your father put on us lighter?'

He had written in his Proverbs that the ruler who lacks wisdom will oppress his people (Prov. 28:16); and although his wisdom remained with him right to the end, in terms of knowledge (Ecc. 2:9; 12:10), yet at the end of his reign Solomon was the ruler who did oppress his people (1 Kings 12:11). And he had gone on in Prov. 28:16 to warn against covetousness in a ruler, even though he went ahead with practicing every conceivable form of it in Ecc. 2. "Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh" (Ecc. 11:10) Solomon taught- and yet Solomon in Ecclesiastes is the very picture of such a person. Like the experienced pilot who takes off with frozen wings and then crashes, so Solomon's very wisdom somehow disinclined him to living it out in practice. This is the perversity of our nature- the higher we may rise, the deeper we are inclined to fall.

1Ki 12:10 The young men who had grown up with him spoke to him saying, Thus you shall tell this people who spoke to you saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but make it lighter to us;' you shall say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist-

The Lord appears to allude to this when He invites all those burdened and heavy laden to come to Him because His yoke is easy and the burden light (Mt. 11:28). It could be argued that He is thereby acknowledging that Jeroboam, who offered the easier burden, could have been as Him, a fulfilment of the promise of the Messianic king (1 Kings 11:38). He saw in those people abused by Solomon the religiously abused people who were suffering under the burdens placed upon them by their religious leaders; and He saw those Jews as represented by Solomon, whom He continually reads in a bad light.

1Ki 12:11 Now whereas my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions'-

The contrast is not between whips and scorpions, but the idea is rather than he would use a far heavier whip known as a scorpion. The Romans had a whip called a "scorpio", used for punishment.

We have an insight into why Solomon was like this in Prov. 10:13 LXX: "He that brings forth wisdom from his lips smites the fool with a rod". Solomon has himself in view, but now instead of attributing wisdom to Divine inspiration, he starts to consider that it emanated from himself. When he died, the people complained that he had whipped [Heb. 'beaten'] them unreasonably. It was Solomon's false view of his wisdom which led him to do this. He assumed that he must be right, he was infallible, because of his possession of Divine truths. He justified indulging his natural human tendency to be overly harsh on others because he claimed he was the source of all wisdom. And again we see a parallel in fundamentalist Christian groups; where the more dogmatic are the claimants to possession of absolute truth about everything, the more they tend to abuse others and show no mercy to any who fail to attain to their supposed wisdom. Prov. 26:3 is also relevant, in the LXX "As a whip for a horse, and a goad for an ass, so is a rod for a simple nation". It was this attitude which led Solomon to beat his own people. Like many who hold God's truth, the mere holding of it lifted Solomon up in pride, and he came to despise all others who didn't accept his wisdom.

Despite having such knowledge and wisdom with which to rule Israel (for this was the primary purpose of the gift of wisdom to him), Solomon oppressed his people. With evident reference to himself, he commented: "Because the king's word has power, who may say unto him, What doest thou?" (Ecc. 8:4 RV). It is only God who cannot be questioned in this way. But Solomon felt that because he possessed God's wisdom, he could therefore act as God: "I counsel you, Keep the King's command, and that in regard of the oath of God" (Ecc. 8:2) could suggest that he thought that his commandments were in fact God's. So the possession of Truth, which we too have, can lead to an incredible arrogance, a lack of openness to others' comments upon us, and a certainty that *we* are right in all that we do and are beyond criticism. The hardness of a man is changed by true wisdom (Ecc. 8:1 RV), but knowing this, Solomon became hard hearted. He had the wisdom- but as he said, it was far from him personally.

“Surely oppression maketh a wise man foolish” (Ecc. 7:7 RV), he commented at the end of his life- even though *right then* he was chastising the people with whips, oppressing them (1 Kings 12:11). He knew the true wisdom, he saw his reflection so accurately in the mirror, but resigned from its personal implications. He could even write that “I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun [by himself!]: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power [Solomon was king and had set up the tax system in a clever and biased way]; but they had no comforter” (Ecc. 4:1; 5:8). It was a real case of spiritual schizophrenia- he sorrowed for the people he oppressed. All groups who feature absolute truth claims, considering themselves the one true church and their system of theology to be "the truth" and all others to be without God... run the risk of becoming like Solomon. "The truth" eclipses personal moral obligation, and leads to abuse or abusive positions to those inferior to our level of "truth". The meaning and value of the human person becomes forgotten.

1Ki 12:12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king asked, saying, Come to me again the third day-

We the readers are drawn into a sense of expectation; we ourselves know what Rehoboam is going to say, but we are placed in the position of the suffering people, who didn't yet know what Rehoboam was going to answer.

1Ki 12:13 The king answered the people roughly, and forsook the advice of the old men which they had given him-

"Roughly" is the word used of how the Egyptians treated the Israelites in whipping them and giving them heavy burdens to carry (Ex. 1:14). This was how he was behaving. It is the word the people have just used when they complained that Solomon had treated them 'grievously' (:4); and Rehoboam confirms that he is going to do the same. Solomon had frequently warned against forsaking the advice of elders (s.w. Prov. 2:17; 4:2 and especially the warning of Prov. 27:10 not to forsake the advice of your father's friend). But Rehoboam had probably not even read or heard all these Proverbs, as Solomon himself had ignored his own Proverbs and lived quite opposite to them. And so did his son.

1Ki 12:14 and spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions-

Solomon has so much to say about 'chastisement' / "correction" / "instruction" coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be

admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

1Ki 12:15 So the king didn't listen to the people; for it was a thing brought about of Yahweh, that He might establish His word which Yahweh spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat-

There are times when God has influenced men not to respond to the evidently wise words of other men, in order to fulfill His purpose (e.g. 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 25:20). There are a number of other passages which mention how "it was of the Lord" that certain attitudes were adopted by men, resulting in the sequence of events which He desired (Dt. 2:39; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 10:15; 22:7; 25:20). It is tempting to read Jud. 14:4 in this context, meaning that God somehow made Samson desire that woman in order to bring about His purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine domination. God through His Spirit works to confirm men in the path they wish to go. And this is the huge significance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today.

1Ki 12:16 When all Israel saw that the king didn't listen to them, the people answered the king saying, What portion have we in David? Neither do we have an inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, Israel! Now see to your own house, David. So Israel departed to their tents-

This was the cry of Sheba in 2 Sam. 20:1. But the promises of 2 Sam. 7 were to David and his seed / house. By resigning from any association with that house, they were walking out of the hope of Israel which was in those promises. This has been done so many times by those who [understandably] become disillusioned with the family of believers, but their break with them develops into a break with the things of God's Kingdom.

"See to your own house, David" could be a reference to the house in the sense of the temple. Indeed it reads strangely if it simply refers to 'house' as in a family. The idea would then be that the temple was so deeply associated with David and his line that the people were saying they refused to worship in it. They now considered it was to just be for the house of David. And I have suggested earlier that the temple was little more than the king's chapel, attached by an "ascent" to his palace which was far bigger and more glorious than the temple. And so it often happens, that unreasonable behaviour by religious leadership means the flock don't want to attend church, and are left wide open to being led away by totally non Christian ideas.

LXX gives "Now feed your own house", as if the bitterness arose from decades of the other tribes being taxed in order to feed Solomon's huge royal family, arising from his 1000 wives.

1Ki 12:17 But as for the children of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them-

This means that there were people from the ten tribes living in Judah, particularly those who had been transported there by Solomon to live in the various defensive outpost towns he had built in southern Judah. And they remained under Rehoboam. See on :23.

1Ki 12:18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the men subject to forced labour; and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. King Rehoboam made speed to get himself up to his chariot, to escape to Jerusalem-

If the forced labour quotas of Solomon were to now be multiplied, life would literally be impossible for the ten tribes. It is no surprise therefore that Adoram was stoned and Rehoboam had to flee for his life back to Jerusalem- reflecting on the folly of his young advisors.

1Ki 12:19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David to this day-

The same phrase used of Edom in 2 Kings 8:22. The word for "rebelled" is also translated "transgressed". Their division from the house of David was a division away from the promises about the eternal establishment of that house, as noted on :16. In this sense it was therefore sinful.

1Ki 12:20 It happened, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only-

We are given the impression that Jeroboam did not present himself as king nor seek the throne. He was invited to be king by the people. This again suggests that the will was there to continue under Rehoboam; but it was "of the Lord" that Jeroboam became king, almost against his will. At least, without undue effort on his part to claim the throne over Israel.

They presumably made him king by anointing him. "All Israel" may therefore imply that those present at the meeting with Rehoboam in Shechem had largely been more local people. The mention of "Judah only" is a nod to the fulfilment of the promise that Rehoboam would be left with but one tribe; but :21 goes on to say that Benjamin were also given to him, by grace. For Benjamin was the tribe of Saul who had for many years been bitterly opposed to David and his tribe of Judah. It was the men of Benjamin who had supported previous revolts against Davidic rulership (2 Sam. 19:17; 20:1). Ahijah had torn the garment into 12 strips and given 10 to Jeroboam. There was one strip or tribe for Rehoboam, and the Levites were God's. But by grace, Rehoboam ended up with Benjamin too, and in fact also half the tribe of Manasseh. Again we see how this too was "of the Lord" and grace was ever present even in judgment. Perhaps they were simply influenced by the fact that Jerusalem was technically in their tribal allotment (Josh. 18:28). If they were not with Judah, then they would apparently have to accept Shechem or some other northern city as their capital and effectively abandon Jerusalem, which Solomon had built up to be the most impressive city of the whole Middle East at the time.

1Ki 12:21 When Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon-

Benjamin was a small tribe (1 Sam. 9:21; Ps. 68:27). 18 years later, there were 400,000 warriors in Judah (2 Chron. 13:3), so this was a very significant proportion of warriors. But in David's time there had been 470,000 (2 Sam. 24:9). Although "thousand" may refer to a military division rather than 1,000.

1Ki 12:22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God saying-

This may be now a quotation from the history written by Shemaiah about Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:15).

1Ki 12:23 Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house

of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people saying-

"The rest of the people" presumably refers to those of the ten tribes who lived in Judah and were loyal to Rehoboam (:17). The records dovetail so perfectly, as we would expect of a history written ultimately under Divine inspiration.

1Ki 12:24 'Thus says Yahweh, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brothers, the children of Israel. Everyone return to his house; for this thing is of Me'. So they listened to the word of Yahweh, and returned and went their way, according to the word of Yahweh-

This was significant humility, involving a recognition that what had happened was "of God", in judgment for Solomon's sins. To fight against our brothers can never be justified. 1 Kings 14:30 "There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually" would indicate disobedience to this command to Rehoboam not to fight the ten tribes. The Spirit may lead us against a course of action and we initially accept that, but over time we can revert to our own way again... for the work of the Spirit is not to force a man against his genuine freewill.

At this point, LXX adds to the record: "Roboam his son reigned in his stead in Jerusalem, being sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twelve years... And there was a man of mount Ephraim, a servant to Solomon, and his name was Jeroboam: and the name of his mother was Sarira, a harlot: and Solomon made him head of the levies of the house of Joseph: and he built for Solomon Sarira in mount Ephraim; and he had three hundred chariots of horses: he built the citadel with the levies of the house of Ephraim; he fortified the city of David, and aspired to the kingdom...".

1Ki 12:25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived in it; and he went out from there, and built Penuel-

Shechem was ideally centrally situated within his territory. Penuel was on the east side of Jordan, and would consolidate his power there, as well as controlling the fords of Jordan. The record mirrors how David had chosen Jerusalem and built it.

1Ki 12:26 Jeroboam said in his heart, Now the kingdom will return to the house of David-

As noted on :1, the ten tribes had initially welcomed Rehoboam as their king. Their only issue was with the taxation system. 'Said in his heart' is a common Biblical phrase (e.g. Gen. 17:17; 1 Sam. 27:1; 1 Kings 12:26; Esther 6:6). There is a huge importance attached to self talk and spiritual mindedness. Further, there are many instances where we read that a person 'said' something; but it's apparent that they said it to themselves, in their heart. Take Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:20: "But Gehazi said, Behold, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought; but, as the Lord lives, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him". For sure, Gehazi said this to nobody but himself. Or Moses – he's recorded as saying "People have found out what I have done!" – surely he said this within himself (Ex. 2:14 GNB).

1Ki 12:27 If this people goes up to offer sacrifices in the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah-

This reasoning was maybe true enough on a secular level, but it reflects a lack of faith in the promise made to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11:38. Jeroboam simply didn't have the

faith to believe in this wonderful grace; that he, son of a whore (:24 LXX) could be empowered by God to be the Divinely chosen king of Israel and the fulfilment of the promises to David. Perhaps Jeroboam was forced into this way of thinking by the approach of a feast, probably tabernacles (:32), when his people would usually go up to Jerusalem to worship.

1Ki 12:28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said to them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Look and see your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt!-

It's been suggested that these calves were false cherubim. There is certainly a connection between the calf and the cherubim. In Ez. 1:10 we read that the living creatures had "the face of an ox on the left side". In Ez. 10:14 we learn that this face was that of a cherub. Jeroboam placed the calves at each end of the land of Israel, as if it was the ark (the ark had the cherubim at each end of it). By doing so, Jeroboam excluded Jerusalem, the temple, from God's presence. He excluded others from the presence of God. The calves were therefore a mixture of true religious symbolism with gross apostasy. In Hosea 8:2,3 we read a prophecy against Jeroboam: "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. Israel hath cast off the thing that is good... of their silver and their gold have they made them idols... thy calf, O Samaria hath cast thee off... (it) shall be broken in pieces", as they were later by Josiah. So Israel thought that they knew God at this time, they felt in fellowship with Him, when actually the anger of God was deeply against them. Jeroboam was the one on whom the sin of Israel's later idolatry is blamed. But Jeroboam is not called an idolater. He no doubt had an element of good spiritual motivation in him. 2 Kings 3:2,3 implies that Jeroboam did not actually worship Baal. Jehoram put away the image of Baal, but he cleaved to the sins of Jeroboam. The implication is that Jeroboam was not a Baal worshipper, which is what the majority of the wicked kings were guilty of.

Jeroboam quotes the words of Ex. 32:4 "These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt". The connection is conscious and intentional. His argument was presumably that the golden calf was quite legitimate and built by none other than Aaron. What was wrong, so he perhaps reasoned, was that the people had worshipped it as an idol. Whereas Jeroboam was initially arguing that his calves were a legitimate part of Yahweh worship. And Jeroboam is going right against the clear statement that it was Yahweh and not anyone or anything else that brought Israel up from Egypt: "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt" (Ex. 20:2).

1Ki 12:29 He set the one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan-

These were at the far north and south of his territory. Perhaps if indeed his calves were alluding to the cherubim (:28), his idea was that they were as the cherubim overshadowing the land.

1Ki 12:30 This thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even to Dan-

This doesn't have to mean that they only went to Dan. Bethel was a well known sanctuary, but Dan was in a remote northern part of the land. So I would paraphrase this as meaning 'The people went to worship before one or the other of them, yes, they even made the journey all the way up to Dan'. Therefore LXX adds "and they neglected the house of the Lord".

1Ki 12:31 He made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people, who were not of the sons of Levi-

The Levites went to Judah (2 Chron. 11:13,14). The migration of the Levites to Judah may not have been from purely spiritual motives. Probably Jeroboam confiscated the Levitical lands within his dominions for the benefit of the new priestly order (2 Chron. 11:13,14). And they were not very effective, because after three years idolatry became rampant in Judah and the people turned away from Yahweh.

So Jeroboam allowed the ordinary people to be priests; in Ex. 32 we learn that the ordinary people offered the sacrifices to the golden calf, not the priests. Again, it seems that Jeroboam was trying to consciously mimic the golden calf apostasy, perhaps arguing that Israel were a nation of priests. It is no accident that Josiah stamped his calves to powder, just as Moses did to the golden calf. Now *why* did Jeroboam so consciously lead Israel into the same apostasy which brought them as it were within a hairs breadth of national rejection in Ex. 32? Jeroboam wasn't ignorant. Perhaps he had gone down a path of contorted exposition which made out that Israel didn't really sin by worshipping the calf. Or perhaps he got so carried away with the idea that he was like Aaron, the priest, that he thought (like some modern Rabbis) that Aaron couldn't have done anything wrong, and therefore he consciously copied Aaron, as he did David, Solomon, Jacob and Samuel. Again, we see Jeroboam having a familiarity with Scripture, but not pausing to really meditate upon his actions or upon the real spirit of the word. We see him failing to analyze why Aaron acted as he did, failing to see that Aaron acted politically, failing to deeply analyze his own motives. The character of Jeroboam shines through here. Jeroboam named his sons Abijah [Abihu] and Nadab- the very names of Aaron's sons. It seems Jeroboam tried to model himself upon Aaron, and justify the building of the calves by interpreting what Aaron did as a positive, righteous thing (as some Jewish expositors do today). He politely overlooked the fact that Aaron was condemned for making the calf, and that Nadab and Abihu were slain for unacceptable worship (Lev. 10:1,2). We too can justify outright wrong behaviour in the name of superficial allusion to Scripture, willfully failing to see the similarities between our actions and those of men who were condemned for doing in essence the things which we seek to justify.

1Ki 12:32 Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; he did so in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made-

Jeroboam was full of works, of activity in fighting the Lord's battles. He was active in the Truth, as we would say. He ordained a feast "*Like* the feast which was in Judah". He ordained a new feast on the 15th day of the 8th month, no doubt copying the feast of tabernacles, on the 15th of the 7th month. See on :27. So Jeroboam lacked an attention to detail, despite an appearance of spirituality. 1 Chron. 5:17 says that in Jeroboam's reign, the genealogies we read in the early chapters of Chronicles were written. So in some ways, he gave great attention to detail- when it suited him.

The feast of tabernacles was on the 15th day of the seventh month, but Jeroboam announced a feast on the 15th day of the eighth month. Perhaps he argued that as harvest came a month later in northern Israel, then this was acceptable. Perhaps he alluded to the way that a second passover could be kept a month after the prescribed date for those impure or otherwise unable to keep it on that date (Num. 9:6-12). So he may have presented this as a feast of tabernacles- "*like* the feast which was in Judah".

He was clearly making vague allusions to spiritual reasoning and out of context Biblical precedent- just as so many do today.

Jeroboam's building of an altar for the calves as well as a proclamation of a feast is another similarity with Aaron, who built the golden calf, with an altar for it, and then proclaimed a feast to Yahweh (Ex. 32:5). Jeroboam is so carefully copying a Biblical example- but a bad one. The connection between Aaron and Jeroboam is confirmed by the record describing both as 'making Israel to sin' ["What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?" (Ex. 32:21). And the desecration and destruction of their altars, and judgment upon the priests, is again so similar (Ex. 32:20; Dt. 9:21 = 2 Kings 23:15 and 1 Kings 13:2 = 2 Kings 23:16-20). The irony is that it was the Levites who were appointed priests because of their faithfulness at the time of the golden calf apostasy; whereas Jeroboam is careful to do the very opposite, appointing non Levites as priests.

1Ki 12:33 He went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and went up to the altar, to burn incense- He went up to the altar, making himself the priest. It seems that he was copying David and Solomon, who did just this. But he lacked David's motivation and spirituality. Another example of his mixture of truth and error is shown by the way he built an altar at *Bethel*. Now this had many religious associations; Jacob offered there, Samuel held regular gatherings there; and as with trying to be like David and Solomon, it seems that Jeroboam went in for even more self-conscious spiritual exhibitionism and seeking to publicly associate himself with righteous men. In :28 we read that the idea of the calves was a result of taking counsel with others; but the idea of ordaining an alternative feast of tabernacles, picking a random date near enough to the Mosaic one, was purely "devised of his own heart". We can ask others for advice when really we are intent on following our own narrative of what we anyway want to do. He has to take much personal responsibility, and so "Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin" is the continual judgment of the records upon him personally.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 13

1Ki 13:1 There came a man of God out of Judah by the word of Yahweh to Beth El: and Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense-

This prophet would have been tempted to reason that he need not make this long and dangerous journey; for after all, the ten tribes had chosen to secede from Judah. But we learn here of our responsibility to all our brethren, even if they have separated from us wrongfully. And this prophet was willing to risk death to do so (:4).

1Ki 13:2 He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh and said, Altar, altar, thus says Yahweh: 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name. On you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and they will burn men's bones on you' -

The fulfillment came 330 years later (2 Kings 23:15,16). This is one of the few prophecies which apparently had no short term fulfillment to validate it; but there was therefore a dramatic sign given at the time (:3).

1Ki 13:3 He gave a sign the same day saying, This is the sign which Yahweh has spoken: Behold, the altar will be split apart, and the ashes that are on it will be

poured out-

LXX and Hebrew "fat" instead of "ashes". "Split" is the word used for the 'rending' of the kingdom from Judah to Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:13,30,31). But the lesson was that Jeroboam's false religious system would now be rent apart. The potential promised to Jeroboam of becoming king of the 'split / rent' kingdom on God's behalf, experiencing the fulfilment of God's promises to David (1 Kings 11:38) had now in turn been rent.

1Ki 13:4 It happened, when the king heard the saying of the man of God which he cried against the altar in Bethel, that Jeroboam put out his hand from the altar, saying, Seize him! His hand, which he put out against him, dried up, so that he could not draw it back again to himself-

Jeroboam's reaction to the prophet was exactly that of Saul to David and Solomon to Jeroboam. They all thought that their action in murdering people could somehow stop the fulfilment of God's word. Jeroboam's action is a typical example of anger with the messenger because of the message. And we experience this often in our preaching of God's word to others.

1Ki 13:5 The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of Yahweh-

I noted on :2 that the prophecy about Josiah was not to be fulfilled for 330 years. But most prophecies had a short term fulfilment, for according to the Mosaic law, this was how a prophet could be tested and validated. Therefore this dramatic sign was given. An earthquake or earth tremour split the altar, and the ashes or "fat" fell to the ground.

1Ki 13:6 The king answered the man of God, Now entreat the favour of Yahweh your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me again. The man of God entreated Yahweh, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before-

The prayer of the man of God caused Jeroboam's hand to be healed. But he used the words of Pharaoh to Moses: "Pray for me...". The prayers of someone else can affect the fortunes of another in a way which would not happen if they just prayed for themselves. The Corinthians "helped... by prayer for us" (2 Cor. 1:11)- as if Paul's unaided prayers had less power than when the Corinthians were praying for him too. we note Jeroboam refers to "Yahweh *your* God". Despite all his cleverly planned allusions to Yahweh worship in his new religious system, and his awareness of Yahweh's word- Yahweh was not his God. We marvel that a man can experience an absolute miracle- and still not be convicted of Yahweh as his God. This is further evidence against the Pentecostal idea that miracles are necessary in order to elicit faith. The Bible is full of examples of where they do not do so.

1Ki 13:7 The king said to the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward-

"Home" was presumably to Shechem. For they were at Bethel at the time. Jeroboam still saw things in a very materialistic way, reasoning as did Saul (1 Sam. 9:7), and had utterly failed to appreciate the great spiritual potentials offered to him in 1 Kings 11:38. We see internal corroboration of the record in the character presentation of Jeroboam; in 1 Kings 13:7 and also 1 Kings 14:3, Jeroboam thinks that prophets must be paid for their services.

1Ki 13:8 The man of God said to the king, Even if you gave me half of your house, I would not go in with you, neither would I eat bread nor drink water in this place-
The prophet is tempted to break the commandment received not to do so (:9), but he overcomes it. He is then to be tested in a similar way again, and he fails it. God tests us and then repeats the test, that we might learn; or that our apparent obedience may be tested and proven to ourselves as real.

1Ki 13:9 for so was it commanded me by the word of Yahweh saying, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, neither return by the way that you came'-

There was possibly the idea that eating and drinking together with others was a sign of religious fellowship (1 Cor. 5:11). But likely the prophet was being empowered miraculously as Elijah was later, to make a journey in God's strength. And the lack of food and water was to make him closer to God through fasting. Bethel was south of Shechem, so the prophet coming from Judah would not have travelled on this road. Perhaps the command not to return was because God wanted the prophet not to be delayed by people who had seen him coming wanting to congratulate him or otherwise delay him on his return journey. His whole period outside the border of Judah was to be without eating or drinking, so he was being told to make the journey as quickly as possible, and not allow himself to be delayed.

1Ki 13:10 So he went another way, and didn't return by the way that he came to Bethel-

See on :9. However the exact reason for this is unclear. It may have been just a simple test. The first part of the commandment, not to eat food, he had obeyed. Now he was to be tested regarding the second part of the commandment.

1Ki 13:11 Now there lived an old prophet in Bethel; and one of his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. They also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king-

The prophet was returning to Judah, so he was moving south of Bethel. To go back to Bethel would require him to return by the way he had come, in spirit, although he may have argued that seeing he was travelling a different road back home (:10), his return to Bethel by that road was not strictly returning by "the way that he came to Bethel". But such legalism leads into sin, as we see here. We wonder why this prophet was still in Bethel and had not joined the Levites in going to live in Judah. Perhaps it was because he was old. Yet his subsequent behaviour makes us wonder whether he was in fact a prophet of Yahweh, or just a "prophet" in a general sense.

1Ki 13:12 Their father said to them, Which way did he go? Now his sons had seen which way the man of God went, who came from Judah-

We note the emphasis upon "the way". He had been told by his sons all the words spoken (:11), so he knew the prophet from Judah was not to eat or drink, nor return by "the way" he had come. Perhaps as discussed on :11 he reasoned that returning to his house would not be returning by the way the prophet had come to Bethel- because he was on a different route. But knowing he had been forbidden to eat and drink, it was surely wrong of him to fake a word from Yahweh commanding him now to eat and drink. Perhaps he reasoned that the command not to eat and drink meant not to do so with Jeroboam. We can see the wrong thinking which his legalism led him to.

1Ki 13:13 He said to his sons, Saddle the donkey for me. So they saddled the donkey for him; and he rode on it-

The focus of the Divine cameraman is zoomed in close up. Sometimes we have scant detail, at others, such as this, we get much detail. We are thereby invited to imagine what the man was thinking as they saddled the donkey and he mounted it, and why he was doing this...

1Ki 13:14 He went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak. He said to him, Are you the man of God who came from Judah? He said, I am-

If he had not eaten nor drunken, he was presumably tired. This would militate against my earlier suggestion that he was given miraculous power with which to make the journey without eating or drinking.

1Ki 13:15 Then he said to him, Come home with me, and eat bread-

We naturally ponder the man's motives. He faked a word of Yahweh, and yet is not so dramatically punished as the brave prophet from Judah who had done what he ought to have done, if he were a true prophet of Yahweh. Perhaps on the other hand, he realized this, and desperately wanted to show his respect to this prophet who was braver than he. So desperate that he faked a word from Yahweh. And yet that weakness was used by God to test the prophet from Judah. We marvel at the Divine ecology revealed in all this. The situation gets the less strange the more we think about it. For this kind of mixed motive is quite imaginable.

1Ki 13:16 He said, I may not return with you, nor go in with you; neither will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place-

"This place" presumably refers to the ten tribes, although perhaps Bethel and its environs is specifically in view.

1Ki 13:17 For it was said to me by the word of Yahweh, 'You shall eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that you came'-

By taking a different route home, the prophet had fulfilled this. But he rightly interpreted the spirit of it as meaning that he must not return at all by any road he had travelled on.

1Ki 13:18 He said to him, I also am a prophet as you are; and an angel spoke to me by the word of Yahweh, saying, 'Bring him back with you into your house, that he may eat bread and drink water'. He lied to him-

The whole incident underlines the importance of personal relationship with God. If we are given a word from the Lord to do something, we are to do it, and not let that be overridden by the words of others, even if they claim to also be reasoning according to God's word. Our personal understanding of God's word is to be utterly paramount. No matter how apparently credible is another argument against it. And we must remember that the man had not eaten nor drunk for some time, and was resting, exhausted, beneath a tree (:14). Perhaps in his weakness he wondered whether this was God's way of sustaining him. But God will not send help to us in any way which so fragrantly breaks His own word to us.

1Ki 13:19 So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water-

LXX "So he turned him back". The problem with what he did was that the prophet of

Judah's word to Jeroboam now appeared compromised. For Jeroboam had tried to seize him after his condemnation of the altar, but had been stopped. But now it seemed God had intervened to slay His prophet, and so there was no need to take his word seriously.

1Ki 13:20 It happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of Yahweh came to the prophet who brought him back-

Whether or not this old man was a true prophet of Yahweh, he was used to speak Yahweh's word to the prophet of Judah.

1Ki 13:21 and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying-

"Cried" is s.w. in :2 for how the prophet cried against Jeroboam for his disobedience. For all his bravery, he was no better; at least in this moment of his life. He is condemned to death, not perhaps because he will not be saved, but as a lesson for us as to the importance of very personal obedience to God's word. The old prophet apparently sinned worse, but wasn't immediately slain. That point is so obvious in the story, and we are surely to conclude from it that sometimes men are punished with death for far 'less', apparently, than others sin. We think of Uzzah being slain for touching the ark in an apparently well meaning way, and David preserved after the sin with Uriah. The outcomes of our sins are sometimes so that others may hopefully learn something. Everything in our lives is so multi factorial. See on :24.

Thus says Yahweh, 'Because you have been disobedient to the mouth of Yahweh, and have not kept the commandment which Yahweh your God commanded you- God's word is His actual word. The prophet heard "the mouth of Yahweh". And those words have been recorded. When we read His word, we hear His voice. Jeremiah spoke "from the mouth of the Lord" (2 Chron. 36:12). His word brings Him that near to us, if we will perceive it for what it is. Jeremiah also was "disobedient to the mouth of Yahweh" (same phrase in Lam. 1:18), but wasn't immediately slain; see commentary on the first half of this verse.

1Ki 13:22 but came back, and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, Eat no bread, and drink no water; your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers'-

"The place" was the apostate area of the ten tribes, and Bethel in particular. The old prophet's house is included within that, another indication that he was perhaps not untainted by the apostasy around him. On :30 I will note that the prophet's body didn't come to the tomb of his fathers, but rather to the tomb of the old prophet. But this came about through the old prophet's deep respect for the prophet of Judah.

1Ki 13:23 It happened, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back-

His sons had saddled the donkey for their father, but now the old prophet, despite his age, does this menial task for the prophet of Judah, as a sign of respect. We note that the old prophet carries the blame- "he had brought back" the prophet of Judah, resulting in his death.

1Ki 13:24 When he had gone, a lion met him by the way, and killed him. His body was cast in the way, and the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the body-

I suggested on :21 that the apparently harsh judgment of the prophet was in order to teach others a lesson. And so the manner of his death advertised this. The lion killed

him, but didn't eat him. Nor did he touch the donkey. Lions kill to eat, but this lion didn't eat the prophet. And it was all done in such a public manner (:25). Everyone would know that this was a judicial death from Yahweh. And they would have marvelled at His insistence upon personal obedience to Him, and not following anyone even if they falsely claimed to speak in Yahweh's Name. The equivalent of the old prophet was Jeroboam, who was setting up another religion on the basis of falsely representing Yahweh's word.

1Ki 13:25 Behold, men passed by, and saw the body cast in the way, and the lion standing by the body; and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet lived-

See on :24. The public nature of the strange slaying would have been gossiped far and wide, as it was such an unusual scene that was described. For everyone knew that lions kill only to eat.

1Ki 13:26 When the prophet who brought him back from the way heard of it, he said, It is the man of God who was disobedient to the mouth of Yahweh. Therefore Yahweh has delivered him to the lion, which has mauled him and slain him, according to the word of Yahweh, which He spoke to him-

The old prophet realized that he had been merely a channel. He doesn't say "the word of Yahweh which I spoke to him", but rather "which He spoke to him". "Mauled" is 'ripped', and the same Hebrew phrase for "mauled / ripped and slain" is used of the death of Eli, also by Divine judgment (1 Sam. 4:18). As the altar had been ripped (:3), showing how the kingdom had been ripped from Jeroboam as it had been from Solomon, so now the prophet of Judah was ripped or torn by the lion. He is presented as representative of Jeroboam and all disobedient to God's word.

1Ki 13:27 He spoke to his sons saying, Saddle the donkey for me. They saddled it-
The repeated emphasis upon saddling donkeys in this story (:13,23,27) may be to connect with how the false prophet Balaam likewise saddled his ass and disobeyed God's word (Num. 22:21 s.w.).

1Ki 13:28 He went and found his body cast in the way, and the donkey and the lion standing by the body. The lion had not eaten the body, nor mauled the donkey-

There was a fair chance that the old prophet would be killed by the lion, and realizing he too deserved Divine judgment for faking His word, he went there prepared to be slain too. He went therefore out of very deep respect, willing to pay with his life for that respect.

1Ki 13:29 The prophet took up the body of the man of God, and laid it on the donkey, and brought it back. He came to the city of the old prophet to mourn, and to bury him-
The old prophet, despite his age, travelled the road which the prophet of Judah would have travelled had he survived. This was a sign of identity with the prophet of Judah, again indicating that he felt this man had done what he ought to have done.

1Ki 13:30 He laid his body in his own grave; and they mourned over him saying, Alas, my brother!-

It seems that the old prophet kept the body, laid it in the grave prepared for himself, and then went to the old prophet's city to mourn there (:29). This keeping of the body is unusual and may suggest the prophet had no living family. Again we see the Divine

economy in how things worked out; for the old prophet's desire to identify himself with the death of the prophet of Judah, placing that man's body where his should have gone, resulted in the fulfilment of God's judgment of :22.

1Ki 13:31 It happened, after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the tomb in which the man of God is buried. Lay my bones beside his bones-

This was a final act of identity with the prophet of Judah. The old prophet shows himself to be sincere in his devotion to God's word and the cause of the prophet. Despite faking Yahweh's word and bringing that prophet to his death. We see here what we are confronted by in our own lives and those around us- a sincere belief in Yahweh and genuine love of His ways, despite terrible failure at specific points (such as his faking of Yahweh's word and thereby leading a good prophet to his death), as well as general failure to attain our highest potentials (in this case, the old prophet ought to have delivered the message to Jeroboam, since he lived in Bethel. But he didn't). LXX adds "in order that my bones may be preserved along with his bones", suggesting he believed in a resurrection of the body for them both, by grace.

1Ki 13:32 For the saying which he cried by the word of Yahweh against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, will surely happen-

This may imply that the prophet's message was against the other high places as well. The city of Samaria is not in view, but the towns in the region of Samaria (1 Kings 16:24). "Will surely happen" was faith indeed, for Josiah didn't fulfil the prophecies for another 330 years. The old prophet loved the prophet of Judah for what he had done and for his message, and although he lived in Bethel and was likely to be persecuted by Jeroboam for his stance, the death of the prophet from Judah inspired him to speak out as he ought to have done earlier.

1Ki 13:33 After this thing Jeroboam didn't return from his evil way-

The implication may be that he could have done, according to the spiritual potential he had explained on 1 Kings 11:38.

But again made priests of the high places from among all the people. Whoever wanted to, he consecrated him, that there might be priests of the high places- "Again" doing this suggests the incident with his hand withering and then the subsequent slaying of the prophet were all intended to make him stop and change his policy. But he didn't.

1Ki 13:34 This thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the surface of the earth-

The language here is slightly strange, as if the sin became sin and the sin was intended to destroy them. The idea is that God confirms people in their sins, and sin has its own downward dynamic, leading to destruction.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 14

1Ki 14:1 At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick-

"Abijah" is 'father of Yah' but that effectively means 'worshipper of Yah', and his naming further indicates that Jeroboam was initially aware of Yahweh worship. He had the potential of being the Divinely blessed king of Israel, with the promises to

David fulfilled through him (1 Kings 11:38). His twisting of Yahweh worship is therefore the more reprehensible. Abijah is not to be imagined as a little child; see on :13.

We note that Rehoboam also had a son called Abijah, who succeeded him as king (:31). The contrast could hint that God was somewhat more acceptant of Rehoboam in the end, despite his unwisdom and harshness at the start of his reign; but not with Jeroboam. And yet Rehoboam in summary "did that which was evil, because he didn't set his heart to seek Yahweh" (2 Chron. 12:14). Perhaps here we have a case of God being less displeased with one king than He was with another. Just as Jehoshaphat was told "some good is found in you" (2 Chron. 19:3).

1Ki 14:2 Jeroboam said to his wife, Please get up and disguise yourself, that you won't be recognized as the wife of Jeroboam. Go to Shiloh. Behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, who spoke concerning me that I should be king over this people-
This turning to Yahweh in time of need, rather than to other gods, indicates that he had a conscience toward Yahweh and after the healing of his withered hand by the prophet from Judah, he knew that Yahweh was really the only God who could heal. "Ahijah" is 'brother of Yah' but that effectively means 'worshipper of Yah'. It is very similar to "Abijah", and we wonder if Jeroboam initially believed Ahijah's prophecies of 1 Kings 11:38, and named his child after the prophet, as well as making a statement of his commitment to Yahweh worship.

1Ki 14:3 Take with you ten loaves, cakes and a jar of honey, and go to him-
The possible death of the child would confirm the annulling of the promises about Jeroboam fulfilling the promises about the house of David. That had been made clear by the prophet from Judah in 1 Kings 13, and now at this same time (:1) the message was being confirmed by the death of Jeroboam's son Abijah, who symbolized his weak attempt at fulfilling the potential of the prophecies of Ahijah about him. We see internal corroboration of the record in the character presentation of Jeroboam; in 1 Kings 13:7 and also 1 Kings 14:3, Jeroboam thinks that prophets must be paid for their services.

He will tell you what will become of the child-
Again we sense Jeroboam's recognition of the power and truth of Yahweh and His prophets, although he preferred his own power and kingdom to His.

1Ki 14:4 Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age-
"His eyes were set" is the phrase used about Eli (1 Sam. 4:15), and he was also in Shiloh, at the sanctuary. The statistical chance of the phrase and town occurring together is too great to be chance. But as with our own lives, we cannot always attach meaning to event and coincidence. It could simply be that Ahijah was to meditate upon the similarities between himself and Eli and learn the lessons from Eli's failures and final rejection by God. Shiloh was in Ephraim, near Shechem, the capital of Jeroboam. It was a priestly city, but we wonder why Ahijah had not joined the other Levites in migrating to Judah. Perhaps old age had stopped him. We note from here and the prophet of Yahweh in Bethel of 1 Kings 13 that there were faithful prophets still in the ten tribes. Indeed by Elijah's time there were 7000 who were still faithful, and Obadiah hid 100 of Yahweh's prophets in a cave.

1Ki 14:5 Yahweh said to Ahijah, The wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you

concerning her son; for he is sick. This is what you shall tell her; for it will be, when she comes in, that she will pretend to be another woman-

Jeroboam knew that Ahijah was likely to condemn him and his wife for the golden calves and other idolatry. We have an insight into human nature here. Jeroboam and his wife believed Ahijah had God's help and power to know the future for their child, and the power to heal him. But they thought they could deceive him, so that his blindness stopped him perceiving that she was not Jeroboam's wife. We may believe in God's knowledge of the future and His power; but yet disbelieve His ability to see us and know us right now for who we really are. This is why the tendency of some to focus upon Bible prophecy, God's knowledge of the future and power in future history, can become an obsession which somehow mutes our awareness of His knowledge of us personally right now.

1Ki 14:6 It was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, you wife of Jeroboam! Why do you pretend to be another? For I am sent to you with heavy news-

The woman came to Ahijah, having been sent by Jeroboam; but Ahijah was "sent" to him. This is part of a wider theme of God's word 'coming' to us, and God 'coming' to us, through His word. God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so – but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time (1 Pet. 3:19).

1Ki 14:7 Go, tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Because I exalted you from among the people, and made you prince over My people Israel-

The "Because... therefore" judgment (:10) shows that those who are called to potentials are held responsible for their failure to realize them, and are judged accordingly. And we are all called to various potential good works (Eph. 2:10). Jeroboam had been the son of a prostitute (LXX) whom God exalted very far. But he used it for himself rather than God's service. "Exalted" is the same word used of how Jeroboam "lifted up his hand" against Solomon (1 Kings 11:26,27). But God exalted / lifted up Jeroboam, and ultimately he became king of the ten tribes. His revolt or lifting up his hand against Solomon was therefore of God.

Baasha was intended to learn from the path of Jeroboam, for he too was "exalted" (s.w. 1 Kings 16:2) from nothing to be prince over Israel. But Baasha like Jeroboam made the people sin. We are intended to learn from the life path of others. This is why we have Biblical history, and it is why God controls the encounters of those we meet in life.

1Ki 14:8 and tore the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it you; and yet you have not been as My servant David who kept My commandments, and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My eyes-

The final comment upon Jeroboam is that he was not as God's servant David (1 Kings 14:7-9). And yet he was set up with that potential possibility. Consider:

Jeroboam (1Kings 11) - David

Man of valour v. 28- As David 1 Sam. 16:18 RV;

Young man v. 28 - 1 Sam. 17:58

Ruler over all v. 28 - 1 Sam. 18:5

I will take you and you shall reign over Israel v. 37 - 2 Sam. 7:8

Build a house v. 38 - 2 Sam. 7:11

v. 40 - 1 Sam. 19:2,10

And it works the other way, too. Prophecies of doom can be turned round by our repentance. Nineveh avoiding certain destruction on account of their repentance is a clear example.

1Ki 14:9 but you have done evil above all who were before you, and have gone and made you other gods and molten images, to provoke Me to anger-

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

And have cast Me behind your back-

The same phrase is used in Neh. 9:26 of how Israel cast God's law behind their backs. "The word was God", attitudes to God's word are attitudes to Him.

1Ki 14:10 therefore, behold, I will bring evil on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male, he who is shut up and he who is left free in Israel, and will utterly sweep away the house of Jeroboam, as a man sweeps away dung, until it is all gone-

The preceding verses show that the extreme judgment pronounced was because of the great potentials God had enabled for Jeroboam (see 1 Kings 11:38). But he refused to realize them. We live in an age of great potentials. We are generally literate, mobile, with easy access to God's word; and many members of the body of Christ live in relative ease and luxury, free from persecution. The potentials for service are far higher for the average believer today than they were centuries ago. So this issue of judgment according to wasted potentials is so relevant to our age. "He who is shut up and he who is left free" is apparently an idiom referring to children still shut up at home, and those who are free to move about independently. The meaning would then be "young and old".

1Ki 14:11 He who dies of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and he who dies in the field shall the birds of the sky eat: for Yahweh has spoken it'-

The next verse goes on to state that Jeroboam's child "in the city" was to die. But then the judgment that he would be eaten by dogs is not applied to him in :13. To not "come to the grave" (:13) meant being thrown onto the rubbish tip like Gehenna, and eaten by dogs. The Lord's New Testament references to Gehenna are another way of saying 'Those put there will not have a decent burial', which was the greatest fear of the Semitic mind.

1Ki 14:12 Arise therefore, and go to your house. When your feet enter into the city, the child shall die-

See on :11. By returning home, she was bringing about the death of her child. There could have been here an appeal for repentance; if she had not returned to her home in Tirzah, thereby resigning her position as queen of the apostate kingdom, then she might have saved her child's life. See on :17.

1Ki 14:13 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 Yahweh, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam-

In Jeroboam's son "there was found some good thing" toward God. If Jeroboam's son was righteous, it is likely that Jeroboam and / or his wife had a spiritual side to them. But they didn't live up to their potential. See on 1 Kings 11:38. The child was old enough to have some spirituality, and God recognized this. "All Israel" knew of him, so he was presumably not a small child. The word for "child" is used of Solomon when he became king (1 Kings 3:7). He must have been an unusual child to have "some good thing toward Yahweh", because he was surrounded by every possible influence away from the true God. It is stressed that the child died "in the city", as soon as his mother returned there. The judgment of :11 was that those who died in the city would be eaten by dogs, but this is here ameliorated, by grace.

1Ki 14:14 Moreover Yahweh will raise Him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam. This is the day! What? Even now-

What God plans and purposes is effectively done at that moment of planning, so certain is His will and power. Therefore He speaks of those things which do not exist physically as if they do (Rom. 4:17). What will be, is now, from God's perspective. The Angel commented that God's words of future prophecy are "true and faithful... they are come to pass" (Rev. 21:6 RV). They are as good as done as soon as they are uttered, so certain are they of fulfillment. Thus 1 Kings 14:14 AV: "The Lord *shall* raise him up a king... but what? Even now". The future reality could be spoken of as effectively "even now". This is the way to understand those passages which appear to teach that both Jesus and ourselves existed physically before our birth. God doesn't completely express Himself in our terms and language (although of course to some degree He does).

1Ki 14:15 Yahweh will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will root up Israel out of this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking Yahweh to anger- As Egypt was a reed, so were Israel (1 Kings 14:15). As Pharaoh's heart was plagued (Ex. 9:14), so was Israel's (1 Kings 8:38); as Pharaoh-hophra was given into the hand of his enemies, so would Israel be (Jer. 44:30). She would be "Condemned with the world...". There is a major Biblical theme that when God's people lose faith, they are described and treated as the world. The uprooting of Israel was because they as a people had broken covenant (Dt. 29:28). But the same word is used in Jer. 18:7; if God says He will uproot a nation, then they can still repent and change the otherwise inevitable outcome. This is why there is a gap between the statement of judgment, and its fulfilment. The statement that God's people would no longer be uprooted (s.w. Am. 9:15) therefore means that the good news of the Kingdom is that God's people will no longer sin and have to be judged.

1Ki 14:16 He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he has sinned, and with which he has made Israel to sin-

The 'giving up' was to captivity, which is the context of :15. Yet the prophets repeatedly appealed for Israel's repentance, so that this outcome would not happen. But Ahijah here says that they were to go into captivity because of Jeroboam's sins. One way to reconcile this is to understand that there is a gap between God's statement

of judgment, and His fulfilment of it. In that gap, repentance and prayer can change the execution of what has been stated. We all stand and live in such a gap, and it gives intensity to the need for prayer and repentant living.

1Ki 14:17 Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah. As she came to the threshold of the house, the child died-

We see grace interlaced throughout the judgments. Whoever of Jeroboam's children died in the city was to be eaten by dogs and not buried. But an exception was made for this child. The judgment had been that as soon as she entered the city, the child would die (:12). But God allowed her to walk from the city limits to her house before the child died. We wonder if this delay was a reflection of God's desperate hope for her repentance.

1Ki 14:18 All Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of Yahweh, which He spoke by His servant Ahijah the prophet-

This fulfilment of :13 suggests Abijah was not a small child but was known in Israel.

1Ki 14:19 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-

This is not necessarily the same as the "book of Chronicles" which we have in the Bible. However, 2 Chron. 13:3-20 describes the wars of Jeroboam with Judah, and how Judah captured cities from Jeroboam.

1Ki 14:20 Jeroboam reigned for twenty two years: and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place-

Jeroboam named his sons Abijah [Abihu] and Nadab- the very names of Aaron's sons. It seems Jeroboam tried to model himself upon Aaron, and justify the building of the calves by interpreting what Aaron did as a positive, righteous thing (as some Jewish expositors do today). He overlooked the fact that Aaron was condemned for making the calf, and that Nadab and Abihu were slain for unacceptable worship (Lev. 10:1,2). We too can justify outright wrong behaviour in the name of superficial allusion to Scripture, willfully failing to see the similarities between our actions and those of men who were condemned for doing in essence the things which we seek to justify. Jeroboam allowed the ordinary people to be priests; in Ex. 32 we learn that the ordinary people offered the sacrifices to the golden calf, not the priests. Again, it seems that Jeroboam was trying to consciously mimic the golden calf apostasy. It is no accident that Josiah stamped his calves to powder, just as Moses did to the golden calf. Now *why* did Jeroboam so consciously lead Israel into the same apostasy which brought them as it were within a hairs breadth of national rejection in Ex. 32? Jeroboam wasn't ignorant. Perhaps he had gone down a path of contorted exposition which made out that Israel didn't really sin by worshipping the calf. Or perhaps he got so carried away with the idea that he was like Aaron, the priest, that he thought (like some modern Rabbis) that Aaron couldn't have done anything wrong, and therefore he consciously copied Aaron, as he did David, Solomon, Jacob and Samuel. Again, we see Jeroboam having a familiarity with Scripture, but not pausing to really meditate upon his actions or upon the real spirit of the word. We see him failing to analyze why Aaron acted as he did, failing to see that Aaron acted politically, failing to deeply analyze his own motives. The character of Jeroboam shines through here.

1Ki 14:21 Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one

years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem-
1 Kings 14:21; 2 Chron. 12:13 says Rehoboam was 41 when he became king. But he was "young and tender hearted" (2 Chron. 13:7). The LXX addition at 1 Kings 12:24 says he was 16 when he began to reign. He was surrounded by young men who had grown up with him. I suggest on balance that he was indeed 41 and the "young men" were "young" in comparison to the older men present. The description "young and tender hearted" could simply be a purposeful repetition of the description of his father Solomon when he ascended the throne; or it could mean that he was a rather weak and child like man.

The city which Yahweh had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there: and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess-

The criticism of Solomon for marrying Gentile women also applies to his first marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh; *besides* marrying her, he married the others too, and the criticisms which follow are spoken in the context of both these actions. Yet Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter in his early days, before he asked for wisdom. This is another indication that Solomon did not start off well and then go wrong; right from the beginning he had this incredible dualism in his spirituality. The Talmud (*Shabbath F*, 56,2) records that "When Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh she brought to him 1000 kinds of musical instruments, and taught him the chants to the various idols". Even when Solomon was young, he evidently loved wine (Song 1:2,4)- which was later to be something he (temporarily) abandoned himself to. He had a child by an Ammonite girl one year before he became king (1 Kings 14:21)- so his relationships with foreign women cannot be put down to mere political alliances. If the Song of Solomon is about her rather than the Egyptian woman he married, one can only say that one early error, unrepented of, paved the way for his later disasters with foreign women.

1Ki 14:22 Judah did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, even worse than all that their fathers had done-

Jealousy is a lead feature within Yahweh's personality (Ex. 20:5; 34:14). It speaks specifically of the jealousy of a man concerning the faithfulness of his wife (Num. 5:14). God was the passionate lover and husband of His people, and it is inevitable therefore that the extent of that love would produce jealousy when they spurned Him and went after other men, the idols. At this point they only began to do this evil after Rehoboam had established his kingdom and felt strong (2 Chron. 12:1). Yahweh was no longer apparently needed by them, and so they turned to other gods. Maachah his beloved wife (2 Chron. 11:20-22) was an idolater (2 Chron. 15:16).

1Ki 14:23 For they also built themselves high places, and pillars and Asherim on every high hill, and under every green tree-

Houses of worship were built on the high places as Jeroboam had done (1 Kings 12:31), and these became Jeroboam's answer to centralized worship on one building, the temple, in one place, Jerusalem. But Judah "also" did this, they were influenced by Jeroboam's style of worship.

1Ki 14:24 and there were also sodomites in the land: they did according to all the abominations of the nations which Yahweh drove out before the children of Israel-
These sodomites were associated with the idol shrines (1 Kings 14:23; 1 Kings

15:12). They may well have been Gentiles from Phoenicia, hence they were expelled from the land rather than killed (1 Kings 15:12). They may well have been involved with homosexual practices, but the Hebrew *qadesh* means literally a devoted person.

1Ki 14:25 It happened in the fifth year of king Rehoboam-

This was after Rehoboam was established in his own strength; see on :22.

That Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem-

Shishak had given refuge to Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:40), so it could be that he urged Shishak to attack Judah once Rehoboam became established as king of Judah. "A monument of this king, the first of the 22nd dynasty, has been discovered at Karnak in Upper Egypt, recording his conquests and the names of certain towns which he had taken in Palestine". Inscriptions on the wall of the temple at Karnak list many conquered cities, including three of the "cities for defence" which Rehoboam had built, Shoco, Adoraim and Aijalon (2 Chron. 11:7-10). The list also includes many cities within the ten tribes, suggesting that if Jeroboam got Shishak to invade Judah, Shishak then turned against his one time protégé Jeroboam and invaded the ten tribes also.

1Ki 14:26 and he took away the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king's house; he took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made-

LXX mentions that David took golden spears from Hadadezer: "And the golden spears which David took from the hand of the servants of Adraazar king of Soba and carried to Jerusalem, he took them all". These would not have been used as real spears, but were part of the worship of the golden sun which was the main religion in Syria at the time. David would have been better destroying them, rather than bringing idol paraphernalia into Jerusalem. For it later contributed towards the freedom Judah felt to worship sun gods. These spears would have been taken at the time of 2 Sam. 8:7: "David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem". "Hadad" was the god of the sun, "Hadadezer" had not been 'helped by Hadad' as his name means, and so David brought these golden imitations of the sun to Yahweh's temple. It is perhaps questionable whether David should have brought idols into Jerusalem; we note that later Judah worshipped sun gods. David's actions here were not blessed, for the LXX adds "And Susakim [i.e. Shishak] king of Egypt took them, when he went up to Jerusalem in the days of Roboam the son of Solomon".

2 Chron. 12:5-8 recounts the temporary repentance of Rehoboam as a result of the challenge of the prophet Shemaiah at this time.

1Ki 14:27 King Rehoboam made in their place shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house- Gold being downgraded to brass reflects the decline of faith in Rehoboam, for gold is a symbol of faith (1 Pet. 1:7).

1Ki 14:28 It was so, that as often as the king went into the house of Yahweh, the guard bore them, and brought them back into the guard room-

This indicates that there was a very low level of security even in the Jerusalem temple. Rehoboam wished by all means to imitate the worship of his father Solomon, but it was on a pathetically lower level. Despite all his idolatry, he still entered the

temple for public worship of Yahweh. This was Israel's recurrent problem, to worship both Yahweh and the idols.

1Ki 14:29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?-

This may not be a reference to the books we know as "Chronicles", but it is noteworthy that the parallel record in Chronicles is far more detailed at this point than what we are reading in Kings.

1Ki 14:30 There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually-

This would indicate disobedience to the command to Rehoboam not to fight the ten tribes (1 Kings 12:24).

1Ki 14:31 Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. Abijam his son reigned in his place-

His mother's name is twice stressed (see on :21). The records of the kings so often mention their mothers, in reflection of the huge spiritual influence of a mother upon her children.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 15

1Ki 15:1 Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat began Abijam to reign over Judah-

Abijam means "father of the sea", but 'father of' can mean 'worshipper of', as 'Abijah' means 'father / worshipper of Yah'. The sea god was worshipped, and so we conclude this was reflective of pagan devotions. He is called Abijah in 2 Chronicles, 'worshipper of Yah'. Having both a pagan and Yahwistic name was typical of the times, and Maacah / Michaiah his mother had a similar two names (see on :2). 2 Chron. 11:20-22 shows that Rehoboam had 28 sons. Abijam wasn't the firstborn, but rather the firstborn son of the favoured wife. Abijam had 38 children (2 Chron. 13:21), so he must have been a reasonable age when he came to the throne.

1Ki 15:2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom-

Maachah, Rehoboam's beloved wife (2 Chron. 11:20-22) was an idolater (2 Chron. 15:16). She is called Michaiah in 2 Chron. 13:12, "Who is like Jehovah?", but was known by her more pagan name Maachah, "oppression". She was the granddaughter of Absalom, but "son" and "daughter" are used in Hebrew with wide latitude.

The records of the kings so often mention their mothers, in reflection of the huge spiritual influence of a mother upon her children. The three years is a figure inclusive of parts of years, as he became king in the 18th year of Jeroboam's reign in Israel and died in his 20th year. "Three days / years" is often not a literal figure, and this must be recalled when considering the chronology of the Lord's three days in the tomb.

1Ki 15:3 He walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God, as the heart of David his father-

And yet we read of Abijah's apparent devotion in :15 and 2 Chron. 13:10-12. The comment of 1 Kings 15:3 is that his heart wasn't perfect with Yahweh as David's was. David clearly sinned and seems to have suffered a decline in his ethics and spirituality

as he got older. But he was judged on the overall dominant desire of his heart, to the point that having a heart perfect with Yahweh seems to effectively mean 'He was wholeheartedly devoted to Yahweh and never worshipped other gods'. Whereas Abijah, despite peaks of spirituality, did not have that total devotion to Yahweh as the dominant position of his heart throughout his life. Whatever peaks of obedience and devotion we may attain at points in our lives, it is the overall core position of our heart which is judged. Men like David may sin terribly at some points, those like Abijah may achieve wonderful levels of devotion at some points. But those high or low points play no major part in the final, unknowable equilibrium of Divine judgment. We need to remember this, as we encounter our brethren and ponder what to make of them, in their pits of sin and heights of devotion. Those points on their graph ought not to unduly weight our overall position on them.

1Ki 15:4 Nevertheless for David's sake, Yahweh his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem-

The way God allowed David's dynasty to continue for nearly 400 years therefore reflects His deeply positive overall impression of David. See on :3. By contrast, there were nine different dynasties in the ten tribe kingdom over 250 years.

1Ki 15:5 because David had done that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and didn't turn aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite-

As noted on :3, David was seen as having had a perfect heart for Yahweh all his days. The highs and lows of his graph were not unduly significant in that overall judgment. But the matter of Uriah was so awful that it did weigh heavily. I suggest this was because it had many ongoing implications, and I have noted throughout the Psalms that David failed to maintain his intensity of contrition about it, and came to rationalize it as he entered older age.

These words must be given their due weight, as they would appear to imply that David's feeling of guilt and sin over taking the census in 2 Sam. 24:10 was therefore a case of a man taking false guilt. For it was allowable to take a census of Israel, although there was to be a half shekel tax paid at the time, which if not paid would result in plague (Ex. 30:12-15). Joab perhaps guessed that those numbered would not pay this and therefore the census would lead Israel into sin. This is why God chose the punishment of plague; not upon David, but upon Israel. Yet David perhaps realized all that, but knew that his lack of faith in wanting a census, his lack of consideration for the weakness of others, would lead them into sin and punishment. And therefore he felt guilty. It could be argued that his sacrifice atoned for himself and for the people, but they still suffered for not having paid the required "atonement money". But then we must balance against this the comment that "David had done that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and didn't turn aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5). No mention is made of the matter of the census. There is true guilt, the guilt we should take for our actual sins; and false guilt, the guilt put on us by others and the malfunctioning of the human conscience. In this matter of David's guilt about the census, we may have an example of a man taking false guilt. The fact Israel and not David were punished with plague would rather confirm this. It may be impossible for us to sort out within us what is true guilt or false guilt, at least not be any intellectual

process. But we can rest assured that all our guilt, of whatever kind, is met in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate guilt offering.

1Ki 15:6 Now there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life-

This would indicate disobedience to the command to Rehoboam not to fight the ten tribes (1 Kings 12:24). The terrible sin and tragedy of fighting ones own brethren is noted twice (also in 1 Kings 14:30).

1Ki 15:7 The rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam-

Again, the sin of fighting ones own brethren is stressed as in :6,16; see on 1 Kings 12:24.

1Ki 15:8 Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his place-

One meaning of "Asa" is "physician", and he ended his days trusting physicians rather than Yahweh. Perhaps he trained as a physician and ended up therefore having more faith in science than in Yahweh.

1Ki 15:9 In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Asa to reign over Judah-

Far more information is given in 2 Chron. 14:1-16, where we learn about the Ethiopian conflict, the prophecies of Azariah and Hanani and his covenant with Syria.

1Ki 15:10 He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom-

The reference seems to be to his grandmother Maachah, Rehoboam's favourite wife, who seems to have retained her position, perhaps because Asa's mother was dead. The word for "mother" here can specifically mean 'the queen mother', an official title.

1Ki 15:11 Asa did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, as did David his father-

Asa is recorded as serving God just as well as David, when actually this wasn't the case; but God counted him as righteous. The incomplete faith of men like Baruch was counted as full faith by later inspiration (Jud. 4:8,9 cp. Heb. 11:32). Sometimes the purges of idolatry by the kings is described in undoubtedly exaggerated language- such was God's joy that at least something was being done? As discussed on :3, Asa was not perfect, nor was David; but God's overall judgment was that he "did right", despite doing wrong at specific points in his life. Indeed as noted on :23, Asa died at a low point for him spiritually. But the judgment overall was that he "did right".

1Ki 15:12 He put away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made-

These sodomites were associated with the idol shrines (1 Kings 14:23,24). They may well have been Gentiles from Phoenicia, hence they were expelled from the land rather than killed. They may well have been involved with homosexual practices, but the Hebrew *qadesh* means literally a devoted person.

1Ki 15:13 Also Maacah his mother he removed from being queen, because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah; and Asa cut down her image, and burnt it at the brook Kidron-

I suggested on :10 that this may refer to Maachah, Rehoboam's favourite wife, who seems to have retained her position, perhaps because Asa's mother was dead. The word for "mother" here can specifically mean 'the queen mother', an official title. The Lord Jesus may well have recollected the bravery of this act when He crossed the Kidron just before His final sacrifice.

1Ki 15:14 But the high places were not taken away: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect with Yahweh all his days-

Asa and Jehoshaphat removed the high places, but in a sense they didn't (1 Kings 15:14 cp. 2 Chron. 14:5; 17:6 cp. 20:33). We read of how the land was purged of Baal, Sodomites etc.; but in a very short time, we read of another purge being necessary. Partial cleansing of idolatry amounted to no cleansing. Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah all made major purges within a space of 80 years. Jeremiah therefore condemns the Jews who lived at the time of Josiah's reformation for not *knowing* God in their hearts. See on :18. Many a Western Christian has this very same tendency. We too must ask ourselves whether our spirituality is really just a product of the crowd mentality; as the crowd shouted one day "Hosanna to the Son of David", a few days later they wanted Jesus to be delivered rather than Barabbas, but within minutes they were persuaded to cry for the crucifixion of the Son of God. Church life, Bible studies, the breaking of bread... inevitably, there is a crowd mentality developed here. There is a feeling of devotion which wells up within us as a community, as an audience, as we sit there, as we stand in praise and worship together. But the *real* spirituality is far deeper than this. We must seriously ask whether our spirituality, our feelings of devotion, our true repentance, are *only* stimulated by these meetings?

As discussed on :3, Asa like David clearly sinned and seems to have suffered a decline in his faith as he got older, as the Chronicles record shows. But he was judged on the overall dominant desire of his heart, to the point that having a heart perfect with Yahweh seems to effectively mean 'He was wholeheartedly devoted to Yahweh and never worshipped other gods'. Despite all the ups and downs, of which his final faith in doctors rather than Yahweh was one of the down points, his overall deepest heart was for Yahweh.

1Ki 15:15 He brought into the house of Yahweh the things that his father had dedicated, and the things that himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels-
We note that Abijah did dedicate things to Yahweh, but as discussed on :3, despite peaks of devotion and generosity, the dominant desire of his heart was not to Yahweh. And it is this dominant desire which is critically important to God.

1Ki 15:16 There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days-
Again, the sin of fighting ones own brethren is stressed as in :6,7; see on 1 Kings 12:24.

1Ki 15:17 Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might not allow anyone to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah-
Ramah was a strategic point on the road which led to Jerusalem from the north. He

maybe particularly feared that his people were still attracted to the idea of worship at the Jerusalem temple; for it seems it was access to Jerusalem which he particularly wanted to cut off.

1Ki 15:18 Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants; and king Asa sent them to Ben Hadad son of Tabrimmon son of Hezion, king of Syria, who lived at Damascus, saying-
Benhadad was the grandson of Hezion, a name which uses similar characters to Rezon who led the first attempted revival of Zobah and Damascus (1 Kings 11:23) after David's victories against them in 2 Sam. 8:3-8.

Asa gathered the gold and silver vessels back into the temple- and then went and used them to make a political treaty. He *apparently* treated them as God's riches, but then in reality he used them as his own (1 Kings 15:18, 15). See on :14.

1Ki 15:19 There is a treaty between me and you, between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent to you a present of silver and gold. Go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me-

The intent of the treaty, however, was that Benhadad would attack Baasha (:20). Perhaps this was not stated specifically because Asa wanted to give lip service obedience to the command not to fight with his own brethren in (1 Kings 12:24. So the Lord's money was spent on effectively getting others to fight their own brethren; and in essence the same can happen today in church politics. We also see how fickle are relationships when not governed by Divine principle; Benhadad's treaty with Baasha was broken when money was received from a third party, and he not only trashed the treaty but attacked him.

1Ki 15:20 Ben Hadad listened to king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel, and struck Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maacah and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali-

These cities were in the far north of Israel. It was an invasion of the border area rather than of all Israel.

1Ki 15:21 It happened, when Baasha heard of it, that he left off building Ramah, and lived in Tirzah-

Asa's plan appeared to have worked. Baasha stopped the attempted blockade of Jerusalem. Even though Asa did wrong in how he used the Lord's money / wealth, that isn't commented upon. It all seemed to work out. But we are left, naturally, with the question as to whether this was right or not.

1Ki 15:22 Then king Asa made a proclamation to all Judah; none was exempted: and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and its timber, with which Baasha had built; and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah-

We see here the value of stones and timber and the huge amount of labour needed to move them. This corroborates the way that Solomon's huge demand for these things led him into debt financially (see on 1 Kings 9:14) and into abusing his people for labour.

1Ki 15:23 Now the rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did,

and the cities which he built, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?-

These are the "fortified cities" of 2 Chron. 14:6. See on 1 Kings 16:27.

But in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet-

The record of Asa here is far more positive than that in Chronicles. For in 2 Chron. 16:12 we read that "his disease was exceeding great... yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians". As discussed on :3,11, Asa was not perfect, nor was David; but God's overall judgment was that he "did right in the eyes of Yahweh" (:11), despite doing wrong at specific points in his life. Indeed it seems from 2 Chron. 26:12 that Asa died at a low point for him spiritually. But the judgment overall was that he "did right". This surely affects our thinking about those who die in the low point of suicide. This doesn't necessarily preclude them from God's salvation.

1Ki 15:24 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 place-

2 Chron. 16:14 gives far more information about the funeral: "They buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art, and they made a very great burning for him".

1Ki 15:25 Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah; and he reigned over Israel two years-

"Nadab" means "liberal". "Two years" means parts of two years, rather than 24 months. Because his reign began in the second year of Asa and the next king began reigning in Asa's third year.

1Ki 15:26 He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin with which he made Israel to sin-

If the "sin" in view were simply the worship of the golden calves, it is hard to see how all Israel sinned in this; for not all worshipped them. "His sin" may therefore refer to the sin of schism amongst God's people, in which all Israel were involved, and the sin of division in that sense therefore touched all Israel literally, including Judah.

1Ki 15:27 Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha struck him at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon-

It appears that the prophet Jehu had apparently sanctioned what Baasha did (1 Kings 14:1,2). But it was tragic that whilst fighting their common enemy the Philistines, tribal jealousies led to God's people being less effective and fighting amongst themselves. Jeroboam's family were from Ephraim (1 Kings 11:26), so perhaps there was a tribal jealousy factor in someone from Issachar now trying to exterminate the whole family of Jeroboam, and thereby found a new dynasty. The infighting amongst the Israelites led to the siege being lifted, because in 1 Kings 16:15 we find the siege resumed, and again a king of Israel is slain during a siege of the same city. We see here how Biblical history intentionally repeats itself. Situations repeat in our lives, so that we may learn from them. And often we fail, as Israel did in this matter. Within a period of 25 years at the most, two kings of Israel (Nadab and Elah) were killed by usurpers whilst the same city was being besieged.

1Ki 15:28 Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha killed him, and reigned

in his place-

"Reigned" is literally 'to be made king', perhaps suggesting he was anointed.

1Ki 15:29 As soon as he was king, he struck all the house of Jeroboam: he didn't leave to Jeroboam any who breathed, until he had destroyed him; according to the saying of Yahweh which He spoke by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite-

The fact this had been prophesied didn't mean it was the right thing for him to do. We note the radical difference with David, who expressly sought to show grace to the family of Saul the previous ruler- when the usual thing was to destroy the family of the previous king.

1Ki 15:30 for the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and with which he made Israel to sin, because of his provocation with which he provoked Yahweh the God of Israel, to anger-

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

1Ki 15:31 Now the rest of the acts of Nadab and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?-

These comments suggest that this volume was available to the initial audience. It seems that the school of the prophets in Babylonian exile had access to the Old Testament scriptures, and I have often suggested that under Divine inspiration, they rewrote and reapplied parts of them with relevance for the exiles.

1Ki 15:32 There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days-

These notes about the conflict between Judah and Israel run as the saddest refrain throughout the historical records; for the division amongst God's people, and their conflicts, were the greatest tragedy for God. The wars were all in defiance of His command not to do this (1 Kings 12:24).

1Ki 15:33 In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah began to reign over all Israel in Tirzah for twenty-four years-

It seems the capital of the ten tribes moved away from Shechem to Tirzah, a location famed for its beauty (Song 6:4). These 24 years are reckoning as usual that parts of years are whole years (1 Kings 15:33 cp. 1 Kings 16:8).

1Ki 15:34 He did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin with which he made Israel to sin-

The eyes of Yahweh may refer specifically to His Angels (2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 4:10), who informed Yahweh, as it were, of human actions on earth. Whilst God is omniscient and omnipotent, He always seems to prefer to work through some human or Angelic mechanism.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 16

1Ki 16:1 The word of Yahweh came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying-

The prophet Jehu rebuked Baasha (1 Kings 16:1) and yet he also wrote a history of Jehoshaphat's reign (2 Chron. 20:34), implying that he outlived Jehoshaphat. This means that Jehu must have been a young man at the time of his rebuke of Baasha. It's hard to keep on keeping on in ministry over a long lifetime, and those who do should be deeply respected. His father Hanani had rebuked Asa for his alliance with the Syrians against Baasha (2 Chron. 16:7-10), and now Jehu rebukes Baasha. Having to be constantly critical of people is not a nice ministry.

1Ki 16:2 Because I exalted you out of the dust, and made you prince over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have made My people Israel to sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins-

Baasha was intended to learn from the path of Jeroboam, who had also been "exalted" (s.w. 1 Kings 14:7) from nothing to be prince over Israel, having been the son of a whore (1 Kings 12:24 LXX). Baasha like Jeroboam made the people sin. We are intended to learn from the life path of others. This is why we have Biblical history, and it is why God controls the encounters of those we meet in life.

We can limit God's plans to save others in the ecclesia by our attitude to them. We can make others stumble from the path to His salvation. Baasha made other people sin and thus provoke God to anger; his own sin and that of the people are described in identical language, to portray how he influenced them (1 Kings 16:2,7).

1Ki 16:3 behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house; and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat-

This was the language of Jeroboam's judgment (1 Kings 14:10). Baasha had failed to learn the lessons of Jeroboam and so he was judged in the same way.

1Ki 16:4 The dogs will eat Baasha's descendants who die in the city; and he who dies of his in the field- the birds of the sky will eat-

This repeats the language of Jeroboam's judgment (1 Kings 14:11). As noted on :3, Baasha was really intended to discern the wrong path of Jeroboam. As we may be with people who come into our lives. And he didn't, so he went to the same destination which Jeroboam's "way" led to.

1Ki 16:5 Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?-

These comments suggest that this volume was available to the initial audience. It seems that the school of the prophets in Babylonian exile had access to the Old Testament scriptures, and I have often suggested that under Divine inspiration, they rewrote and reapplied parts of them with relevance for the exiles.

1Ki 16:6 Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah; and Elah his son reigned in his place-

The idiom of 'sleeping' for death implies resurrection (Dan. 12:2). We will see these men again, at the day of judgment- and yet presumably they will be condemned to the "second death".

1Ki 16:7 Moreover by the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the word of Yahweh against Baasha, and against his house, both because of all the evil that he did in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam-

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. This is a major theme of this chapter (:2,7,13,26,33). He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

And because he struck him-

Yet God had raised up Baasha to strike the house of Jeroboam. Perhaps we have a similar position was in Is. 47:6, where the nations raised up to judge Judah are themselves judged because they did so without showing mercy. There are times when we have to judge, not in the sense of condemning (Mt. 7:1), but in the sense of judging righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24). But we shall be condemned if we do so without the mercy which we ourselves are saved by. And this seems to be the reason for Baasha's condemnation, amongst other things.

1Ki 16:8 In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha began to reign over Israel in Tirzah for two years-

"Elah" means "oak", which was associated with idolatry (s.w. Ez. 6:13; Hos. 4:13). This reflects upon Baasha's idolatry.

1Ki 16:9 His servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, conspired against him. Now he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who was over the household in Tirzah-

"Arza" is 'man of the earth'; "Zimri" means 'musical'. We note the lack of the 'Yah' suffix in the names, and how Elah was drunk when he was killed.

1Ki 16:10 and Zimri went in and struck him and killed him, in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place-

Elah began to reign in the 26th year of Asa, died in Asa's 27th year, and is counted as having reigned two years (:8). This means that the 'years' are counted as parts of years rather than literally 24 months.

1Ki 16:11 It happened, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he struck all the house of Baasha: he didn't leave him a single male, neither of his relatives, nor of his friends-

We note the radical difference with David, who expressly sought to show grace to the family of Saul the previous ruler- when the usual thing was to destroy the family of the previous king. David's behaviour was radically counter cultural, as is all displays of grace.

1Ki 16:12 Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the word of Yahweh, which He spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet-

As noted on :11, such destruction of the family of the usurped king was typical of secular behaviour at the time, but was not the way of grace. And yet God worked

through this failure to fulfil His prophetic word. We learn from this that we may be used by God to do His will, but that doesn't of itself mean that what we are doing is right, nor are we justified by means of having been used to fulfil His will.

1Ki 16:13 for all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned, and with which they made Israel to sin, to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities-

We frequently read of the sins *by which* men sinned (AV "the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin"). How do you 'sin by a sin'? Surely in the sense that sin leads to sin.

1Ki 16:14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?-

See on :5. This "book" may not be the book of Chronicles which we have in our Bibles.

1Ki 16:15 In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. Now the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines-

The infighting amongst the Israelites led to the siege being lifted at the time of 1 Kings 15:27, because here in 1 Kings 16:15 we find the siege resumed, and again a king of Israel is slain during a siege of the same city. We see here how Biblical history intentionally repeats itself. Situations repeat in our lives, so that we may learn from them. And often we fail, as Israel did in this matter. Within a period of 25 years at the most, two kings of Israel (Nadab and Elah) were killed by usurpers whilst the same city was being besieged.

1Ki 16:16 The people who were encamped heard say, Zimri has conspired, and has also struck the king: therefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp-

The captain of the army was effectively second in common politically (2 Kings 9:5, and consider the example of Joab with David). Zimri was an outsider and had slain all Elah's supporters, relatives of whom were likely in the military. So to make Omri king was logical, and the record is absolutely credible.

1Ki 16:17 Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah-

As noted before, the infighting amongst God's people blunted their fulfilment of God's will and the establishment of His Kingdom. Instead of besieging Gibbethon (:15), they left that important work and went to besiege their own brethren.

1Ki 16:18 It happened, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the castle of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over himself with fire, and died- That palace had doubtless been the object of his envy for a long time. He destroyed himself along with it, for Zimri was identified with his envy. What he coveted was identified with him as a person. His death was his judgment (:"for his sins", :19), but was self inflicted. All judgment is in the end self-judgment.

1Ki 16:19 for his sins which he sinned in doing that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make

Israel to sin-

We can make others sin (Ex. 23:33; 1 Sam. 2:24; 1 Kings 16:19). There is an urgent imperative here, to really watch our behaviour; e.g. to not drink alcohol in the presence of a brother whose conscience is weak. Zimri was given just seven days in power, and was judged and condemned for how he behaved during those seven days. Other kings reigned many years. God in His wisdom knows how long to test a person.

1Ki 16:20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he committed, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?-

Treason, assassination, short lived leaders and division (:21) were the experience of the ten tribes at this time, and this must be contrasted with the long and stable reign of Asa over Judah at this period. Clearly division and instability amongst God's people is a work of the flesh, but it is used by God to show His displeasure and judgment upon a people. We can note the quick succession of rulers which brought the kingdom of Judah to an end. Division and instability within a church or community is in the end not just the works of the flesh, but a sign of Divine judgment upon them.

1Ki 16:21 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-

Again we note the lack of the Divine Name or suffix 'Yah' in these names. "Tibni" means 'man of straw'.

1Ki 16:22 But the people who followed Omri prevailed against the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned-

See on :20. LXX adds that Tibni's brother Joram was also killed at this time. Such infighting and division within a community is a sign of Divine judgment, even if the individual participants are also guilty of wrong behaviour. The struggle between them went on for about four years (1 Kings 16:15 cp. 23).

1Ki 16:23 In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel for twelve years. He reigned six years in Tirzah-

The average length of reign of the ten tribes kings was far less than that of Judah's kings. See on :20. The four years of the civil war (see on :22) are not counted to neither Omri nor Tibni. The simple point is that in conflict between brethren, nobody really wins. See on :29.

1Ki 16:24 He bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built Samaria, after the name of Shemer the owner of the hill-

AV gives 6000 shekels. Abraham was an alien, and needed approval from the local community council to buy a burial place; and even then, the council had to speak with the owner and as it were do Abraham a favour. Further, the price of 400 shekels for some land with a cave in it to bury the dead was exorbitant (Gen. 23:14). There are records of the sale of whole villages in northern Syria dating from about this time, recorded in the Alalakh Tablets. They were sold for between 100 and 1000 shekels. Jeremiah paid 17 shekels for a field (Jer. 32:9); Omri paid 6000 shekels for the entire site of Samaria (1 Kings 16:24 AV). If ever we feel ripped off by this world, unreasonably treated in this land which is eternally ours, powerless to protest, left without option as Abraham was- then we are following in his steps, and are truly his "seed".

1Ki 16:25 Omri did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and dealt wickedly above all who were before him-

This phrase is common in the records, implying that there was an overall downward slide into apostasy until the people were at such a point that there had to be Divine judgment and intervention.

1Ki 16:26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sins with which he made Israel to sin, to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities-

Giving our lives to vanity rather than to God provokes Him to great anger. It is a sin. And yet at no other time has God's people faced such strong temptation to give their hearts and time to vanities, thanks to the online world of screens in which we live and move and have our beings.

1Ki 16:27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

This is the common rubric found in the histories of the kings (1 Kings 15:23; 16:5,27; 22:45; 2 Kings 10:34; 13:8,12; 14:15,28; 20:20). "His might that he showed" uses a word for "might" which has the sense of victory / achievement. But the contrast is marked with the way that David so often uses this word for "might / victory / achievement" in the context of *God's* "might"; notably in 1 Chron. 29:11, which the Lord Jesus places in our mouths as part of His model prayer: "Yours is the power [s.w. "might"], and the glory and the majesty". The kings about whom the phrase is used were those who trusted in their own works. It therefore reads as a rather pathetic memorial; that this man's might / achievement was noted down. But the unspoken further comment is elicited in our own minds, if we are in tune with the spirit of David: "But the only real achievement is the Lord's and not man's". All human victory and achievement must be seen in this context. The same word is used in Jer. 9:23,24: "Don't let the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might [s.w.]... but let him who glories glory in this, that he has understanding, and knows Me, that I am Yahweh who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth". The glorification of human "might" is often condemned. "Their might [s.w.] is not right" (Jer. 23:10; also s.w. Jer. 51:30; Ez. 32:29; Mic. 7:16 and often).

1Ki 16:28 So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his place-

This phrase "slept with his fathers" clearly means he died, and often a clause to the effect "he was buried" follows it. The unconsciousness of death, as a sleep, is a teaching laboured in the Bible so very many times.

1Ki 16:29 In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and he reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years-

If Omri reigned a total of 12 years starting from the 31st year of Asa (:23), it follows that there was an interregnum of about five years. Perhaps Omri was incapacitated, and during those last five years of his 'reign', his son Ahab reigned.

1Ki 16:30 Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh above all that were before him-

This statement is found often in the historical record, creating the impression of an overall downward slide to the point of lost relationship with God. We note that God does perceive degrees of sin; Ahab sinned "above" the previous kings. Whether we are to perceive these different degrees of sin in others' behaviour is a different question.

1Ki 16:31 It happened, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel-

Ahab's marriage to a Gentile was far worse than *all* the sins of Jeroboam; the idolatry, the perversion, the making of Israel sin; these were "a light thing" compared to the evil of marriage out of the faith (1 Kings 16:31). That perspective on marriage out of the faith needs to be appreciated. And further, those who married the daughters of Ahab were led astray by them (2 Kings 8:18,27).

The daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him-

Tyre was originally a colony of Sidon; the terms are at times interchangeable. Ethbaal is called "king of Tyre" by Josephus (*Antiquities* 8.3.2), but "king of the Sidonians" in 1 Kings 16:31. Some of Tyre's coins celebrate it as "the metropolis of the Sidonians". The Yahweh worship of Hiram turned into Baal worship, resulting in the blasphemous cherubim idols explained on Ez. 28:14.

1Ki 16:32 He reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria-

The ten tribes' equivalent of Judah's temple to Yahweh in Jerusalem were the high places and two golden calves. But Ahab appears to have now matched Yahweh's temple with a kind of temple to Baal, built in Samaria.

1Ki 16:33 Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him-

This is stressed twice (see on :30). That Ahab should finally repent is therefore so significant. He is the parade example of why we should never give up on anyone as 'too far gone'.

1Ki 16:34 In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho: he laid its foundation with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of Yahweh, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun-

To even attempt to rebuilt Jericho meant a studied disregard of God's word, considering Biblical records of Joshua's words to be merely the words of men. Hiel was from Bethel, where the golden calf was. Jericho had been inhabited after Joshua's time (Jud. 3:13; 2 Sam. 10:5). So this was a conscious rebuilding of the walls with gates in defiance of Yahweh's word. And his sons died during the building work, perhaps 'at some time between the beginning, in laying the foundations, and the ending of the project, in hanging the gates'. After Abiram died laying the foundations, we would rather imagine that Hiel might have learned the lesson. But he didn't, such was his desire to defy God's word. And so his youngest son died when the project was almost completed and the gates were being hung. The desire to rebuild the settlement as a walled, gated city could have been because of its strategic position near the crossing of the Jordan river. Jericho was on the border of Ephraim but belonged to Benjamin (Josh. 16:7; 18:21), so it seems Ahab had taken it, and wanted to have the city and fortify it as a boundary against the two tribe kingdom.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 17

1Ki 17:1 Elijah the Tishbite, who was among the foreigners of Gilead, said to Ahab-
This could imply Elijah was a Gentile (s.w. Lev. 25:47), who named himself after Yahweh, 'My God is Yah'.

As Yahweh, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand-
'Standing before the Lord' refers to prayer- Ps. 106:23; Ezra 9:15; Jer. 15:1; 18:20. To live a life standing before the Lord is to live a life of prayer. Hence David and Paul say that prayer can be continual- in that life becomes a lived out prayer, with the practice of living in the presence of God. And straight away we ask ourselves, in lives just as busy as those of David and Paul, whether our self-talk, our minute by minute inner consciousness, is "before the Lord"...or merely the sheer and utter vapidness of the modern mind.

"Before whom I stand" was perhaps uttered too quickly. At Horeb, Elijah was asked to stand before Yahweh. But he hid terrified in a cleft of the rocks. We too are taught to put meaning into our words. James 5 says that Elijah prayed that there may be no rain. So "before whom I stand" may suggest that he had prayed about what he was going to do, and his whole life was a standing before God in prayer over this matter. He was convinced he was praying according to God's will, and so he confidently states that the answer will come- rain will be withheld, in accordance with the many statements that rain would stop falling if Israel were idolatrous. This alone is where confidence in prayer can come from. Elijah had faith and is presented as a "righteous man" in James 5, but of our passions- he was righteous but with many weaknesses.

There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word-
Dt. 11:16,17; 28:24 had clearly stated that God would close the skies if Israel were idolatrous. James 5:17 says Elijah prayed earnestly it might not rain. So here we have a case of a man discerning God's will and his prayers therefore being answered. Elijah's word of prayer was effectively God's word. Baal was the storm / rain god, so lack of rain meant Baal had been closed down by the word of Yahweh's prophet. But Jezebel and Ahab desperately didn't want to perceive that. The closure of the skies, and thereby of Baal, was therefore an appeal to Israel to quit the useless Baal and return to Yahweh.

Here is an example of being sure of God's will in what we pray for. If the Lord's words abide in us, then we will ask what *we* will and it will be done; yet John also records that if we ask according to *God's* will, it will be done for us. In Elijah's case, he knew God's will from His word. Our will and that of the Father come to coincide as His word takes an ever deeper lodgment in our consciousness. And this is how close Elijah must have been to knowing the will of God. Elijah alludes to Dt. 28 in saying there would be no rain (and 1 Kings 19:14 forsaken thy covenant= Dt. 32)- therefore he could be so sure of being heard. His request that there be "no dew" was inspired by the prayers of Gideon and David, who had prayed just the same things (Jud. 6:37; 2 Sam.1:21; and 1 Kings 18:33 = Jud. 6:20). Likewise the two witnesses of the last days will be inspired in their turn by Elijah's example to pray that Heaven will be stopped. When it comes to prayer, there clearly is a positive pattern of influence and example both amongst us and from our absorbing the spirit of countless Biblical examples. The righteous man 'decrees a thing in his heart and it is done' through his prayers (Job 22:28). The same Hebrew words for 'according' and 'word' occur in both 1 Kings 17:1 and 24: "There shall not be dew nor rain but according to my word...The word of the Lord in [according to] thy mouth". Elijah's word and will had become parallel with those of the Father. This was taken to the ultimate extent by the Lord, in whom the Father's word

was made flesh. But that same word slowly becomes flesh in us too. No longer do we request things that are not the Father's will as through His word we become more attune to Him. Our experience of answered prayer becomes increasingly positive, reinforcing our faith in Him and our attention to prayerfulness. And this dovetails with our increasingly sensitive reading of His word daily. The Lord intended that we should all pray the prayer of command as Elijah did; for He taught that with faith, we should be able to tell a sycamore tree to be rooted up and planted in the sea (Lk. 17:6). He doesn't advise that we pray to the Father that the tree, according to His will, be rooted up and transplanted. He wants us to come to so know the will of the Father that we can pray the prayer of direct command. And this is quite some challenge.

Elijah could be so sure his prayer would be heard because he knew that he was genuinely motivated. His reason for withholding the rain and dew was so that Israel would come to repentance (James 5:16-18)- perhaps through them perceiving that lack of rain was a sign that they had broken the covenant. And that Baal, the rain god, was effectively dead. The people needed Yahweh, not Baal. But human motivation is complex, and rarely pure. Elijah did seek Israel's repentance, and yet so often all it was all about him. In this case, Elijah was somewhat harsher than God Himself, who had not yet withdrawn rain from His people. Elijah "shut the heavens", even though Israel rejected him at that time (Lk. 4:25,26). Their rejection of him is unrecorded in the Kings record, but we are left to reflect upon the wonder of the fact that Elijah's response to rejection was not to merely hurt back, but to earnestly seek their restoration to God. He "prayed in his prayer" (James 5:17 Gk.)- there was a deep prayer going on within his prayer, words and feelings within words- the prayer of the very inner soul. This was how much he sought their repentance. The James passage sets Elijah up as a pattern for our prayer for our wayward brethren. He really is our pattern here. He clearly saw prayer as requiring much effort; and the way he prays at the time of the evening sacrifice on Horeb suggests that he saw prayer as a sacrifice (1 Kings 18:36).

A lack of rain was one of the Law's curses for idol worship (Dt. 11:10-12,17). Elijah's response to Israel's idolatry was to tell them there would be no rain (1 Kings 17:1 cp. 1 Kings 16:32,33). Those reflective upon God's Law would have realized the implied criticism which this carried; the more unspiritual would have just cursed Elijah for bringing about a devastating drought. Elijah had to pray daily for the lack of bread and water in Israel (so 1 Kings 17:1 implies). He suffered himself because of this. He was prepared to forego quite legitimate blessings in order to lead an apostate ecclesia back to God.

1Ki 17:2 The word of Yahweh came to him saying-

There seems to be a contrast between this, and how Elijah dogmatically declares his own word in :1, confident Yahweh would confirm it as his word, rather than giving a "Thus says Yahweh".

1Ki 17:3 Go away from here, turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan-

The whole incident on Horeb was to make Elijah see the supremacy of the still small voice; that it is in humble, quiet service rather than fiery judgment of others that the essence of God and spirituality is to be found. But God had prepared Elijah for this earlier. Elijah had to hide by the brook Cherith (1 Kings 17:3) for three and a half years (Lk. 4:25,26). Elijah was characterized by wearing a hairy garment like sackcloth (2 Kings 1:8 RV). In Rev. 11:3,6 we meet another Elijah figure- also clothed in sackcloth, with the power to bring fire down from Heaven, who for three and a half years...prophesies / preaches. We would expect Elijah to have been preaching during his time hidden by Cherith- but there is not a word of this in the record, indeed he is told to hide himself away from people. Could it not be that the Father

wishes to show us what He was then trying to teach Elijah- that the essential prophetic witness is through us being as we are, the still small voice of witness through example...?

This fleeing eastward from persecution by Ahab , finding refuge with a family, recalls what Moses did after Pharaoh persecuted him. And so begins the many allusions to Moses. Elijah was set up to be the prophet like unto Moses, but failed to perceive Moses' spirit of love for Israel, and so he was dismissed.

1Ki 17:4 It shall be, that you shall drink of the brook. I have commanded the ravens to feed you there-

Elijah was being paralleled with an apostate Israel, who were also sustained by food 'commanded' by God (s.w. Neh. 9:21); the brook is described as "dried up", using the same word about the Red Sea drying up. Elijah is being nudged towards identity with Israel. But instead he sees himself as alone with God, he alone is faithful and Israel deserve judgment, and Rom. 9 says that at Horeb he interceded with God *against* Israel. Later the Gentile widow is "commanded" to feed Elijah just as the unclean ravens were. He is being nudged towards accepting that he needs the unclean, and God is quite happy to work through the unclean. Yet Elijah felt himself to be so superior to Israel generally. But God was trying to teach him that in essence, he wasn't. We have shown earlier that God sought to again show Elijah the same lesson when he went into the Sinai wilderness and was fed by an Angel. Perhaps he did learn the lesson when he says that he felt that he was not better than the Jewish fathers? For they walked 40 years as he walked 40 days in the very same place, also fed by Angels. God told Elijah that He had commanded unclean ravens to feed him; and thus He reminded Elijah of a basic fact, that God speaks to even unclean animals (Gen. 1:22; Job)- and they obey him. The ravens not only obeyed Yahweh in going to Elijah, but in not eating the food they were carrying. Elijah likely considered that the fact God spoke to him meant that he must therefore have some automatic superiority over others. But not so. It's the same with us. We can consider that because we have heard God's true voice, we thereby are justified before Him. But He speaks to and uses all, clean and unclean.

1Ki 17:5 So he went and did according to the word of Yahweh; for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan-

Elijah is commended for his obedience to Yahweh's word, even though as explained on :3,4, it was humiliating for him. "Brook" is literally a torrent bed; "Cherith" means a "cut" or ravine. There would only be water in the deep ravine immediately after times of torrential rain. Seeing there was no such rain, it could be that the water in the torrent bed was therefore provided by God miraculously.

We note the repeated language in :15 about the widow woman: "So she went and did according to the saying of Elijah" matches "So he went and did according to the word of Yahweh". And as a result, they both ate and drunk "many days". Elijah was being led to identity with the woman. As will be discussed on :6, God was ever nudging Elijah to identity with the people of God, and those to whom he ministered. He was set up to be the prophet like Moses, but Moses supremely identified with people- whereas Elijah refused to be led toward empathy with people, and merely saw himself as the upholder of God's Truth upon earth. This same lack of empathy is found with so many legalistic believers who are maxed out on the apostacy of others and their own retention of orthodoxy.

1Ki 17:6 The ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook-

As a hyper observant Jew, evening and morning were the times when Elijah ought to have been sacrificing to God. But God's intention was to teach him of His grace. Instead of Elijah

offering food to God, God was giving food to him- and food made unclean by contact with unclean ravens. LXX has "loaves" for "bread", which would mean a possible connection with the loaves of the tabernacle rituals.

There is a clear parallel with Israel's experience in the wilderness: "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread" (Ex. 16:12,13). He was being led to identity with Israel; a reminder that he was not separate from them. Moses showed a very clear identity with Israel and refused to separate from them, even when offered the chance of Israel being destroyed and he being made a great nation. Elijah by contrast wanted Israel destroyed, making intercession to God against Israel (Rom. 11:2). But God sought to teach Elijah to truly be as Moses, by giving him their experience in the wilderness. Elijah's life is the story of Divine hints, seeking to educate and spiritually develop him- and of so many of them being ignored. The parallels between Elijah and Moses are so many, that Elijah appears to be the intended prophet to be raised up "like unto" Moses of Dt. 18:18. But he is an example of where Divine potential is not realised; for he is fired from the job because he lacked the spirit and humility of Moses. See on :5.

1Ki 17:7 It happened after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land-

As noted on :1, Elijah himself suffered the effects of the drought he had called upon Israel in order to lead them to repentance. Our efforts to help our brethren are often at deep personal cost to ourselves. I suggested on :5 that the water he drunk there was miraculously provided, because "brook" means 'torrent bed' and was a ravine which would only have water after torrential rains. So the translation here may be to the effect that 'The torrent bed had dried up because there had been no rain in the land, and after a while the word of Yahweh came to him...' (:8).

1Ki 17:8 The word of Yahweh came to him saying-

This is as in :2, we get the sense that God meant Elijah to learn in stages. His time at Cherith was to develop him to accept God's grace and realize that ritual purity was not going to save anyone of itself.

1Ki 17:9 Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain you-

God had sought to gently teach Elijah his need for others when He told Elijah to go to the widow woman in Zarephath who would "sustain you"; it worked out that Elijah sustained *her*. And he must have reflected upon this. But perhaps, therefore, God's intention was that spiritually, Elijah's experience with that woman would sustain him. "Zarephath" means 'place of refinement' and clearly Elijah's time there was intended for his refinement. It is emphasized that Zarephath belonged to Sidon because this was where Jezebel's father reigned (1 Kings 16:32). Even in the heart of apostasy, Elijah was to encounter obedience and commitment to Yahweh's word. But his later insistence that he alone remained faithful was effectively his trashing the woman's faith and commitment as not enough to count as faithfulness to Yahweh.

There is no evidence that the woman was commanded to feed Elijah by some specific revelation to her. Rather, the commandment may refer to the word of potential command which God had given the woman. But it came to her through circumstances.

1Ki 17:10 So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks: and he called to her and said, Please get me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink-

The woman “gathering sticks” (1 Kings 17:10) would likely have stimulated his Bible-steeped mind to think of the illegal gathering of sticks in Num. 15:32,33. For this is the only other Biblical reference to gathering sticks in the Old Testament.

1Ki 17:11 As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand-

See on :12. On :13 I discuss whether these demands were simply part of God's demand upon the woman, or whether they also simply reflect Elijah's arrogance and inappropriate sense of entitlement.

1Ki 17:12 She said, As Yahweh your God lives-

Perhaps she had experienced a specific revelation from Yahweh about Elijah (:9). Or maybe Elijah was well known in the area. Or again, perhaps we are only reading a tiny part of their conversation, and the woman may have realized that the drought was because of Elijah's prayer to Yahweh.

I don't have a cake, but a handful of flour in a pitcher, and a little oil in a pitcher. Behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and bake it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die-

1 Kings 17:11 in Hebrew has Elijah asking the woman: ‘Bring me a *handful* of bread’ - and she replies that she has only a *handful* of flour (1 Kings 17:12). Yet even this is demanded of her. Her handful of flour in a pitcher gives the impression of a handful of meal in a very large container; it's an eloquent picture of her poverty, and how she was down to the last little bit of flour in a large container that was once full. And the Lord through Elijah demanded this of her, that He might save her.

Later, the Angel gave Elijah cake and water (1 Kings 19:6) just as the unclean ravens and Gentile widow woman had done- to teach Elijah that God works through those people.

There were two occasions in which God fed Elijah with a cake when he was hungry. Once when the widow woman baked him one (1 Kings 17:13), and once when the Angel did (1 Kings 19:6). Surely God was trying to show Elijah that He was manifested through that desperately poor, weak, sick, starving widow woman who was at the point of death from starvation. It was the same message- that God wasn't in the earthquake and fire, but in the still small voice.

The widow woman was prepared to die. The tragedy of that gaunt woman touches me deeply. I imagine her tidying the house, and then walking out into the blazing heat to gather sticks. But she gave her last bit to God's man Elijah; not, it seems, with any hope of getting out of her plight. She gave of her very last, her best, her all, not expecting anything back. Another widow, centuries later, threw her two mites into the collection bag of a fabulously rich, doctrinally corrupt, hypocritical ecclesia. The implication is that she died even more pathetically, perhaps tossed onto Gehenna with the starving cats. There seems to have been no happy ending- in this life. And she absolutely understood that.

LXX "sons", which would explain why she and her family ate many days (:15).

The meal she was preparing was not for sustenance, but a funeral meal- a very humble one. [To eat at a funeral is part and parcel of a funeral in many cultures, although not so much in Anglo-Saxon culture. This is the basis of the "breaking of bread" to commemorate the Lord's death]. The closing of the skies and lack of rain had shown the powerlessness of Baal, the rain god. But in Canaanite mythology, Baal was slain by Mot, the god of death. But now, even Mot, supposedly more powerful than Baal, has been shown impotent by Elijah. The woman and her son were absolutely on the point of death- and Elijah had saved them from death, rescued them from the supposed power of Mot.

1Ki 17:13 Elijah said to her, Don't be afraid. Go and do as you have said; but make me of it a little cake first, and bring it out to me, and afterward make some for you and for your son- Elijah asked the widow woman to *first* feed him, and *after* feed herself and her son when she had given him all the food she had. The Hebrew word translated "after" is that translated "last"- 'put me first and yourself last', Elijah is saying. Wasn't this arrogant? He was so sure he was manifesting God that he could demand that she put him first and herself last. But God *is* demanding, and yes He worked through Elijah. But one does get the sense that Elijah felt *he* should be put first. God can be demanding, but we don't have the same right to be upon others.

The Gentile widow was clearly a believer in Yahweh, as the Lord implies in Lk. 4. Elijah was sent to her because of her faith even though it was incomplete and faltering- for she speaks of "your God" and only after her son is raised does she make a full confession of faith. She presumably recognized Elijah as Yahweh's prophet, and put Yahweh first above her own most desperate and immediate needs. Elijah was being nudged to understand that those whom he considered definitely not God's people- a Gentile female living in the heart of Jezebel territory- in fact were. But he fails to follow where he is led, for he insists he alone remains faithful to Yahweh. And for this he is fired from his potential commission as the prophet like unto Moses.

1Ki 17:14 For thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'The jar of meal shall not empty, neither shall the jar of oil fail, until the day that Yahweh sends rain on the earth'-

See on :16. The food and water of condemned Israel did "fail" (s.w. Ez. 4:17), but that of the revived remnant didn't (s.w. Is. 51:14). Israel faithful to the covenant suffered no lack (Ex. 16:18; Dt. 2:7 s.w. "fail"). This woman was being treated like the faithful in Israel, although she was a Gentile.

1Ki 17:15 She went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, ate many days-

She was responsible for more than just one son; hence :12 LXX says she had "sons", plural. The end result of all this was that she was converted to Yahweh (see on :24). And Lk. 4:26 notes that there was no starving widow in Israel who was so open to conversion as this Gentile woman. The Lord again alludes to her in saying that who ever receives a prophet in the name of a prophet, receives a prophet's reward; even if they give a little one a cup of cold water, just as the woman gave water to Elijah (Mt. 10:41,42). This would equate Elijah with a "little one". His spirituality was as immature as that of the disciples, whom the Lord also called "little ones". Faith is not the same as hope and love, and Elijah's faith was not the same as spirituality.

1Ki 17:16 The jar of meal didn't empty, neither did the jar of oil fail, according to the word of Yahweh, which he spoke by Elijah-

We note that it was not the meal or oil which is described as not finishing, but rather the containers of those products. We see the similarity with how the extent of Elijah's miracle of multiplying the widow's oil depended upon the number of pots borrowed.

1Ki 17:17 It happened after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so severe, that there was no breath left in him-

The idea is, that he died (:18). Perhaps death is described in this way because Elijah was to breath the breath of life back into him.

1Ki 17:18 She said to Elijah, What have I to do with you-

The idiom means 'Go away!' (2 Sam. 16:10; Lk. 5:8). She had hosted Elijah and cared for him, and now she feels his presence has brought about the death of her son. And so she wants him to leave.

You man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to memory, and to kill my son!-

In her desperation, the woman felt that Elijah's presence had attracted God's attention to her, and brought some personal sin to His memory. Perhaps her son had been conceived out of wedlock. Many times we read of God being provoked to remember someone, for good or for evil (Lev. 24:7 LXX "that God may mercifully remember"; Ps. 69:1 LXX; 37:1 LXX; Zech. 6:14; 1 Kings 17:18). We could accept this as mere anthropomorphism. Or we could reflect deeper, and wonder whether this language of limitation suggests that the God who could be omniscient over time, not needing to have anything brought back to His memory, allows Himself to 'forget' so that sin or righteousness again brings things to His remembrance. And it can work positively too. Thus generosity and prayer is a memorial before God in the sense that it brings a person to His memory or attention (Acts 10:4), and He appropriately responds in their lives. When sin gets to a certain point, it causes other sins to be remembered by God, and thus judgment comes (Rev. 18:5). It has been suggested by Joachim Jeremias that the Lord's command to break bread in remembrance of Him can mean 'that God may remember me'.

We see here the psychological credibility of the Biblical record. Extreme circumstances do elicit awareness of past sin. The art of course is to be humble and allow God's word to elicit that awareness and repentance, rather than having to be brought to fess up through major hammer blows.

1Ki 17:19 He said to her, Give me your son. He took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into the room where he stayed, and laid him on his own bed-

The focus of the Divine cameraman is zoomed in upon the woman holding the dead child to her breast, and Elijah prizing the child away from her. He performs the healing miracle on the bed she had provided for him, in order to demonstrate that in fact the child was not slain because of Elijah's presence in the house; see on :18.

1Ki 17:20 He cried to Yahweh and said, Yahweh my God, have You also brought evil on the widow with whom I stay, by killing her son?-

The force of "also" is that Elijah perhaps considered that the drought that affected Phoenicia was not what he had intended, as he wished the drought to bring Israel to repentance. But he was being taught that God wanted idolatrous Gentiles such as the Sidonians, of whom Jezebel was one, to also repent. And not just be witnessed against for their sins. He struggles to understand how the child of the widow who had cared for him should be slain. He was being given the problem of evil to struggle with, just as we are, in order to humble him. For he needed that. He was being forced to recognize he did not know all about God. There were things he didn't understand. Our inability to immediately attach meaning to event is intended likewise.

Despite his union with the Father, this didn't preclude Elijah questioning God. So in the midst of this tremendously powerful prayer, Elijah remonstrates with God: 'Have You brought evil...?'. The Hebrew for 'evil' usually means evil in the sense of sin- 'have You brought the result of sin... on her as well as upon this people?'. This is all part of a passionate, living relationship with a living God.

Elijah clearly considers both he and the widow woman had suffered unjustified "evil" from Yahweh. Moses likewise considered Yahweh's judgment at Kibroth Hattaavah to be "evil" in his eyes (Num. 11:10). "Why have You dealt ill [evil] with Your servant" recalls Moses' words in Ex. 5:22 "Why have You done evil to this people?". Elijah perceived he was the intended prophet like unto Moses, but he abuses this by considering that therefore Moses' weak moments could be replicated by him. He fails to perceive and rise up to the better side of Moses- his self sacrificial love for his people, his intercession *for* them rather than *against* them, as Elijah is understood as doing by Paul in Romans.

Another approach is that Elijah's apparently caustic words to God are in fact his way of interceding for the widow. Because he is saying to God the essence of what she has said to him in :18, accusing God of being too hard on her for her sins and slaying her son for the sake of her sins. And Romans 8 explains that this is how the Lord Jesus, as "the spirit", intercedes for us- placing the essence of our spirit, our unspoken, un verbalized positions, before God in His own words. The Lord is not merely a translator from one language to another, but places our inner spirit before God. Elijah places his body on the boy's body, doing press ups over the boy (:21)- to ask God to see the boy's dead body as identified with his living body. And this again is how we are saved by the Lord's intercession, we identify with His body and are saved thereby, as His spirit enters us and becomes our spirit, just as happened here physically.

1Ki 17:21 He stretched himself on the child three times, and cried to Yahweh and said, Yahweh my God, please let this child's soul come into him again-

"Soul" would be better rendered 'life'. The soul typically refers to the person. The spirit of life which animates people is that which animates all of creation, and it returns to God, not in the sense of an immortal soul or conscious existence after death. Perhaps the way that the first six prayers of Elijah for rain went unanswered, his need to pray three times for the child to resurrect, were all part of God teaching Elijah that no matter how close we are to Him, we have no right to expect automatic answers to prayer, even if they are according to God's will.

Baal was thought to be the god of fertility, who gave oil, brought fire, lightning, rain and water, and who was thought to be able to heal the sick and revive the dead. The various incidents in the Elijah account all therefore show the preeminence of Yahweh over Baal. Elijah presents as absolutely confident that this was the case, and therefore he does miracles knowing that Yahweh will come through for him. But as Paul explains in 1 Cor. 13, faith alone is not spirituality; for without love, the greatest faith is nothing, even if mountains are actually moved by it. That means that God may respond to faith in Him, even if the believer has no love and is therefore spiritually nothing. Elijah is an essay in this. Elijah was only interested in demonstrating Yahweh's superiority over Baal, but it is questionable whether he made any lasting converts from Baal worship to Yahweh. Because he wasn't interested in people- at least initially. He was removed from his post after his shameful intercession *against* Israel in 1 Kings 19. But we must square this against Malachi's apparently strange comment that Elijah in future will turn the heart of the fathers to the children and vice versa (Mal. 4:6). This makes sense once we understand that Baal worship involved child sacrifice, as the preceding section in 1 Kings 16 makes clear. This created tension and no "heart" between fathers and children, and vice versa. After his demotion, Elijah carried on believing- and we can assume that he "got it". His future work will therefore involve caring for people, and turning fathers and children towards each other in that they have quit Baal. Elijah will finally learn from his immaturity, and become people focused.

1Ki 17:22 Yahweh listened to the voice of Elijah-

Just as He had done in :1 when it was Elijah's voice which brought forth the drought that slew

so many. But his voice likewise had the power of revival. And that is what God wanted to teach Elijah out of all this; not to simply judge for sin, but to ever seek revival

And the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived-

“When Jesus saw the faith of *the friends*, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you” (Mk. 2:5). That man was healed for the sake of the faith of others. The widow woman’s son was resurrected because God heard Elijah’s faithful prayer; and thus Heb. 11:35 alludes to this incident by saying that through faith- in this case, the faith of Elijah, a third party- women received their dead raised to life. The Centurion’s servant was healed for the sake of his faith; Jairus’ daughter was healed because of his faith (Mk. 5:36). This inspires us to endless effort for the sake of others. Clearly God worked through Elijah giving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). It was Elijah’s breath which entered the child, but it was the source of the child’s new life. There is no teaching here about immortal souls returning into bodies. The soul [effectively, the life] came from Elijah’s breath / spirit. Which represented God’s Spirit reviving the dead.

1Ki 17:23 Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the room into the house, and delivered him to his mother; and Elijah said, Behold, your son lives-

The Lord Jesus quotes Elijah’s words “Your son lives” (1 Kings 17:23 = Jn. 4:50-53). He also, however, shows that Elijah’s “spirit” wasn’t always correct, although it was used by God. For in the context of Elijah, He rebukes the disciples for having the wrong spirit, in seeking to have the spirit of Elijah. The idea of fire from Heaven, which Elijah called down, is found in the Lord’s teaching in Lk. 12:49-54, where He associates it with division in the brotherhood. And the Lord went on to say that the Pharisees could interpret a cloud arising in the West as a sign that rain was coming, but they could not forgive their brethren, which was what was essential (Lk. 12:54). This just has to be a reference to Elijah, who saw a cloud arising from the West as a sign of rain. The Lord is, it seems, sadly associating Elijah with the Pharisees. And yet... despite all this, Jesus likens Himself to Elijah. Jesus sent fire on earth as Elijah did (Lk. 12:49). And the context of the Lk. 9:54 reference to Elijah is that the Lord’s time had come that he should be “received up”, and “he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Lk. 9:51). This is all very much the language of Elijah (2 Kings 2:1). The Lord Jesus quotes Elijah’s words “Your son lives” (1 Kings 17:23 = Jn. 4:50-53). What this shows is that the Lord saw what was good in Elijah, and He didn’t separate Himself from someone who didn’t have His Spirit. He simply wanted His followers to learn better from him.

Jewish tradition claims that the boy became Elijah’s servant of whom we will later read, and that he was the prophet Jonah.

1Ki 17:24 The woman said to Elijah, Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth-

This means more than ‘God’s word is true’; it is an expression of faith that Yahweh is the one true God. The way the woman talks about “Yahweh *your* God”, to which Elijah responds by speaking of “Yahweh, the God of Israel”, implies that she did not even believe in Israel’s God (1 Kings 17:12,14). She didn’t even initially believe at that time that Elijah was a man of God (so :24 implies); and so, we can conclude, the daily miracle of the meal and oil not drying up did not deeply touch her, just as the daily provision of manna did not seem to register with most of Israel in the wilderness. She even seems to have been cynical in earlier calling him a “man of God”, because only later did she say that she really believe he was this (1 Kings 17:18, 24). But now she was his first recorded convert. This was all to teach Elijah that God works not only with the clean, and not only with those in covenant with Him. And

as noted in :22, Elijah was being taught that he was to make converts and revive people, not merely judge them as sinners.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 18

1Ki 18:1 It happened after many days, that the word of Yahweh came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show yourself to Ahab; and I will send rain on the earth- Elijah said that there would be no rain "but according to my word" (1 Kings 17:1). His faith was undoubtedly based upon being attune to the will of God and His ways of working with His people, to the extent that he knew that because the word abided in him, he could ask what he wanted and it would be heard, because he asked according to God's will. But when the time comes for rain, we read that "the word of Yahweh [not Elijah's word] came to Elijah... saying... I will send rain upon the earth" (1 Kings 18:1). It seems Elijah was more interested in judging the people for their sins, than seeing their repentance. God wanted to send the rain because of His pity, in the spirit of Dt. 32:36 "For Yahweh will judge His people and have compassion / pity on His servants when He sees that their power is gone, that there is none remaining, shut up or left at large". Both Obadiah and the widow of Zarephath feel that Elijah had brought their sins to remembrance, or tried to. And he failed to recognize the repentance when it came. He will later insist that he alone is faithful to Yahweh. He discounted the 7000 who had not bowed to Baal, and the 100 prophets hidden by Obadiah; as well as Obadiah and the widow woman of 1 Kings 17. As well as Micaiah and the various faithful prophets who appear later in the record at this time. But perhaps all these faithful ones were those who had responded to the three years of drought. Even if Elijah discounted them.

Elijah had reasoned that because God's word said there would be drought if Israel were disobedient, therefore he could pray to God for a drought and be assured of an answer. And so it happened. But he doesn't get God's grace- that in wrath God remembers mercy, whether or not Israel have repented. God tells him that the drought is now over. In his legalistic way, Elijah assumes this must mean that Israel have repented. And so he sets up the contest on Carmel. When he prays for rain to come, this is because he thinks that Israel have repented- whereas 18:1 clearly states that it was God who decided to send rain by grace, without repentance. The fact Ahab is present with Elijah and appears to accept the outcome of the contest encouraged him in this. And therefore, on the basis that he thought Israel had repented, Elijah prays to God for rain. But when Ahab's repentance is shortlived as soon as he returns to Jezebel... Elijah therefore falls into depression. Because he just didn't get it, that God's basic pity and dislike of judgment meant that He had decided to cut short the drought by His sovereign grace.

1Ki 18:2 Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. The famine was severe in Samaria- This was a risky thing to do, as Ahab and Jezebel had been searching everywhere for Elijah with a view to killing him. But Elijah is to be commended for obeying God's word.

1Ki 18:3 Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared Yahweh greatly- We naturally wonder how he could have retained his responsible post at the palace of Baal worshippers. He presumably like Naaman must have gone through some motions

of Baal worship. But his heart was "greatly" with Yahweh. Elijah will later state that he alone is faithful in Israel. Obadiah's surface level failure was enough for Elijah to write him off completely. And there is strong warning to us here.

Obadiah saved the lives of 100 prophets. Elijah took the lives of 450 prophets and 100 soldiers. When the disciples wanted to imitate Elijah by bringing down fire from Heaven, the Lord rebuked them by saying they didn't know what Spirit they had. We wonder if one function of Obadiah in the narrative is to point out what is a far more effective way of serving Yahweh- humbly living out His principles and secretly doing His work, as opposed to the antics of Elijah on the public stage. Obadiah, as his name means, was a servant of Yahweh. He surely is presented as a kind of foil for Elijah, who speaks of himself as a "*man* of God".

1Ki 18:4 for it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of Yahweh, that Obadiah took one hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water)-

God tried to correct Elijah's despising of the other prophets of the Lord. Elijah was in a cave, and was also fed bread and water- just as the other prophets were. And yet Elijah didn't see, or didn't want to see, that connection- after having been reminded of this experience of the other prophets, he claims that "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:22)- he wrongly believed that all other valid prophets had been slain (1 Kings 19:10). In fact the record shows how that during Elijah's lifetime there were other prophets of Yahweh active in His service (1 Kings 20:13,35). And yet the lesson is that God still works through the conceited, the spiritually superior, those who despise their brethren. God didn't give up on Elijah because he was like this, and neither should we give up in our relationship with such brethren.

The fact Elijah was hidden by God meant that he was forced into fellowship with the prophets of Yahweh whom Obadiah hid in a cave. Elijah was thus intended to see a link between Obadiah and God, and himself and the other prophets of Yahweh. But Elijah's pride didn't let himself make the connection, just as ours often doesn't. For he continued doubtful of Obadiah's sincerity, and still insisted that he alone remained a faithful prophet of Yahweh- even though Obadiah had hidden one hundred other prophets from Jezebel's persecution. Those one hundred prophets were presumably part of the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

1Ki 18:5 Ahab said to Obadiah, Go through the land, to all the springs of water, and to all the brooks. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, so that we don't lose all the animals-

This reflects the pitiful selfishness of Ahab. He like Solomon was obsessed with his horses, which a true king of Israel ought not to have had (Dt. 17:16,17). For Ahab, the worst thing about the famine was that there was no fodder for his prized herd of horses, and he personally is so concerned about it that he and the master of his household go around Israel searching for grass to feed them with, lest he have to slay them.

Elijah was fed by unclean ravens with unclean food. His conception of the unclean was thereby challenged by a Divine re-education. But Obadiah likewise was an instrument of Divine feeding for God's prophets. Elijah should have learned the lesson, and accepted that Obadiah was likewise clean, and not made unclean by his association with Ahab.

1Ki 18:6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one

way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself-

As noted on :5, Ahab personally went out in search of fodder for his beloved but unlawful herd of horses, because they meant so very much to him. He was far less concerned about the fate of his people. If Obadiah had been a literalist, he would have challenged Ahab about the matter, citing the words of Dt. 17:16,17 as to how Israel's king shouldn't have horses; and arguing that he should accept the loss of them as a quite legitimate punishment for breaking the covenant. Obadiah didn't do this; instead he assisted in the search for fodder for the illegal horses. Yet he "feared Yahweh greatly"- that is the Divine comment upon him. We do indeed have the example of Daniel in Babylon, not defiling himself with the king's meat, and insisting on publically praying toward Jerusalem when this was forbidden. But the Bible also brings before us the example of Obadiah, who was not like that. And of Elijah, who condemned him as not really genuine, and was himself condemned for judging in that way.

1Ki 18:7 As Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, Is it you, my lord Elijah?-

Elijah must have been known as a prophet for Obadiah to recognize him. Presumably he had advertised the fact that the drought was because of his word (1 Kings 17:1), and was an invitation for Israel to accept that they were receiving the consequences of breaking the covenant and needed to repent.

1Ki 18:8 He answered him, It is I. Go, tell your lord, 'Behold, Elijah is here!'- Elijah is mocking Obadiah's addressing of him as "my lord" (:7). He is saying that Ahab is Obadiah's lord, and he did not accept Obadiah as one of his servants, nor a servant of Yahweh. Because Elijah considered himself the sole remaining Yahweh worshipper. "Obadiah" means 'servant of Yahweh', but Elijah is opining that Obadiah is servant of his lord Ahab, not Yahweh. We continually see Elijah presented as arrogant and elitist. If not narcissistic.

1Ki 18:9 He said, Wherein have I sinned, that you would deliver your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?-

Again, Obadiah insists that he is Elijah's servant, and not that of Ahab. See on :8. We note that the widow woman likewise considered that Elijah was treating her as a sinner (1 Kings 17:18). Elijah came over as so spiritually superior that he made people feel bad about themselves. No wonder his ministry was taken away from him.

1Ki 18:10 As Yahweh your God lives-

This is exactly the language of the widow woman in 1 Kings 17:12. Elijah is being made to see the similarity between these two faithful people, who lived in totally different situations. But it seems he considered neither of them to be sincere worshippers of Yahweh; he later says that he alone was left faithful.

There is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. When they said, 'He is not here', he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they didn't find you-

As noted on :7, Elijah was known to be the one who had caused the famine. And Ahab wrongly assumed he had fled Israel so as not to have to endure the famine himself.

This shows the total obscurity of the widow woman. The great search for Elijah didn't think of going to her. But Elijah must have remained secluded in her home for probably three years. This was surely to seek to educate and teach him. But still he

refused to accept Obadiah and the other prophets as of Yahweh, insisting that he alone was faithful to Yahweh. Even after those three years of Divine re-education.

1Ki 18:11 Now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, Behold, Elijah is here' -

Elijah evidently didn't have too positive a view of anyone apart from himself- and that included faithful Obadiah. Obadiah repeatedly calls Elijah "my Lord" and describes himself as "your servant"; but Elijah responds to this by calling Obadiah the servant of Ahab- he tells him to go and tell "your Lord", i.e. Ahab (1 Kings 18:7-14). Elijah is insisting that he and Obadiah have nothing in common- Obadiah serves Ahab, and he is nothing to do with Elijah. 'Obadiah' means 'servant of Yahweh'- the name surely reflects very faithful parents to have called him that at the time of the Baal cult. But Elijah insists that Obadiah is really a servant of Ahab, not of Yahweh.

1Ki 18:12 It will happen, as soon as I am gone from you, that the spirit of Yahweh will carry you I don't know where; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he can't find you, he will kill me. But I, your servant, have feared Yahweh from my youth-

It seems it was a common occurrence for Elijah to be snatched away by the Spirit. His snatching away into the sky when Elisha replaces him needs to be read in this context. Which is why after that, the sons of the prophets go out looking for him, assuming he has been dropped down in some remote location. We should not therefore read that incident as meaning that Elisha was snatched up into Heaven. For no man has ascended to Heaven (Jn. 3:13).

Obadiah here assumes that if Elijah's life was in danger, there was only one way for God to save him- by His spirit whisking Elijah away to safety. Obadiah assumes this will happen when Elijah meets Ahab. But it is in these assumptions about God's "options" that we are time and again proven so wrong.

1Ki 18:13 Wasn't it told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of Yahweh, how I hid one hundred men of Yahweh's prophets with fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water? -

Obadiah faithfully hid Yahweh's prophets, at the risk of his life; but when tested again in this matter, he was fearful to appear to Ahab to have been hiding Elijah's location (1 Kings 18:10-12). We can pass the test at one stage in our lives, and yet when the same test repeats later, we may still fail.

Elijah felt he was the only faithful man left in Israel. Yet 1 Kings 18:4 records how he was reminded that Obadiah had fed Yahweh's prophets in a cave with bread and water. Elijah also had been hidden in a cave and fed with bread and water. 1 Kings 17:4,9; 18:4,13 all use the same Hebrew word for feed / fed / sustain. The connection was to try to teach him his linkage with the prophets, whom he felt were still apostate. God tries to teach us things but we often fail to grasp the potential understanding made possible; be aware that He is trying! Elijah was fed by both ravens and a widow, as the prophets were fed by Obadiah. The raven and the Gentile widow woman were both 'commanded' [s.w.] to feed Elijah by God. Both would have been seen by him as unclean. God repeatedly tried to teach Elijah that true spirituality is about doing what is counter-instinctive in terms of personal self-control- rather than about blasting others for their apostacy, hard words when provoked, etc. Hence God begins by making Elijah's very life depend upon being fed by unclean birds bringing him food. Those ravens had to avoid bringing him dead meat- which is

their usual food. They had to surrender their food to him, when there was little food around; and they had to come up to a man and give him their food, all of which was counter-instinctive for ravens. And thus Elijah was shown that life itself, especially spiritual life, depends upon counter-instinctive behaviour. And within Elijah's personality type, to criticize and condemn others was instinctive behaviour.

1Ki 18:14 Now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, Behold, Elijah is here!' - and he will kill me-

If Ahab would have killed Obadiah for reporting a false sighting of Elijah, then how much more likely would he have been to have killed Obadiah for hiding the prophets in :13. So Obadiah is volunteering very personal information to Elijah, so desperate was he for Elijah to accept him as sincere. But for all that sacrifice and risk in sharing the information, Elijah would not accept him as genuine. For he considered only himself as genuine.

1Ki 18:15 Elijah said, As Yahweh of Armies lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today-

To stand before Yahweh implied Elijah was a prophet, and he seems to love to emphasize this to Obadiah, considering Obadiah not at all the 'servant of Yahweh' which he claimed to be and which his name meant. Elijah implies that Obadiah was disbelieving the prophetic word by raising the concern he had.

1Ki 18:16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah-

We are invited to imagine what were Ahab's feelings. He had searched high and low for Elijah, seeking to kill him being responsible for the drought. And now he was invited to go and meet him.

1Ki 18:17 It happened that when Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, Is that you, you troubler of Israel?-

LXX "the perverter". Ahab justified his persecution of Elijah by reasoning that Elijah was perverting the true Israelite religion. See on :18.

1Ki 18:18 He answered, I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of Yahweh, and you have followed the Baals-

One of Elijah's problems was that because he spoke the truth, God confirmed his words; but this didn't mean that Elijah himself was always morally acceptable to God. Thus Ahab accuses Elijah of being the one who troubles Israel, like Achan (Josh. 7:25), for whose sake many of the people suffered. Elijah replies that it is Ahab who is the troubler of Israel, the Achan character. And he lived up to this, for in his days they sought to rebuild Jericho, and the curse associated with Achan came true at that time (1 Kings 16:34). Elijah's words were justified, just as the truth we speak to those around us may be- because it is the truth of God. But this doesn't of itself mean that we are right before God personally, nor does it mean that we can in any way presume to 'play God'.

1Ki 18:19 Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel, and four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal, and four hundred of the prophets of the Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table-

Although these prophets were to be slain later in this chapter, we read again of Ahab having 400 false prophets later in his reign (1 Kings 22:6). So it seems that he didn't learn his lesson, and raised up another such group. This fits with the common theme of purges and repentances at the time of the kings needing to be repeated. For the purges were only surface level, despite all the evidence for them at the time.

The gathering of all Israel to a mountain recalls Moses gathering all Israel to mount Sinai, likewise placing before them the stark choice between Yahweh and idolatry, and Moses' repetition of the theme in Dt. 30:15-20.

Carmel was chosen because it was renowned for its fertility, and was thought to be the abode of Baal- the god of fertility, who gave rain, lightning and fire in order to produce fertility. It was an extremely brave move by Elijah- for trapped at the top of Carmel, he would have no escape route. The prophets of Baal were armed with spears and swords / knives with which they cut themselves.

1Ki 18:20 So Ahab sent to all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together to Mount Carmel-

Ahab is not recorded as saying anything further. He apparently doesn't accuse Elijah of anything else, and obeys what Elijah asks him to do. We wonder why Ahab and Jezebel allowed this great showdown. Perhaps the plan was to not only kill Elijah, but to destroy his religious credibility before all Israel. Perhaps they were to set up various bogus schemes for creating fire to consume the sacrifices, but they failed at the last minute. The incident shows Ahab on one hand really did believe in Baal and thought Baal would come through for him. But he also saw the need to destroy the credibility of Elijah's God. The deep perceived need to do this was a tacit reflection of how subconsciously he knew there was a Yahweh... but he wanted to discredit Him. He is the one who hops between two opinions, as Elijah later says of Israel.

1Ki 18:21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, How long will you waver between the two sides? If Yahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. The people answered him not a word-

When Elijah asks the people who they will follow they give no "answer" (v. 21), Elijah proposes that the god who "answers" is god (v. 24), the people "answer" (v. 24), the prophets of Baal cry out for an "answer" (v.26), they receive no "answer" (v. 29), and Elijah prays to God asking twice for an "answer" (v. 37). The people didn't answer because their god gave no answer. Yahweh is presented as the God who answers, and whose people are in dialogue with Him. "Dumb idols" says it all. No idol gives living relationship. Only the one true God does.

As with Moses appealing to Pharaoh, the classic example of limping between two opinions was Ahab. He repents several times in the record, but slips back. He has three children who have 'Yah' in their names (Ahaziah, Athaliah, Jehoram), tolerates Obadiah working for him, but he persecuted and slew the prophets of Yah.

When Elijah demands that the people chose which lord they will serve- Baal [= 'lord'] or Yahweh, he is really getting to the very crux of spirituality- for truly, there can be no halting between the two opinions of serving Baal and serving Yahweh. The Lord Jesus surely based His words of Lk. 16:13 on those of Elijah in 1 Kings 18:21: "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon". So although on one hand the Lord Jesus Himself quotes Elijah's 'truth'

approvingly, there is evidence galore that at the very same time, Elijah's attitudes were far from Christ-like, as we will show below. At the very same time, Elijah mocks the Baal worshippers, teasing them to shout louder, because maybe their god has gone 'in a journey' - a Hebraism for 'gone to the toilet' (1 Kings 18:27). This kind of mockery and crudeness is surely not how the Father and Son would have us act. Yet Elijah did this whilst at the same time deeply believing the fire would come down, and bringing it down by his faith. And saying other words which were alluded to with deep approval by the Lord.

Your own example of making clear choices, doing what is right before God rather than what is wise and smart in human eyes, will reveal a sense of clarity about you which will become inspirational to your brethren. Yours will not be one of those many lives that is paralyzed by constantly postponing the choices, by indecision, like Israel on Carmel, hopping backwards and forwards between two opinions (1 Kings 18:21), between your persona and your true person, which is Christ in you. Ultimately, the choice is not one of principles or doctrines or interpretations; it is between Christ and all the other things which would lead us away from Him. The essential choice is always between "Christ in you" and... her mother, your instincts, their self-perception imposed upon you, your self-interest. And in those choices there is no third road; we are at a T-junction, hour after hour. We chose either life or death (Dt. 30:19); we cannot serve two masters (Mt. 6:24). Insofar as you at least live a life that reflects this recognition, you will be a challenge to those around you.

How long will we halt between the two paths, never facing up to the choice? It's an agony to God, as was Laodicea's "neither hot nor cold" attitude. I sometimes wonder if say 90% of our prayer, our Bible reading, our spiritual activities, are all wasted because we are only half hearted about it. We don't (often) pray the prayer of dominant desire, or (often) read or (often) break bread with that spirit of total, total dedication and concentration. You must have, as I do, those all too fleeting moments of grasping the logic, the wonder, the imperative urgency of the fact there's no third way; that total devotion is the only choice. Cling on to those moments. Organize your life decisions around this spirit.

1Ki 18:22 Then Elijah said to the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of Yahweh; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men-

Again we sense how arrogant and condemnatory is Elijah. Obadiah had recently reminded him of the 100 faithful prophets, and there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. There were also schools of the prophets operating (2 Kings 2:3,5,7) and various known prophets of Yahweh (1 Kings 22:8). But Elijah seems to be revelling here in standing with his back to the world. There are times when that is necessary, but it seems to have appealed to Elijah's personality type to set up a situation like this. And there are those within the body of believers who take an inappropriate encouragement from Elijah's attitude. Because he did indeed have faith and boldness, this didn't mean he had the hope and love without which even the faith to move mountains is of "no profit". Despite his arrogance, God worked through him. But that did not thereby justify him. You can give your body to be burned at the stake, and still not be saved if you have no love.

135000 Midianites had faced Gideon's 300 men (Jud. 8:10). That works out at precisely 450 of the enemy for every one of Gideon's men. And it cannot be coincidence that Elijah describes himself as facing off as one man of God against 450 prophets of Baal on Carmel (1 Kings 18:22). Despite his arrogance and spiritual weakness, Elijah learned the lesson from Gideon's courageous example. This is how

the Bible becomes a living word, the history is not dead but alive, because it has been carefully selected by God to show us that man is not alone, God is with us, no circumstance we face is in essence unique; others have trodden this path before.

1Ki 18:23 Let them therefore give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under it; and I will dress the other bull, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under it-

The bull was offered as a sin offering, as bulls were at several points in the Mosaic legislation. Elijah is still assuming that the promised gift of rain was because they had repented and so a sin offering was required. He still fails to see God just wants to show pity. Elijah's idea was that his sin offering would be accepted by God, and their offering rejected, making them as Cain to his Abel. But because of the acceptance of his sin offering, Israel's sin would be purged and therefore the rain would come. God went along with this plan, indeed all this may have been of His commanding. In which case we see that He was willing to accept sin offering offered by a third party, without the repentance of the people. For they only apparently repented (and even then, not for very long) after He had accepted the sin offering Elijah offered. We see here His prevenient grace, not simply responding to human repentance and spirituality, but taking huge initiatives.

1Ki 18:24 You call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Yahweh. The God who answers by fire, let him be God. All the people answered, It is well said- Elijah almost seems to have revelled in assuming *all* Israel were apostate when he met them on Carmel. He assumes they will all call on the name of their god Baal, whilst he alone would call on Yahweh. It definitely sounds as if he was setting himself up against them. And thus he asks God to make all Israel know Him (1 Kings 18:37), as if none of them did at that time- except himself. Elijah takes the language of God 'answering by fire' from the account of David's intercession for the plagued, sinful people in 1 Chron. 21:26 (same Hebrew words). Elijah saw himself as David, interceding to gain the forgiveness of impenitent third parties as a result of his sacrifice. And indeed there was an element of that. And in the final synthesis and unknowable equation of salvation, there is still a great role played by third parties in our salvation.

1Ki 18:25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, Choose one bull for yourselves, and dress it first; for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it-

Elijah purposefully set up the contest with the Baal worshippers so that he was alone against so many Baal worshippers; he rejoices almost that "you are many". He didn't invite any other worshippers of Yahweh; he was convinced that it was him against the world / the rest of the ecclesia. When we read Elijah inviting all the prophets of Baal to be gathered to Carmel, we expect him to match this by inviting the prophets of Yahweh- for we have just read that Obadiah hid 100 of them in a cave. But Elijah doesn't. He asks Ahab to call "all Israel" there- he wanted to set himself up as alone against all Israel.

"Call on the name of your god" carefully avoids using the name of Baal, as in :27. He was making the point that Yahweh has a Name, reflecting a personality. Whereas Baal was effectively nameless and without personality and character.

By letting the Baal worshippers go first, Elijah was setting the scene to build to a climax with the maximum psychological impact. He not only believed Yahweh would answer him, but also that there would be no response from Baal. He set up the situation to highlight the deadness of Baal. But by doing so, he showed amazing faith and certainty that he would be answered- despite his arrogance and other weaknesses at this time. Genuine faith does co-exist with human weakness. Belief and unbelief exist together. This comforts us in our weaknesses, although it is no excuse for hypocrisy; and helps us be patient with our immature brethren.

1Ki 18:26 They took the bull which was given to them and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, Baal, hear us! But there was no voice, nor any who answered. They leaped about the altar which was made-

We wonder why Ahab goes along with the contest (he comes over as obedient to Elijah's proposals in :19,20), when he has been earnestly seeking Elijah to kill him for causing the drought, and when he and his wife had slain Yahweh's prophets with impunity. We see here his niggling conscience, just as with Pharaoh. For Moses and Elijah are so similar. Ahab really wanted to show that Baal was god because he feared the attraction of Yahweh worship. When he fails and Yahweh is vindicated, he then repents- for a moment. All this is psychologically credible, and shows the inability of even the most sinful man to ever conclusively remove the nigger of conscience toward God. We need to recognize that, surrender, and wholeheartedly go God's way.

"Leaped" is the word used for the limping of the people between Baal and Yahweh (:21). Even in the apparent passion and absolute devotion of leaping on the altar, they were in fact limping between Baal and Yahweh. And this is so for many religious people, even at the point of the height of their apparent devotions.

The idea of prophets was well known in the world around ancient Israel. The idea of a prophet was that a person was caught up in some kind of ecstasy, transported into some 'other' world, and leaving behind their humanity. The true prophets were different. Their inspiration was about being attuned to the mind of God, they remained very much in the flesh and in the world, and the subjects of their prophecy related to very real, human things- injustice, a guy building an extension on his house without paying the labourers. Not flashing lights and ethereal coasting through space. The pagan prophets (e.g. the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:26-29) worked themselves into a frenzy in order to reach a state of depersonalization and loss of consciousness, in the hope that then they would be filled with Divine consciousness. True prophets like Amos were absolutely different; the inspiration process required them to be fully in touch with their own consciousness and personality, and it was exactly through their humanity that the personality of God came through in the inspired words they spoke and wrote. Amos perceived the Lord's word, and then 'butted in' as it were, in full consciousness: "O Lord God, forgive, I beseech Thee! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" (Am. 7:2). This is the very opposite of the pagan prophets losing touch with their human senses and reasoning.

1Ki 18:27 It happened at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry louder; for he is a god! Either he is musing, or he has gone aside to the toilet, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he sleeps and must be awakened-

Despite Elijah's crude sarcasm about Baal being in the rest room, God didn't give up working with Elijah, and Elijah still had a relationship with God. And this is how we

have to see those brethren whom we perceive as arrogant and so terribly deficient in the spirit of Christ.

1Ki 18:28 They cried aloud, and cut themselves in their way with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them-

In 1 Kings 18:28 the prophets of Baal worshipped "in their way", AV "after their manner"- a Hebrew word normally translated 296 times "judgment"; they judged / condemned themselves, rather than needing Elijah to do so. And the word translated "cut" essentially means 'to gather'. They gathered themselves together to condemnation and poured out their own blood. "Knives and lances" is a phrase normally translated "swords and spears". They lived out judgment upon themselves rather than Elijah needing to condemn them.

The Lord understood this when He speaks about the spirit of Elijah not being appropriate. His comment that He had "not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Lk. 9:56) must surely be connected with what He said just before that: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose [s.w. "destroy"] it" and vice versa (Lk. 9:24,25). The three words save, life, lose / destroy are all the same. There is surely a connection of thought here. But what is the Lord saying through it? The disciples like Elijah would have had their prayers heard- the fire of destruction could have come. But the Lord says that they don't know the type of spirit they are of. His Spirit is one of saving and not destruction. Men destroy themselves by seeking to save themselves without Him. This is why the Lord could say that He Himself judged / condemned no man- each rejected man will have condemned himself. And so the same point is actually made within the Elijah story too.

The Baal worshippers cut themselves and made their own blood flow out, in anticipation of how they would soon be slain and left to bleed to death. The connection of thought is to show that they did this to themselves, their idolatry was their own self condemnation and destruction.

We note they had swords and spears. They could so easily have slain Elijah, as the prophets of Baal and Ahab had slain many Yahweh prophets earlier. Elijah's bravery is intense- for he had no way to escape, being on top of a mountain.

1Ki 18:29 It was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the offering; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any who responded-

There was no voice of response from Baal; and the implication may be that there was a voice from Yahweh in His response. But Elijah didn't hear it, for the thrill and noise of the fire coming down and consuming the sacrifice drowned it out. Perhaps this is referred to when Yahweh later tells Elijah that He is not [so much] in the wind and fire, but in the still small voice- which Elijah had not heard. There was no voice from Baal because there was nobody to give answer- there was no answerer. The record seeks to avoid mentioning the name of Baal, because as noted above, there was no 'name' in the sense of character or personality. It was a god of their own creation in their own minds, just as all idols are. Dream homes and holidays likewise exist in the mind of modern man, and have no reality nor personality.

1Ki 18:30 Elijah said to all the people, Come near to me; and all the people came near to him-

Elijah may be alluding to how the people came near to Moses (Ex. 34:32). But he was shown that he was not as Moses; see on 1 Kings 19:9. It may be that they sensed that seeing Baal hadn't answered, and the tricks to make fire appear had failed, then

Yahweh was likely to respond. And they were cowering away, fearful of the Divine fire which they sensed was going to appear. See on :34. The similarities between Elijah and Moses are so many that it's tempting to think that he was the intended fulfilment of the "prophet like" Moses who was to be raised up (Dt. 18:18). The similarities and points of contact are such that we can safely conclude that potentially, this promise was intended to have fulfilment in Elijah. But he failed, although he realized the intended similarities between him and Moses. And so the prophecy was rescheduled to its ultimate fulfilment in the Lord Jesus. All the people coming near to Elijah on Carmel recalls all Israel before Moses at Sinai. "And the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of all Israel (Ex. 24:17)", just as devouring fire came down on Sinai. Elijah as Moses is the intermediary between Yahweh and idolatrous Israel.

He repaired the altar of Yahweh that was thrown down-

The triumph on Carmel involved making an offering on an altar of Yahweh which was in one of the "high places"- whereas Israel were repeatedly criticized for offering on these "high places" and not in Jerusalem. Elijah even criticizes Israel for throwing down these "high places" altars of Yahweh (1 Kings 19:10,14). Surely Elijah knew that the use of the high places was not what Yahweh ideally wanted; and yet he was driven to use a high place in this way. And with us, God will work through circumstances to remove from us the crutches of mere religion, to challenge the essence of our faith and relationship with Him. The way Ezekiel had to eat unclean food and defile himself is another such example.

1Ki 18:31 Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of Yahweh came, saying, Israel shall be your name- - see on Gen. 35:2. This seems a conscious imitation of Joshua's building of the altar from 12 stones when entering the land (Josh. 4:5). Perhaps Elijah's hope was for a complete restoration of the kingdom. The allusion to the renaming of Jacob to Israel may also suggest a new beginning by grace. The usage of 12 stones suggests that he hoped for the ending of the division within Israel, as well as recognizing that the two tribe kingdom also needed forgiveness. For I suggested earlier that the bull was a sin offering.

1Ki 18:32 With the stones he built an altar in the name of Yahweh. He made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed-

Elijah's hyper sensitivity to he alone being acceptable before God is perhaps shown in the way he repairs the Lord's altar and then himself builds another one (1 Kings 18:30-32). It was as if he felt some kind of guilt by association- he could only serve Yahweh on the altar of his own making. Perhaps he justified it by suspecting that the first altar has been built contrary to Mosaic law, perhaps an iron tool had been used on it... and so, Elijah had to go his own way. And how often have our brethren done this. Nothing is any good unless we ourselves are doing it; we can't be made guilty by association with the work of others whom we doubt.

This was as Moses built an altar and set up 12 pillars at the time of the theophany on mount Sinai, where again Yahweh was revealed as consuming fire (Ex. 24:4). See on :40. But Elijah's imitations of Moses were form without content.

1Ki 18:33 He put the wood in order, and cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt offering and on the

wood-

Elijah's mocking attitude of :27 is also shown by the way in which he demands they find him four barrels of water- on the top of a mountain, after a major three and a half year drought. Presumably they took the water from the sea at the bottom of the mountain (although tradition claims there was a fountain at the top of Carmel)- and thus Elijah's sacrifice would be offered with salt. He was strictly obedient to the requirements for sacrifice- yet amidst an abusive, self-justifying mindset. The very possession of truth can take our attention away from our need for self-examination and right attitudes towards others. In this lies one of our most subtle temptations.

1Ki 18:34 He said, Do it a second time; and they did it the second time. He said, Do it a third time; and they did it the third time-

I suggested above that Ahab agreed to this showdown because he planned to discredit Elijah by some bogus appearance of fire. The tricks hadn't worked. Everybody knew they hadn't. And Elijah is at great pains to demonstrate that *he* is not using any tricks. The burnt offering and wood were thrice doused in water, and the trench of water around the altar was of significant size. There was no way Elijah was using fake fire, and he had invited the people to "come near" (:30) so that all was transparent and under close public observation.

1Ki 18:35 The water ran around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water-
As explained on :34, this was to stop any possibility of tricks being used. Various pagan religions construct altars with fire hidden beneath them (Adam Clarke describes several in his commentary). This fire is then exposed by the priests, supposedly by magic or their prayers, and then burns the sacrifice. But Elijah covered the entire sacrifice and altar with water to demonstrate there was no way this was the case with him. And the fire came down from Heaven, rather than up from the altar as in these pagan altars.

1Ki 18:36 It happened at the time of the offering of the offering-
This could imply that this was intended as the daily evening offering.

That Elijah the prophet came near and said, Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant-

He clearly saw prayer as requiring much effort; and the way he prays at the time of the evening sacrifice on Horeb suggests that he saw prayer as a sacrifice. His language here seems to have been inspired by David (1 Sam. 17:46). May our language likewise be an inspiration to others rather than pulling them downwards spiritually. But despite his immense faith, he seems unable to cease his desire for self justification. He didn't just want Israel to accept Yahweh, but to accept that he was Yahweh's servant. This was the meaning of 'Obadiah', 'servant of Yah', and we noted earlier how Elijah mocked that.

Elijah's 'drawing near' matches that of Moses at Sinai (Ex. 24:2).

And that I have done all these things at Your word-

This is another example of Elijah playing God. There's no record of any such word from the Lord to him. He appears to have set it all up at his initiative- and then assumed that actually God had told him to do so and that God would respond as he expected. We can so very easily do the same.

We become suspicious of Elijah's motives when we read of him asking God to show all Israel "That I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things". "That

I...that I..." sounds like there was a large element of self-justification in his spirituality, just as there can be in our, e.g., desiring to prove someone else wrong and ourselves right, to win a debate, to abuse the advantage of our superior Bible knowledge...

God is never recorded as commanding Elijah to do any of these things. He may be saying that he did these things according to God's word [s.w. "word" in :1] that rain was going to come. He therefore assumes God has turned their hearts back in repentance, because Elijah understands that according to His word in Deuteronomy, the drought can only end if Israel repent. So Elijah asks that Israel understand that God has made them repent, and the whole context on Carmel to elicit their repentance was according to God's word that rain was coming. Elijah failed to appreciate that God's grace and basic pity means that at times He acts outside His own word. Hence in the next mountain scene in 1 Kings 19, Elijah was to be shown that actually God was not "in" the fire and wind which feature in 1 Kings 18. He was "in" the silence of the still small voice.

Elijah was perhaps unhappy about offering on a private altar which was not at the sanctuary, let alone one first built [by tradition] by apostate King Saul. So he tells God that he is only doing what God has told him, even though it appears to contradict other principles. Indeed God's legal demands at times do appear to contradict each other, but that is intentional, so that we may discern the spirit of what He wants and realize that the letter of obedience is not what He seeks.

1Ki 18:37 Answer me, Yahweh, answer me, that this people may know that You, Yahweh, are God-

"Answer" is s.w. "hear" in :26. As they had begged Baal to hear them, Elijah asks Yahweh to hear him. He has all the way through stacked the odds against himself- by giving them longer than himself to get an answer [he allowed them to go on until evening], allowing them to go first, allowing them to choose the animals for sacrifice. In this we see his absolute faith.

See on 1 Kings 19:18. This kind of faith in prayer enables a believer to truly follow the Lord's exhortation to ask for things and believe and feel that we have already received them. Elijah chose the terms of the contest on Carmel to be an answer by fire- for Baal was originally the fire god. Yet Elijah appears utterly certain that God will answer by a bolt of fire, without having asked Him first. He asks God to "answer me" without specifically requesting for fire to be sent down; he brings the situation before God and asks Him to 'answer' that situation. And this is why so many of David's prayers are more a bringing of the situation before God, than a specific request for answers.

And that You have turned their heart back again-

It is our knowledge of God's mercy to us which empowers us to confidently seek to share with others our knowledge, our relationship, our experience with God. Forgiveness inspires the preacher; and yet the offer of forgiveness is what inspires the listener to respond. God appeals for Israel to respond by pointing out that in prospect, He has already forgiven them: "I have [already] blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions... [therefore] return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Is. 44:22). Likewise Elijah wanted Israel to know that God had already in prospect turned their hearts back to Him. We preach the cross of Christ, and that through that forgiveness has been enabled for all men; but they need to respond by repentance in order to access it. Hence the tragedy of human lack of response; so much has been enabled, the world has been reconciled, but all this is in vain if they will not respond.

Elijah was evidently in touch with God and knew His will. At the end, he is described as the charioteer of the cherubim; for his prayers had controlled their direction. This really is how much God is willing to be influenced by our prayers. Elijah had a very developed sense of how God works with us. Thus he asks God to make Israel know how that He “didst turn back their heart” (1 Kings 18:37 RVmg.), he wanted them to know how that potentially, God had made their return to Him possible; Elijah perceived that God may prepare something in prospect that never gets realized in practice because of human weakness [and this should be an endless inspiration to us too].

1Ki 18:38 Then the fire of Yahweh fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood, the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench-

For all Elijah's clearly wrong attitudes, Yahweh still accepted him; and very dramatically. The total consumption of everything indicated that God had totally accepted the sin offering. Israel had been forgiven. Even though they had not repented. This was the power of Elijah's intercessory mediation and sacrifice. And how much more powerful is that of the Lord Jesus.

Elijah states in 2 Kings 1:10 that fire would come from Heaven if he was a man of God. He had faith- and he wanted fire to come down as it had come down when he called fire down at Carmel. But faith is nuanced and is not absolute. Elijah had faith in God, great faith, but he also had faith in himself; he assumed the fire would come, because he was Yahweh's faithful man. Although Yahweh as it were agreed with him in 2 Kings 1, and made fire come down as commanded, the Lord in Lk. 9 says that Elijah had the wrong spirit in doing this. We can believe and God can respond to that faith, but that doesn't of itself justify us. As Paul says, we can have faith that moves mountains, but without love we are nothing.

1Ki 18:39 When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces. They said, Yahweh, he is God! Yahweh, He is God!-

This is another way of crying out the name 'Elijah'. Elijah had repeatedly asked for his own justification, and perhaps the people responded in this way purposefully.

The events on Mount Carmel have clear similarities with Yahweh's manifestations to Israel and Moses on Mount Sinai, especially after the apostacy with the golden calf. We note that afterwards, Elijah travels to Mount Sinai- the only time anyone is recorded going there apart from Moses. Both Elijah and Moses are called "man of God" (1 Kings 17:24). The people fall to the ground and accept Yahweh, just as they told Moses that they would obey all Yahweh said (Ex. 24:3-7). The apostate Baal worshipping Israelites limping around the altar they had made (1 Kings 18:26 Heb.) recalls Israel dancing around the golden calf altar (Ex. 32:19). The prayer of Elijah recalls that of Moses, and he too asks God to remember Abraham etc. (18:36 = Ex. 32:13). Yahweh's fire burnt up the altar of Baal (:38), just as Moses destroyed the golden calf with fire and scatterd the dust on water (Ex. 32:20). The burning hot anger of Yahweh (Ex. 32:10) matches the fire from Yahweh that falls upon the Baal altar. The death of the Baal priests (:40) by the sword (1 Kings 19:1) connects with the destruction of the apostate Israelites at the golden calf, again by sword (Ex. 32:27-29). All this sets up Yahweh's manifestation to Elijah at Sinai with that to Moses. They each have a 40 day fast beforehand (1 Kings 19:8; Ex. 34:28). Fire, earthquake, thundering and smoke all feature both times. Both hide in a cleft of the rock before Yahweh's glory, hence 1 Kings 19:9 speaks of "*the cave*", i.e. the one Moses cowered in. But Moses pleads with his own eternal life for the salvation of Israel, whereas

Elijah pleads for their destruction. Elijah's desire for his own death is selfish, whereas Moses' is self sacrificial. The parallels are so clear that it is as if the record seeks to set up Elijah in a very negative light when compared to Moses. This is especially significant when we consider that Elijah appreciated the similarities, hence he of his own volition goes into "the cave" of Moses (1 Kings 19:9), and wrapping his face in his mantle may be a conscious copy of Moses subsequently putting a veil [Heb. scarf] over his face. The great contrast however is that Yahweh proclaimed His Name to Moses in a mighty thundering voice. Whereas Elijah heard only the sound of silence and then the still small voice. Yahweh was not "in" the earthquake, wind and fire, whereas His presence was very definitely with Moses, who even saw His back parts. But the whole point was that Moses was being taught that getting a glimpse of God Himself, seeing mighty visible manifestations of Yahweh, was not of the essence. Rather His grace and acceptance of Israel was of the essence. But Elijah was not at all interested in that, rather did he want Israel's judgment. The connections with Moses present him as really not getting it about God's grace and His salvation of Israel despite their apostasy with the golden calf; and so he is effectively fired from his prophetic work. Because to preach is all about saving people and sharing God's grace, not about proving ourselves right.

1Ki 18:40 Elijah said to them, Seize the prophets of Baal! Don't let one of them escape! They seized them. Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and killed them there-

It's unclear whether the 400 prophets of Astarte were slain or escaped. But by the time of 1 Kings 22, Ahab has another 400 prophets whom he listens to. This was a heat of the moment persuasion and response, but of no abiding value in their spiritual growth as a nation. It again demonstrates the limited value of miracle in fundamentally changing people.

The parallels with Moses continue. This time with Moses seeing Yahweh's theophany on the mountain, and then ordering the Levites to murder idolatrous Israel (Ex. 35:25-29).

1Ki 18:41 Elijah said to Ahab, Get up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain-

"Get up" may possibly be an allusion to how after the theophany of the consuming fire on Sinai, the elders of Israel were asked to "go up" the mountain and "eat and drink" (Ex. 24:9). Ahab does so (:42), but as with Israel, it was mere devotion on the cusp of the moment. And yet the fact the rain came could reflect Divine acceptance of his repentance of a moment- even though it was to be undone by his subservience to his evil wife. Hence :45 LXX has "Ahab wept and went to Jezreel", presumably in repentance. Likewise his repentance for his part in killing Naboth [sackcloth and rent garments implies repentance] in 1 Kings 21:16 is another example of his tendency to mere momentary repentance, although sincere at the time. But again, Elijah is presented as the prophet like unto Moses.

Elijah told Ahab to arise and eat, a meal of fellowship with God. But Elijah then commits suicide (see on 1 Kings 19:5) after Ahab slips back and listens to Jezebel; and then Elijah is told to arise and eat (1 Kings 19:5). He is being asked to consider that he is no better than Ahab, whom he saw as the incarnation of evil. He too had to be invited to share the meal of fellowship with God by grace, just as he had invited Ahab to. He is being shown that his judgmentalism made him no better than Ahab the idolater, but like Ahab, he too could be saved by grace.

Elijah really is the great example of believing that what we have prayed for, we have already received. He tells Ahab that he hears “the sound of a abundance of rain”, well before the prayer for rain had even begun to be answered. Elijah tells Ahab that there is a “*sound*” of rain coming. The same word has just been used earlier, translated as “voice” (1 Kings 18:29) in the context of there being a voice / answer to prayer. So Elijah is saying that there is an answer speaking of much rain to come. There was no sign of rain coming at the time when he started praying, until the little cloud arose. But he calmly tells Ahab that there is a sound / answer of rain coming. Elijah believed in the answer coming before he prayed; he had a *very* firm faith. And thus ahead of time he told Ahab to eat and drink because of it [had Ahab been fasting? If so, to Yahweh or Baal?]. But all this required quite some passion in prayer.

He heard in the ears of faith the sound of rain, before he even formally prayed for it (1 Kings 18:40-42 cp. James 5:17,18). He saw that the sin offering had been accepted, and was sure that therefore the drought would end because it had produced the required repentance. And yet, reading through the record, there is ample evidence that at the very same time as he showed such faith, he had a hardness and arrogance which was contrary to the spirit of the Lord Jesus. And Paul had the same feature.

1Ki 18:42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed himself down on the earth, and put his face between his knees- Elijah *cast himself* down in prayer. The word occurs only in 2 Kings 4:34,35, as if it was Elijah’s example which inspired Elisha likewise to cast himself down [AV “stretch”] upon the child. The implication is that Elisha did so in prayer; and in passing, we wonder whether this implies that Elijah’s stretching himself upon another child, although a different Hebrew word, was also in prayer. Again we see that Elijah’s prayerful example inspired another. Our attitude to prayer is so easily influential upon others, and we ourselves are likewise easily influenced. It should be no shame nor embarrassment to us to instantly break into prayer, nor to kneel down to further our intensity in prayer, regardless of the social embarrassment this may involve in some cultures.

1Ki 18:43 He said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. He went up and looked, and said, There is nothing. He said seven times, Go again- The lack of immediate answer was to humble Elijah after the amazing answer to prayer just received on Carmel. He would have started wondering whether he really understood correctly that rain was to come now that the people had repented and his sin offering had been accepted. He would have started doubting his own faith; as one does after praying six times for something and not getting any answer. All this was to humble him. For his pride seems to have been at a very high point as he stood in triumph before Israel on Carmel, the man with his back to the world had apparently won.

1Ki 18:44 It happened at the seventh time that he said, Behold, a small cloud, like a man’s hand, is rising out of the sea. He said, Go up, tell Ahab, ‘Get ready and go down, so that the rain doesn’t stop you’-

It could be that after the triumph on Carmel, there had been another vision of God’s glory in order to humble Elijah. I say this on the basis that the description of the cloud “like a man’s hand” recalls “the likeness of a man’s hand” under the cherubim in Ezekiel’s visions. Clouds and rain are invariably part of theophanies. Elijah spoke of

how, by faith, he heard “the feet of rain” (1 Kings 18:41 LXX), as if he believed that the Angels were coming with rain. Perhaps Elijah therefore told Ahab “prepare *your* chariot” and ride with the rain- i.e. ‘be part of the vision of glory / cherubim chariots on the ground as it passes overhead’. This was the point of Ezekiel’s vision; Israel were to reflect the Cherubim on earth, just As David moved in step with the Spirit / the sound of marching in the mulberry trees. Therefore in 1 Kings 18:42 when in the face of all this, Elijah places his face between knees, he may be doing the same thing as when he hides his face in the mantle. He sensed the glory of God near him but didn’t want to face up to it personally. He didn’t want to become part of the Cherubic vision of glory, even though he advised Ahab to do so. We must identify ourselves with the vision of God’s glory, and face up to the life-changing implications of it. Elijah ultimately did this, although it took him a lifetime- he was caught up in another cherubic vision and threw away his mantle and became part of the vision of glory; and hence he was called “the chariot of Israel and the [great] horseman thereof” [reading “horsemen” as an intensive plural]. The chariots and horsemen of God appeared; and Elisha perceived that Elijah had finally become identified with them. For Elisha sees them and then describes Elijah as being them- the chariot and horseman of Israel (2 Kings 2:11,12). Finally, Elijah became part of God’s glory; He merged into it rather than resisting it for the sake of his *own* glory. He was the charioteer of the cherubim; for his prayers had controlled their direction. This identification of ourselves with God’s glory, this losing of ourselves and our own insistence upon our rightness, and our focus on others’ wrongness... this is the end result of our lives if they are lived out after the pattern of Elijah’s.

1Ki 18:45 It happened in a little while, that the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel-
LXX "Ahab wept". This fits the impression we have that he repented; his comments to Jezebel at the beginning of 1 Kings 19 could be understood as meaning that it was 'game over' with Baal worship. He had not protested the mass murder of the 450 priests of Baal.

1Ki 18:46 The hand of Yahweh was on Elijah; and he tucked his cloak into his belt and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel-
Running in front of someone meant to herald them. He was perhaps rejoicing in Ahab's apparent repentance, see on :45. This exhilarating run to Jezreel, in the power of the Spirit, set Elijah up for the devastating news that Jezebel had not repented and Ahab was apparently supporting her, or at least not asserting his kingship against her. And thence he crashed into the depression of 1 Kings 19.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 19

1Ki 19:1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword-

We wonder whether Elijah personally presided over the genocide of 450 priests. Ahab had made no protest, and I suggested on 1 Kings 18:46 that he did in fact repent. The coming of rain in response to Elijah's prayer and the peoples' rejection of Baal surely urged him to accept that it was 'game over' for Baal worship. At least, at that time. There is no mention earlier of Elijah's sword. Perhaps he was seeking to imitate Phinehas and the Levites who slew the apostate idolaters of Israel at the mount, with swords. But as we see regarding Moses, Elijah is copying the externalities without grasping the spirit.

As discussed on 1 Kings 18:1, Elijah had been assuming that the rain had come because Israel had repented. Instead of accepting that the rain came because God said it was going to come, regardless of their repentance. He assumed Ahab had repented; and indeed he probably did, just as he did for a time when confronted about the death of Naboth. Ahab's three sons all had 'Yah' in their names- but his weak spirituality was trumped by Jezebel. Her name may be an allusion to Baal Zebul, the rain god ["zebel" = "zebul"]. Her personal god had been declared dead. And so she wanted to kill Elijah.

1Ki 19:2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I don't make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time!-

Elijah had returned with Ahab to Jezreel. So he was there in the city, apparently hoping that Ahab would stand up to Jezebel, and perhaps she too would realize that Baal worship was now a hopeless cause.

The Moses parallels continue. Ahab and Jezebel in many ways recall Pharaoh, especially with Ahab's momentary repentances. Jezebel's words here clearly recall Pharaoh's: "Take care... the day you see my face you shall die" (Ex. 10:28). But Elijah slides down into depression because he sees he's failed to convert Ahab and Jezebel. By contrast, Moses goes ahead and delivers God's people, accepting he had failed to convert Pharaoh, and you can't win every time. Again and again we see Elijah only externally following Moses, but not grasping his spirit. He makes no begging intercession to save Israel, but rather seeks their condemnation for their idolatry. He sees himself as God's man and having God's positions, rather than seeking to persuade God to act otherwise than He initially planned.

1Ki 19:3 When he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there-

The Elijah who fearlessly came before Ahab and the thousands of idolaters at Carmel... now flees before an angry woman. I suggested on 1 Kings 18:46 that the exhilarating run to Jezreel, in the power of the Spirit, set Elijah up for the devastating news that Jezebel had not repented and Ahab was apparently supporting her, or at least not asserting his kingship against her. And thence he crashed into the depression we now read of. The history here has absolute psychological credibility, even though Elijah's faith should have been more resolute. He fled to the very south of Judah, territory not under Ahab's control.

Beersheba belonged to Judah, so we could see his flight there as effectively walking away from his ministry to Israel. And so he was fired from his ministry seeing that he himself had chosen this. It was therefore only pride that made him so resistant to accepting that. "When he saw..." is LXX "And he feared", suggesting Elijah's motive in going to Beersheba was fear. Hence the rebuke "What are you doing here, Elijah?". He "went / fled for his life"- and yet he wants to end his life. It could be that Jezebel's threats to take his life result in him fleeing to God and asking God to take his life, rather than Jezebel. He was convinced by his fears that he now had to die. This fear puts a deeper dimension on Elijah's apparently fearless challenges to Ahab, and his willingness to face off against Ahab and the Baal worshippers alone on Carmel. His apparent nonchalance was in fact the outcome of faith, as he clearly feared Jezebel who was behind Ahab.

Elijah tells his servant to remain whilst he goes out into the desert alone, intent on committing suicide (1 Kings 19:3). When he is finally snatched away, he tried to get his servant Elisha to likewise remain whilst he went further alone. Again he intended suicide and Elisha likely perceived this. And so God did snatch him away, either to death or to make him end his ministry.

1Ki 19:4 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 Yahweh, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers-

By walking out alone into the desert he was effectively attempting suicide. If Elijah was a Gentile (see on 1 Kings 17:1), he would be feeling that he was no really better than a Gentile idolater (see on :5)- because he had failed to convert or see judgment upon Jezebel. Perhaps he had some particular complex of feelings and histories with her which led him to this manic state once she tried to kill him.

Elijah's depression was because Jezebel had not repented. His dream was that the effective ruler of Israel would be converted by him. He failed to perceive that his conversion of the widow woman was quite enough. He wanted high profile converts like Jezebel and felt a failure when he didn't win them.

And yet the constant similarities with Moses lead us to wonder whether Moses' depressive requests to die are being alluded to here by Elijah. Or it could be that Moses' offer to give his eternal life for Israel is being contrasted with Elijah selfishly wanting to die, just because he felt depressed that his mission had apparently not succeeded.

"Enough" is the same Hebrew word picked up and used by the Angel- "the way is *too great* ['enough'] for you" (1 Kings 19:7), and he does eventually eat and not die, living life now only thanks to the provision of food by Angels, going on a 40 day wilderness journey towards Sinai. Elijah was brought to where we have all been- that this is all just too much for me. But it was all too much because he had set himself dreams and conditions- the repentance of Jezebel and Ahab, and felt all was too much because that dream was now shattered- and because he would not cast himself upon God's grace. "It's all too much for me" is related to human pride. All this of course is replete with reference to Israel's wilderness journey, during which they only survived by eating "Angel's food", the food provided by Angels (Ps. 78:25). And as Elijah well knew, that generation were sinful and worshipped the idols they had smuggled out of Egypt with them. To stay alive, he had to eat that food and go in that miraculously provided strength. And so he was *forced* to see the similarity between himself and rebellious Israel in the wilderness. He was being asked to identify with sinful Israel, and seek to save them through identity with them rather than the dramatic wind and fire of Carmel. Moses by contrast does make the identification with Israel. He doesn't want to be saved if they will not be. Likewise earlier God had fed him through the medium of the unclean raven, and the unclean Gentile woman. But Elijah had had enough of these pointed digs, and he asks God to take his life away- alluding to how Jezebel wanted to do this, as if trying to pressurize God into taking away his life rather than Jezebel (1 Kings 19:4, 10).

1Ki 19:5 He lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, an angel touched him, and said to him, Arise and eat!-

The situation is allusive to the Gentile, spiritually weak Hagar being found at the point of death and preserved by an Angel in the same wilderness (Gen. 16:9; 21:17). Elijah in his rebellion against God's intended ministry for him was no better than her. Perhaps that is what he refers to being no better than his (Gentile) fathers; see on :4. And we will see on :6 that he is taught that the Gentile widow whom he had earlier despised was also on God's side more than he was.

A fair case can be made for 'laying down and sleeping' and then being touched and bidden 'arise' by an Angel refers to death and resurrection. The LXX uses the same term here as used for sleeping in death in 1 Cor. 15:6,18,20. Death as sleep is also an OT idea (Dan. 12:2; Ps. 13:4; Jer. 51:39; Job 3:13). The whole incident recalls Daniel's figurative death and resurrection, with the Angel touching him and bidding him arise and not fear. Eating and

drinking (:6) likewise occurs after several resurrection scenes in the NT. The dead girl is bidden "arise and eat" just as Elijah is here. Elijah's comment that Baal is asleep (1 Kings 18:27) is another way of saying he is effectively dead. And the case is pretty much clinched by the context. 1 Kings 19:4 tells us that Elijah has just "prayed that he might die. 'Enough!' he cried, 'Now, O Lord, take my life...'. Elijah then lays himself down in a position where surely he was going to die by dehydration, just as Jonah did, rather than see Nineveh saved by grace.

In this case, Elijah lay down under a bush in the scorching desert as an act of suicide- but was awoken from it in resurrection. We think of how Hagar lay down her son beneath a bush to die in the same desert (Gen. 21:15,16), "in the wilderness of Beersheba" (Gen. 21:14). Jezebel has threatened to take Elijah's life (:2), so he flees for his life (:3), and then asks God to take his life (:4,10). It's as if he wants to die, but he wants to die at God's hand and not Jezebel's.

All this is rather as Jonah's offer to be cast into the sea was an act of suicide- but he was resurrected from it. Jonah was very similar to Elijah in his attitude to Gentiles and God being more merciful than he was. Indeed the similarities are so close that it could be that Jonah justified his desire for suicide [despite having been resurrected from his previous suicide] by thinking that he was copying Elijah. But form had eclipsed content, he was externally following Elijah and not grasping the lesson of Elijah's failure. Just as many misguided zealots appeal to Elijah for justification and inspiration. "Let us disfellowship the weak... in the spirit of the great hero Elijah!".

These men just couldn't cope with God being more gracious than they were, and considering the possibility that He saved those whom they regarded as below the bar of salvation. Likewise today, the wrath of legalists is most acutely aroused over issues of accepting or baptizing those whom they consider Gentiles, not adequately repentant nor groomed in the knowledge of Israel's God. This is the challenge of Divine grace- to accept it not only for ourselves but towards others. But only by accepting our own sinfulness can we perceive God's grace towards us personally, and this alone will lead us to accept His grace towards others. But like Jonah, even after such a resurrection by grace, Elijah pigheadedly continues in his resistance to grace and self justification. The grace of the situation is heightened when we consider that Jezebel sent a messenger (*malak*) to tell Elijah she was going to murder him (:2). Yahweh sent His Angel [*malak*] to save Elijah. Elijah had told Ahab to arise and eat (1 Kings 18:41), a meal of fellowship with God. But Elijah then commits suicide after Ahab slips back and listens to Jezebel; and now Elijah is told to arise and eat. He is being asked to consider that he is no better than Ahab, whom he saw as the incarnation of evil. He too had to be invited to share the meal of fellowship with God by grace, just as he had invited Ahab to. He is being shown that his judgmentalism made him no better than Ahab the idolater, but like Ahab, he too could be saved by grace.

1Ki 19:6 He looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on the coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again-

The woman "gathering sticks" (1 Kings 17:10) would likely have stimulated his Bible-steeped mind to think of the illegal gathering of sticks in Num. 15:32,33. But she gave him meal cake and water. Later, the Angel gave Elijah cake and water (1 Kings 19:6 LXX "a cake of meal") just as the unclean ravens and Gentile widow woman had done- to teach Elijah that God works through those people. There were two occasions in which God fed Elijah with a cake when he was hungry. Once when the widow woman baked him one (1 Kings 17:13), and once when the Angel did (1 Kings 19:6). Surely God was trying to show Elijah that He was manifested through that desperately poor, weak, sick, starving widow woman who was at the point of death from starvation. It was the same message- that God wasn't in the

earthquake and fire, but in the still small voice. Elijah wanted a high profile female convert like Jezebel, and that hadn't worked out. He was being reminded that the conversion of the desperate Gentile woman was quite enough.

Heb. 'the hot coals' suggests a connection with Is. 6:6 where the Angel seraph likewise had these in order to forgive and cleanse God's prophet. Perhaps Elijah didn't want to perceive that nor accept it, whereas Isaiah did. The idea is that the cake was made in Heaven itself, like the manna is presented as "Angel's food", the bread of heaven.

The gift of bread at night [for he awoke and there was bread] recalls the manna given at night (Num. 11:9 "When the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it"). Num. 11:8 also calls the manna a "cake". And the manna was also given by an Angel. Water was likewise given to Israel in the same desert where Elijah was. He is being nudged to identify with Israel. His 40 day journey through the desert to Sinai was clearly intended to connect him with Israel's 40 year journey in the same desert. But he refuses to take the nudges, and goes on, as Paul says, to intercede with God *against* Israel. He sees himself as righteous and them as wicked, rather than identifying with them and seeking to save the unjust by the love and identity of the just. He failed to get the spirit of Moses.

1Ki 19:7 The angel of Yahweh came again the second time, and touched him and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you-

He had been empowered by the Spirit to run all the way from Carmel to Jezreel, running at the speed of horses (1 Kings 18:46). But now the Spirit had been withdrawn from him. The journey was too great for him in his own strength. God would indeed give him food for the journey, but in a manner reminiscent of the Gentile widow who had earlier sustained him (see on :6). He had not learned the lessons from that, and they had to be repeated here; see on :8.

1Ki 19:8 He arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the Mount of God-

We enquire whether Elijah consciously intended to go to Horeb / Sinai. After the theophany and slaughter of the golden calf worshippers (Ex. 32), Moses goes to Horeb / Sinai for another theophany. And so it seems again we have Elijah externally doing what Moses had done, but without his spirit- for he intercedes *against* Israel rather than for their salvation by grace. Time and again we see this in the individual and collective lives of believers- form eclipses content.

Elijah goes in the strength of a little food just as the widow's flour didn't run out. He is being paralleled with the Gentile widow woman- either to reinforce the lesson taught, or because he had failed to learn the lesson that he truly was no better in essence than a Gentile woman; see on :7. One wonders whether he not only despised Gentiles but women too... hence the way God sought to teach him the parallel between Himself and that woman. His depression was because he hadn't converted Jezebel, but he is being reminded to perceive the value of the conversion of the relatively low profile, obscure Gentile woman [so obscure that in the three year search for Elijah, nobody thought of going to her].

God 'set up' Elijah's experience at Horeb / Sinai to compare *and contrast* with that of Moses. There are so many intended similarities between Elijah's meeting God at Horeb and Moses' meetings with God at Sinai- the same place, it seems. In both records it is called "the mount of God" (Ex. 3:1; 18:5; 24:13); there was a journey through the desert both before and after the meeting; the use of the number forty (Ex. 34:28; Num. 14:34 cp. 1 Kings 19:8); miraculous provision of food by God; an accompanying Angel; a cave, standing on a rock, Yahweh passing by, covering the face (Ex. 33:21-23; 34:5,6), earthquake, wind and fire (Ex.

19). We think too of how they both dried up water and passed through it (2 Kings 2), both have successors appointed involving their spirit being placed upon Joshua / Elisha etc.

Moses met with God at Horeb, and received the words of God. Elijah was all set up for the same. But it doesn't happen. Yahweh Himself doesn't appear; and instead of words of command, there is a deafening silence- for I understand the "still small voice" to actually be silence, and that silence was in itself a voice / word to Elijah. And then when God finally does say something, it is simply: "What are you doing here, Elijah?". Surely Elijah saw himself as Moses, and was looking forward to being given a covenant, and seeing a special manifestation of Yahweh. But instead, silence. No appearance of God, and finally, the great anticlimax of being asked what exactly he's doing there. The similarities with the Moses history were arranged by God, but surely they played along with Elijah's assumption that he was the next Moses. And indeed he was set up to be "the prophet like unto Moses", but he is being shown that he lacks Moses' humility and spirit of passion for the salvation of Israel. Perhaps he idolized Moses, as men today idolize heroes, e.g. from earlier days of their denomination. Elijah was being taught that actually, he was not Moses; God had no such message or covenant or special revelation to give him. And there is a type of believer who needs this same lesson; that God speaks through silence and insignificance to us. We are to be ourselves, and not to ever seek to replicate the experiences or spiritual path of faithful men who have gone before us. Such desires are really a running away from our personal responsibilities.

The similarities between Elijah and Moses are so many that it's tempting to think that he was the intended fulfilment of the "prophet like" Moses who was to be raised up (Dt. 18:18). The similarities and points of contact are such that we can safely conclude that potentially, this promise was intended to have fulfilment in Elijah. But he failed, although he realized the intended similarities between him and Moses. And so the prophecy was rescheduled to its ultimate fulfilment in the Lord Jesus.

1Ki 19:9 He came there to a cave, and lodged there-

Heb. "the cave", referring to the cave Moses entered in Ex. 33:12, from where he viewed the great theophany. Moses too was an upright man. But he had to be humbled, until he cowered in the rock as sinners will do before the excellence of God's glory (Is. 2:21), before he could appreciate Yahweh's glory. And Elijah too had to go through the same experience (1 Kings 19:9-12). Eliphaz likewise recounted how an Angel had passed before him, as the Angel passed before Moses and Elijah, and through this he came to realize the essential truth of man's sinfulness and desperate need for repentance and God's gracious acceptance (Job 4:16).

The theophany must have been frightening. "Though Elijah is commanded to go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, the most he does is to go out and stand at the entrance of the cave". By standing there he was failing to be humbled because of his sins. He had no awareness of his sins, like many of the harsh religious reformer types, focused solely on the errors of others. Elijah hid in a cave, hid for his life. He was thus being nudged to identify with the prophets of Yahweh whom Obadiah hid in a cave. But his repeated assertion that he alone is faithful to Yahweh is a studied refusal to make that identity- he continued to consider them apostate, despite having been nudged (through the cave experience) to identify with them.

And behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, and he said to him-

This personification of "the word of the Lord" surely refers to an Angel who spoke to Elijah. When we read that the Lord was not in the fire etc., but was in the "still small voice", perhaps the idea is that the Angel was not visible in the fire, earthquake, wind etc.- but He simply stood there at the end in front of Elijah and quietly spoke to him. The Angel, in a magnificent

manifestation of the 'humility' of God, was quietly spoken and calm ("still"). The Angel was inviting Elijah to be like Him, to be God manifest by following the pattern of his guardian Angel.

What are you doing here, Elijah?-

Literally the text reads: "Elijah, Elijah, Elijah". The three repeats of his name in the Hebrew text connect with the earthquake, wind and fire, and Elijah's triple repeating of the same prepared statement. In his bitterness, Elijah sought to cut himself off from all consideration of his possibility of being wrong, or sensibly dialoguing with the Father. He just repeats the same words three times, as meaninglessly as the earthquake, wind and fire. Elijah hid his face in his mantle rather than face up to the true glory of God, the true fire from Heaven. The only other time Elijah sees the glory of God he threw away his mantle- as if he finally recognized he had been shielding himself from the real reality of it so that he could seek his own glory? The glory of God is His Name and character. To face up to this, believing it rather than merely knowing it, will bring us to repentance and a real facing up to the reality that we are truly not better than anyone else, in the light of the surpassing excellence of His glory. And Elijah just didn't want to face up to it, just as we can not want to face up to the realities of what we know.

Elijah was in "the cave" (Heb.) where Moses had been, and he had rather fancied himself as Moses when he had the people draw near to him (1 Kings 18:30). Now he was being told that he was not as Moses. For Moses was the meekest man, and Elijah had not allowed himself to be humbled as Moses did.

"What are you doing here?" invites Elijah to question whether he is really like Moses, at Sinai to intercede *for* idolatrous Israel. Instead, Elijah refused to respond to the nudges and interceded *against* Israel. Such questions always imply the person questioned was doing wrong. Adam ("Where are you?" Gen. 3:9), Cain ("Why are you angry? Gen. 3:6, and "Where is your brother Abel?" Gen. 3:9), Balaam ("Who are these men with you?" Num. 22:9) and Jonah ("Is it right for you to be angry about the gourd?" Jon. 4:9).

The idea may also be that Elijah had been commanded to go stand on the mountain, but instead he was too scared to even leave the cave. He simply didn't have the intimacy with God which Moses had had. Or maybe the idea is that he shouldn't have fled from Jezebel; or, he should be back at the ministry of converting Israel, rather than just trying to be a Moses copycat.

1Ki 19:10 He said, I have been very zealous for Yahweh, the God of Armies; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars and slain Your prophets with the sword. I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away-

Elijah insists he has been zealous / jealous for Yahweh, alluding to His own stated characteristic of jealousy. Always, Elijah seeks to portray and understand himself as on God's side- but only on the side of some of His characteristics, those concerned with judgment. He fails to perceive that at Sinai, Yahweh revealed Himself as first of all gracious and forgiving. Moses, by contrast, sought to change God's mind. Moses was open to change in perspective, whereas Elijah just stubbornly repeats his narrative three times. This stubborn refusal to change a narrative, about God, about others, about ourselves, repeated time and again within our minds and then out loud... is what stymies spiritual growth, and makes us unfit for God's usage. Clinging on to phrases out of old statements of faiths, to traditions, to perspectives and world views... is very much what religion [as opposed to dynamic spirituality] is all about.

Elijah laments Israel have broken the covenant, but he himself alone is faithful to it. Moses by contrast recognizes that Israel have broken covenant, but urges God to restore it,

and to cancel his own salvation if Israel can't be saved- even refusing God's idea of making a new nation out of him. He alludes to Dt. 31:16,17 which predicted that when Israel broke covenant, Yahweh would be angry and hide His face from Israel. This is true- but he fails to have the spirit of Moses, who despite knowing this, sought to turn away God's wrath on the basis that he [Moses] was himself faithful and willing to sacrifice himself for Israel. This is all so foreign to Elijah; like some today, he was just grabbing on to bits of scripture which talk of judgment but not seeing the wider context. Despite all the nudges to see himself as Moses. God's response to Israel breaking covenant at the time of the golden calf was to renew the covenant, because of Moses' intercession. Whereas Elijah struggles with this and just wants God to destroy Israel, in line with His own statements about consequence for breaking covenant. But God Himself doesn't always follow those principles, because of His love and grace, and His bleeding heart for His people. Thus Ez. 16:59,60: "Yes, thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath, breaking the covenant; yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant". His response to their breaking covenant was to make a new one, just as He made another set of tables of the covenant- rather than just punishing them according to the agreed terms for breaking the covenant. Elijah wanted none of this, and wanted to focus only upon the consequences for sin.

Elijah simply identifies himself with God's more judgmental aspects and fails to have any love in him for Israel. It's all about himself. And this can be seen in so many legalistic believers. Visually and literally, God sought to correct Elijah by showing that He was not in the whirlwind, devouring fire and earthquake [all symbols of His judgment, and God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked], but in the still small voice, the "gentle whisper" (NIV), "the hush of a rush". The "sound of silence" is the idea- it is the absence of God's judgment which is in fact the message. We think of the silence as the Lord stands with the adulterous woman in John 8, no word of condemnation to the legally condemned. Or the sound of silence in Heaven in Rev. 8. Elijah interceded with God against Israel, Paul says. His un verbalized thoughts were counted as his prayer. But God's grace and gentleness triumph over His necessary judgment. There is no polemic against paganism as Elijah perhaps expected or hope for. No response to his prayer through some terrible statement of Divine judgment and vengeance against Israel. Just some sense that Yahweh was not "in" the symbols of judgment. His silence was the message. He was "in" that silence.

Sadly, it seems Elijah's failure here led Jonah to copy him, assuming that because Elijah had a legalistic attitude, focusing on God's judgment in isolation, therefore he could do so also. For he too requests to die when his mission ran out of highway, just as Elijah did.

Elijah's focus on Israel's sinfulness may have been tainted with the syndrome of pulling others down to make yourself look taller. He says repeatedly: "I have been very zealous for Yahweh... for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant... and I, even I only, am left". It's as if he felt that his zeal [s.w. "jealous"] was in the fact they were apostate and he wasn't. He did what Paul outlaws- comparing ourselves amongst ourselves. Both Obadiah and the widow of Zarephath felt that Elijah had come to bring their sins to remembrance. He exuded a sense of criticism of others. This is why so many of the religious reformer types, the hard liners of so many denominations and small time churches, have no awareness of their own sinfulness. His zeal for the Lord was, he reasoned, in being the only one left when they had all quit. And this basic mistake has hamstrung us- you are righteous, zealous, a defender of the Faith, if you merely hold on to a certain academic proposition of truth which others are rumoured or assumed to have apostatized from. Zeal for the Lord surely involves infinitely more than this. Elijah prayed his prayer from the cave mouth, protesting his own righteousness as he cowered before the glory of the Lord. Yet the same word occurs in Is. 2:12,13, where apostate Israel will hurl away their idols and then cower in a cleft / cave of the

rock before the presence of Yahweh's glory. The connection perhaps shows that although Elijah was so proudly not an idolater, yet his pride and arrogance was essentially the same. On one hand Elijah may have gloried in the similarities between his position and that of Moses, when God's glory passed by him in the cleft of the rock; and yet Moses too was effectively being rebuked and humbled for his pride.

God tried to correct Elijah's despising of the other prophets of the Lord. Elijah was in a cave, and was also fed bread and water- just as the other prophets had been by Obadiah (1 Kings 18:4) whom he considered apostate. And yet Elijah didn't see, or didn't want to see, that connection- after having been reminded of this experience of the other prophets, he claims that "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:22)- he wrongly believed that all other valid prophets had been slain. In fact the record shows how that during Elijah's lifetime there were other prophets of Yahweh active in His service (1 Kings 20:13,35), as well as the schools of the prophets mentioned at the time, and the 100 prophets whom Obadiah hid. And yet the lesson is that God still works through the conceited, the spiritually superior, those who despise their brethren. God didn't give up on Elijah because he was like this, and neither should we give up in our relationship with such brethren.

Rom. 11:2,3 interprets this as Elijah actually interceding with God against Israel, asking for Him to destroy them all, apart from himself. This is a feature of many prayers: not to crudely, directly ask for the obvious; but to simply inform the Almighty of the situation, in faith. Examples include: Gen. 19:24; 2 Chron. 14:11; Ps. 3:1-4; 142:1,2; Jn. 11:21,22; Ps. 106:44 cp. Is. 64:3. Elijah's real motives were read, and understood as a prayer to God. And yet his ministry had been intended to reform Israel. But he just wants to see sinner judged. Therefore his ministry was removed from him.

1Ki 19:11 He said, Go out, and stand on the mountain before Yahweh. Behold, Yahweh passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before Yahweh; but Yahweh was not in the wind. After the wind an earthquake; but Yahweh was not in the earthquake-

The Angel tells Elijah to actually go and stand before the Lord and learn what it really meant to stand before the Lord, as he had said he did in 1 Kings 17:1; so he had to literally stand before the Angel as He passed by. Yet Elijah hid his face; he was no longer so happy to be before the Lord once he realized the humility and breaking in pieces of a proud man's spirit that it really implies.

The whole scene, with Yahweh passing by, is so reminiscent of Moses on Sinai. But when Yahweh passed by, Moses saw His back parts- the back parts of God Himself, as I have suggested on Ex. 34. But despite the external dramatics of a theophany, the earthquake, wind and fire- Yahweh was not seen by Elijah. That may be the idea of Yahweh not being "in" those things. He failed to have the spirit of Moses, he prayed against Israel rather than for Israel. Likewise Moses' request to see God was revealed as inappropriate- even greater than that, was realizing that the declaration of Yahweh's Name meant that His grace and forgiveness of the golden calf was more awesome than even seeing God physically. And so the parallels suggest that Elijah ascended Sinai of his own volition, wanting to see more of the wind and fire he had brought down on Carmel. But although the wind and fire do come, the point was that he didn't see God. But God's silence, "the hush of a rush", had a "sound" to it. The fact God isn't into showbiz, nor public exhibition of Himself, the very absence of all that... the silence, if you like... is in fact the message of Him. That He is about grace. He sent rain on Israel even though they were impenitent, and despite having said they would have no rain if they were idolatrous. Elijah had totally missed this point. He was asked in the silence to realize this.

When Elijah was told to go and stand upon mount Horeb [i.e. Sinai] before the Lord, this was evidently seeking to invite him to understand how Moses felt (Ex. 24:12; 34:12). Yet as noted on :9, he was being told that because he had not humbled himself as Moses, he could not be Moses. But he had potentially been set up as a new Moses, but he wasted the potential by his own pride. Consider the following parallels:

Confronted Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) - Confronted Pharaoh (Exod. 5:1)

Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (1 Kings 19:3) - Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (Exod. 2:15)

Miraculously fed "...bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening..." (1 Kings 17:6)-Miraculously fed "...meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning..." (Exod. 16:8, 12)

Spoke authoritatively for the Lord in his own name (1 Kings 17:1) - Spoke authoritatively for the Lord in his own name (Deut. 5:1)

Gathered all Israel to Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19) - Gathered all Israel to Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:17)

Combated the prophets of Ba'al (1 Kings 18:20-40) - Combated the magicians of Pharaoh (Exod. 7:8-13, 20-22; 8:1-7)

Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (1 Kings 18:36-39) - Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Exod. 32:11-14)

Elijah took twelve stones at Carmel "...according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob..." (1 Kings 18:30-32) - Moses had twelve pillars set up at Sinai "...corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel..." (Exod. 24:4)

The Lord accepted Elijah's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (1 Kings 18:36-39)- The Lord accepted Moses and Aaron's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (Lev. 9:22-24)

By Elijah's authority 3 000 idolatrous prophets were slain (1 Kings 18:40) - By Moses' authority 3 000 idolaters were slain (Exod. 32:25-29)

After killing the prophets of Ba'al Elijah climbed Carmel to pray. (1 Kings 18:42) - After killing the idolaters Moses climbed Sinai to pray (Exod. 32:30)

Went without food for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8) - Went without food for forty days and forty nights (Exod. 34:38; Deut. 9:9)

Elijah (re)commissioned at Horeb (=Sinai) (1 Kings 19) - Moses commissioned at Sinai (Exod. 3)

Elijah was in "the cave" on Horeb (=Sinai) when the Lord "passed by" (1 Kings 19: 9-11) - Moses was hidden "in the cleft of the rock" when the Lord passed by Sinai. (Exod. 33:21-23)

Elijah saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Horeb (=Sinai). (1 Kings 19:11-12) - Moses saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Sinai. (Exod. 19:16-20; 20:18; Deut. 4:11; 5:22-27).

Prayed that he might die. (1 Kings 19:1-4) - Prayed that he might die. (Num. 11:10-15).

The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon his enemies. (2 Kings 1:9-12) - The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon those who rebelled against him. (Num. 16; cf. Lev. 10:1-3)

Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan by striking the waters with his cloak and passed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8) - Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea by stretching out his staff and passed over on dry ground. (Exod. 14:16, 21-22)

His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had. (2 Kings 2) - His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had the Red

Sea. (Josh. 3)

Was taken away in the Transjordan. (2 Kings 2:9-11) - Died in the Transjordan. (Deut. 34:5)
Mysteriously translated (2 Kings 9-18) - Died mysteriously and buried in a valley, but his burial place was unknown. (Deut. 34:6).

The point of these similarities was that the Angel wanted Elijah to be like Moses; to pray for the peoples' salvation, to return to the people and lead them and teach them. Moses had begged for God's mercy for His people; but Elijah was so full of self-justification that he prayed against Israel. And so with us, we are potentially led into situations where we are to discern the similarities between us and Bible characters; we are set up with opportunities to respond in a way that reflects how we have learnt the lessons from them. The way the Lord Jesus perceived this in His wilderness temptations is a great example. In 2 Kings 2:8, at the very end of his public ministry, he smites the waters of Jordan and they open for him to pass over on dry ground, just as Moses did. Perhaps he was trying still to assert himself as Moses; or maybe he had finally arrived at the required humility, and so was permitted to act as Moses. And that is why he is given a role parallel to Moses at the transfiguration.

When the Lord passed by, there was a whirlwind which broke "in pieces the rocks *before the Lord*" (1 Kings 19:11). Yet it was Elijah who described himself as the one who stood before the Lord- and even prided himself on this (1 Kings 17:1). He was the rock being broken in pieces by the display of God's glory. And insofar as we too meditate upon the glory of His character, the attributes outlined in, e.g., Ex. 34:4-6, we likewise will be broken men and women. The "earthquake" is the same word found in Ez. 3:12,13 about a theophany / passing of the cherubim chariot. That whole display of God's physical glory was intended to stop Elijah just repeating his prepared statement [he says the same thing 3 times]. Grasping the wonder of who God really and essentially is can and must shake us from the mediocrity of entrenched positions, of forms of expressing and understanding our faith which are mere set formulas... See on 1 Kings 21:29.

1Ki 19:12 After the earthquake a fire passed; but Yahweh was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice-

The way God "was not in" the fire, wind and earthquake make all this an empty theophany. God was very much in the fire and earthquake which accompanied the theophany Moses witnessed in the same place, to the extent Moses even saw His back parts. But just as Elijah was spiritually empty, having faith but no love which made him nothing, so he is being shown that he is not in fact the prophet like Moses. For he has not seen Yahweh's back parts, and Yahweh has not come down personally to him as He did to Moses.

God Almighty spoke to the man Elijah in a still [Heb. whispering] small [s.w. "thin" Lev. 13:30; "beaten small" Lev. 16:12; "dwarf" Lev. 21:20] voice. The awesome God of Sinai spoke in the whispering voice of a dwarf, which compared to Elijah's loud voice. This is not only an essay in the humility of God. It is an essay in how God so earnestly seeks to persuade His children that He works in the small, humble way. And this is contrasted with the loud, booming voice and personality of Elijah. And it isn't what God wants. Here there is a lesson for any loud mouthed, self-confident, razzamatazz way of presenting the Gospel; it just isn't to be done. For this is not how God works.

The word was and is God. Dt. 4:12 [Heb.] says that Israel heard God's voice and saw no similitude *save* a voice. To hear the word is to in that sense see God; for the word was and is God. There are other connections between seeing God and hearing His word in Ex. 20:21 and 1 Kings 19:12-14. Observe the parallelism in 2 Chron. 20:20: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper". Our attitude to God is our attitude to His word. Because the word is so pure, *therefore* we love it (Ps. 119:140).

John Carter rightly observed: "Upon our understanding of what the Bible is, our attitude to it will be determined".

1Ki 19:13 It was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. Behold, a voice came to him, and said, Why are you still here, Elijah?-

"Still here" suggests Elijah should have repented of his pride, and realized that he was not like Moses, and should not be standing in *"the cave"* where Moses had stood. But Elijah insisted on still standing before Yahweh in his own strength. He wrapped *his face* [s.w. "before" the Lord] in his mantle and "stood" [s.w. 'stand' before the Lord] in the cave mouth before the Angel. In Hebrew, the words for 'face' and 'before' are the same. Too ashamed to really stand before the Lord, Elijah therefore wrapped his face. Earlier, he had been so keen to use this phrase of himself (1 Kings 17:1; 18:15); he had prided himself on the fact that he stood before the Lord. But now he hid his face, a common idiom often used by God for withholding fellowship. The fact we too are God's covenant people can initially be a source of pride to us as we do our theological gladiatorship with others. But the implications are so far deeper; and through Angelic work in our lives, we too are brought to see this.

The word for "mantle" is translated "glory" in Zech. 11:3; Elijah wrapped his presence in his own glory, rather than face up to the implications of God's glory. A desire for our own glory prevents us perceiving God's glory. Perhaps Elijah was being pseudo-humble, misquoting to himself a Biblical precedent in all this, namely that the cherubim wrapped their faces (Is. 6:2). In this case, Elijah was doing a false impersonation of the cherubim, manifesting himself before God's manifestation of Himself. Only at the very end does Elijah cast away his mantle (2 Kings 2:13), his human strength, allowing himself to merge with God's glory. He should have cast away his mantle earlier, when he stood before the still small voice on Horeb.

The question "Why are you still here, Elijah?" may imply that Elijah should have allowed himself to be carried away by the cherubim, he should have surrendered himself to the progress of God's glory, rather than so obsessively insist upon his own personal rightness and the wrongness of others. And this was why God's ultimate response to Elijah's attitude on Horeb was to dismiss him from his prophetic ministry and instate Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:16). Elijah seems to have finally learnt his lesson, for he calls Elisha to the ministry by 'passing by' Elisha as in a theophany, taking off his mantle and throwing it upon Elisha (1 Kings 19:19). He realized that he had hidden behind that mantle, using it to resist participating in the selfless association with God's glory [rather than his own] to which he was called. But he got there in the end; hence the enormous significance of Elijah giving up his mantle when he finally ascends to Heaven in the cherubim chariot (2 Kings 2:13).

The question implies that it was wrong for Elijah to have been still in the cave of Moses on Horeb / Sinai. He ought to have realized he was not Moses now, his pride had precluded it. It seems from 1 Kings 19:8 that he himself chose to go there; dwelling in a cleft / cave of the rock is reminiscent of Moses in Sinai in Ex. 34. But Moses was praying for Israel, whereas Elijah was interceding against them, Paul tells us (Rom. 11:2,3). Could it even be that Elijah went down there to Sinai with the idea of somehow asking that a new Israel be formed out of him, as God had offered Moses? Whether this be so or not, the clear implication is that God was not pleased with what Elijah was doing there. When asked what he was doing, he just repeats verbatim his prayer of intercession against Israel. So on one hand, he shouldn't have been praying that prayer. On the other, he was heard- for God's response is to tell him to anoint Jehu, Hazael and Elisha to destroy apostate Israel, even though He would preserve the 7,000 remnant. So again we see the same theme with Elijah- his undoubted faith in prayer is

recognized; he prays for judgment on Israel in a way that is not altogether wrong, and yet sadly differs from the higher spirit of grace which there is in Christ.

Elijah's wrapping of his face in a mantle may have been to consciously imitate Moses, who covered his face from the glory of Yahweh and also covered or hid his face at the burning bush (Ex. 3:6). But again, Elijah is imitating Moses only a surface level. He has no sense of relationship with God nor growth in that relationship; he merely repeats his position statements three times before God, rather like reciting a statement of faith to God rather than dialoguing with him.

Elijah clearly assumed he would get a physical view of God as Moses did, but was disappointed. This desire to see God is relevant to the context of his life. For some years previously, Jeroboam had set up the golden calves with their implicit claim that Yahweh was invisible. W. F. Albright explains: "Jeroboam represented Yahweh as an invisible figure standing on a young bull of gold. It is true that the golden calves have been assumed by most scholars to have been direct representations of Yahweh as bull-god, but this gross conception is not only otherwise unparalleled in biblical tradition, but is contrary to all we know of Syro-Palestinian iconography in the second and early first millennium B.C. Among the Canaanites, Arameans, and Hittites we find the gods nearly always represented as standing on the back of an animal or as seated on a throne borne by animals—but never as themselves in animal form" (From the Stone Age to Christianity p. 299).

1Ki 19:14 He said, I have been very zealous for Yahweh, the God of Armies; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down your altars and slain Your prophets with the sword. I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away-

He laments that Israel had "thrown down" Yahweh's altars, perhaps pointing the contrast with the way he threw himself down in prayer to Yahweh. The same word is used in Ex. 23:24 about throwing down pagan altars. Elijah was saying that they treated Yahweh's altars as if they were pagan. But is there any evidence they ever rejected Yahweh like this? Is not Elijah imputing motives to them? Derelict altars of Yahweh- the "high places" which they were repeatedly criticized for- Elijah interpreted as thrown down. To throw them down was a good thing if done from the right motives. But Elijah was in a mindset of seeing and imagining the very worst of his brethren.

The triumph on Carmel involved making an offering on an altar of Yahweh which was in one of the "high places" (1 Kings 18:30)- whereas Israel were repeatedly criticized for offering on these "high places" and not in Jerusalem. Elijah even criticizes Israel for throwing down these "high places" altars of Yahweh (1 Kings 19:10,14). Surely Elijah knew that the use of the high places was not what Yahweh ideally wanted; and yet he was driven to use a high place in this way. And with us, God will work through circumstances to remove from us the crutches of mere religion, to challenge the essence of our faith and relationship with Him. The way Ezekiel had to eat unclean food and defile himself is another such example.

1Ki 19:15 Yahweh said to him, Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria-

God was indeed going to judge Israel, but not by such a judgmental, angry, bitter person like Elijah. And even now, Elijah doesn't actually do what he is told; he doesn't anoint Jehu nor Hazael to destroy Israel (2 Kings 9:3). It's hard to decide whether this was disobedience or rather an awkward realization that he had been praying with too harsh a spirit for something that would have been best left to God. It's such a warning. It is interesting to compare Elijah's attitude with how Elisha weeps tears over Hazael, knowing how much damage he is going to do to Israel in response to Elijah's prayer (2 Kings 8:12).

1Ki 19:16 You shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah to be prophet in your place-

Remember that Elijah considered that he alone was faithful in Israel. If he knew Elisha or Shaphat (and the immediate response of :19 suggests he did), he would likely have wanted to protest 'But he's not sincere, his dad's not a genuine believer, it's all just words with him!', or something similar. But he was being taught that those whom he had written off spiritually, such as Obadiah and the Gentile widow, were in fact just as much God's children as he was. We note that Elijah is not recorded as anointing any of these men.

It appears Elijah never obeyed the command to anoint Elisha as his replacement. It was Elisha and not Elijah who does the job of appointing Hazael king of Syria; it is Elisha's servant who anoints Jehu, not Elijah. And the anointings of Jehu and Hazael were done covertly, not openly, at a time when the ruling monarchs related to those men were weak or sick. Elijah appears to grudgingly accept God's decision by casting his mantle on Elisha, but never anoints him. It's as if he doesn't put the oil of the Spirit on Elisha's head, but rather thinks that his distinctive personal mantle was enough to put on Elisha's head, thinking that was better than the Spirit. We see here the pride which always doggs conservative religion. A hairy mantle was a sign of being a prophet- hence 2 Kings 1:8 RV, where Elijah is described as "a man with a garment of skin"(Heb.). And we learn from Zech. 13:4 that a hairy mantle was a sign of a prophet. So Elijah didn't use the oil of the Spirit on Elisha but rather his own personal symbol of office. And Elijah only does this when he is forcibly snatched away from his ministry, as if in a begrudging and limited act of obedience to this message to anoint Elisha with oil. He leaves it to the last minute, rather than immediately going and doing as he was told and humbly anointing Elisha.

1Ki 19:17 It shall happen, that he who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and he who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill-

This was largely a prophesy of potentials. There is no record that Elijah anointed Hazael nor Jehu; nor that Elisha killed anyone. It was a potential scenario, perhaps precluded from the start by Elijah's refusal to be obedient to the command to anoint Hazael and Jehu. Perhaps he finally realized that he had been far too judgmental, and didn't want more judgment to flow. And he recognized his unworthiness and failure in his ministry by anointing Elisha to replace him.

1 Kings 21 states that the death of Joram at Jehu's hand was "in accordance with the word of the LORD". Likewise the murder of Ahab's 70 sons is stated to be an explicit fulfilment of Yahweh's word here "through His servant Elijah" (2 Kings 10:10,17 cp. 1 Kings 21:21). But the "through" begs many questions. Elijah maybe repeated these words- but failed to anoint Jehu to do the job as requested. Or maybe the idea is that God's word still finally comes true despite human failure, as we have here on Elijah's part.

So God's word through Elijah was fulfilled, but not through the initially intended mechanism- that Elijah would anoint Jehu. Actually he didn't, Elisha took on the job but got his servant to do it- who nervously ran off after doing it. But still God's word came true- although the path to fulfilment of it varied in accordance with human weakness and, as it were, availability to God. This explains why and how prophecies have varying fulfilments but always somehow come true in the end.

We note too from Hos. 1:4 that God punished Jehu for what he did- presumably because he did it from the wrong motives, i.e. his own blood lust and desire for personal aggrandisement: "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu".

1Ki 19:18 Yet will I leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him-

Elijah, as many an isolated preacher, felt that he alone was faithful. Yet he was reminded that Yahweh had left Himself 7,000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal. It is easy to assume that this means that those 7,000 were out there in Israel but unknown to Elijah. However it is possible to read the Hebrew text as meaning 'I have marked off 7,000 potentially, now Elijah, stop moaning, go out there and find them and convert them'. This would be why Elijah prayed that the people would see that God had already turned their heart back (1 Kings 18:37)- He had potentially enabled their conversion. Something similar may be hinted at in Jn. 1:7, where we read that all of Israel could have believed due to the work of John. It was potentially possible.

The Hebrew for "left" can imply that God had preserved potentially the 7,000- or, that there simply were 7,000 faithful right then in Israel. Faithfulness to Yahweh was itself a gift, just as faith is a gift which not all men have; "all men have not faith... it is the gift of God... not of yourselves". Elijah was being taught that his own faith was in a sense also a gift from God. Hence Rom. 11:4-6 says that the 7000 represent the remnant according to *grace*; they were faithful because of God's grace to them. Yet Elijah clearly discounted them. The more God sought to teach Elijah that he really was not alone, that his view of others was far too dismissive, the more Elijah became almost bitter with God. The conversion of Israel on Carmel turned out, I suggest, a surprise for Elijah. He wasn't expecting them to start chanting "El is Yah", "The Lord, He is the God". They were chanting his name- Elijah. But he turns and runs to Jezreel, and then goes out into the desert and becomes suicidal. Effectively he preferred the life of the lonely spiritual hero, with the people in apostasy; and there are many such examples of brethren who prefer a life of self-imposed exile because of the supposed errors of God's people- no matter what good there is amongst their brethren. And actually, deny it as we may, we all have an element of this deep within us.

There is such a thing as feeling lonely when we needn't. Elijah is an example of this; he felt that he was "left alone" faithful in Israel- even though there were another 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (Rom. 11:3). The Hebrew in 1 Kings is hard to translate. It could mean that God reserved 7,000 of Elijah's brothers and sisters who potentially would not bow the knee to Baal. Yet Elijah didn't want to see the potential of his brethren. He set himself in a league above them, like the Psalmist, saying in his haste that all men are liars (Ps. 116:11).

The one hundred prophets of 1 Kings 18:4 were presumably part of the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And maybe they weren't that strong- they are set up as representative of those who will only be saved by grace, not their works (Rom. 11:4-6). But, by implication, Elijah, for all his love of Israel, did not look upon them through the eyes of grace. Elijah insisted that he alone was "left"; yet God says that He has "left" Himself the 7,000 (1 Kings 19:18). The preservation of the people of God, or 'the truth', can be done, and *is* done, by God Himself; yet the likes of Elijah consider that it is *they* who 'preserve the truth'. Again, Elijah had to learn that we are all saved by grace. God will leave for and to Himself His people, without requiring the help of man. Elijah struggled with this issue of accepting others and not thinking he was the only one who could do the job right up to the end of his ministry; for he ascends to Heaven clutching his mantle, the sign of his prophetic ministry. It seems to me that he took it with him because he felt that not even Elisha was really fit to do the job and take his place; but perhaps in what were possibly the last seconds of his mortal life, he learnt his lesson and let go of it, allowing it to fall to the earth to let another man take it up.

Some manuscripts and LXX say that Elijah was leaving 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal, which would imply that his ministry was being ended because he had not ministered to them. He had considered them apostate and himself as the only true Yahweh worshipper left in the land. This is a powerful warning to the tendency toward spiritual elitism which seems such a common human temptation.

1Ki 19:19 So he departed to there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed over to him, and threw his mantle on him-

God's rejection of Elijah as prophet was because he didn't recognize his brethren. See on :13. Perhaps the 12 yoke was to keep alive the prophetic hope that Judah and Israel would be united in repentance toward the prophetic message. Elijah had built an altar of 12 stones and offered an acceptable sin offering upon it, speaking of the same prophetic intention. Elijah apparently didn't anoint Hazael and Jehu as commanded; but he did give his ministry over to Elisha to replace him. I take that as humility from him, in the very end, although too late for God to continue to use him in ministry as initially intended.

However, "twelve yoke of oxen" could refer to an area of land known as a twelve yoke, or to 12 parcels of land.

1Ki 19:20 He left the oxen, and ran after Elijah-

Possibly implying that Elijah walked on immediately, as a test as to whether Elisha would respond immediately. Immediate response, "yes straight away", is what God so looks for. We see it in the call of the disciples. However in practice we sense a half hearted desire on Elijah's part for Elisha to follow him. He doesn't want to be replaced as God had commanded. He calls him and just walks away rather than trying to persuade him.

And said, Let me please kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you. He said to him, Go back again; for what have I done to you?-

See on :16. The Lord Jesus makes an allusion here when He says that if anyone wants to follow Him but firstly must go home, then such a person is unworthy of Him (Lk. 9:61,62). He shows by this that He expects more of us than Elijah did; He is a more demanding Lord than Elijah, precisely because He is the more gracious. Elijah allowed him to return home first; "for what have I done to you?" is hard to understand, but it seems to mean to the effect that 'I am not myself being unreasonable; this call is not of me, I have not done this to you, but God has by calling you'. There could be there a possible hint of bitterness at his replacement by Elisha; see on :16. There is no record that Elijah ever anointed Elisha as he was commanded to. We could even interpret these enigmatic words as Elijah telling Elisha to return home and not follow Elijah. LXX "Return, for I have done the work for you" encourages us in thinking that. All this is a studied refusal to do as God has told him, and let Elisha take his place.

1Ki 19:21 He returned from following him, and took the yoke of oxen, killed them and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave to the people and they ate. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and served him-

We have here an example of servant leadership. He had been given Elijah's mantle already (:19) and presumably Elijah had explained to him the Lord's word about transferring the ministry to Elisha. But Elisha begins by serving Elijah (2 Kings 3:11 implies in quite a menial way). His destruction of so many oxen and their yoke was really burning all his bridges to return home. His family may well have seen it as an unnecessary waste, as that may have represented a large part of their family wealth.

Elijah was told to replace himself with Elisha, but it seems he only called Elisha to be his servant and didn't anoint him as asked. Hence the section finishes with the comment that Elisha served him. That was not at all what God asked of Elijah. His taking up and snatching away was God forcing him to end his ministry; Elisha was told that Yahweh would take away his master from above his head, indicating Elijah was in the role of Elisha's master [and Elisha was his servant] right up to the moment he was carried away in the whirlwind. Taken away from above his head (2 Kings 2:3 "Yahweh will take away your master from your head today") is a strange phrase. Perhaps it indicates that Elijah was forcibly removed from having Elisha as his servant, and the way Elijah refused to relinquish his role was displeasing to God. But we note how in the gap between being fired from his ministry and being forcibly stopped from continuing it, God graciously still used him.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 20

1Ki 20:1 Ben Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his army together; and there were thirty-two kings with him, and horses and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and fought against it-

Josephus and the LXX have chapters 20 and 21 the opposite way around. This could be the same Benhadad who 14 years ago had made a treaty with Asa of Judah and had attacked the ten tribes during Baasha's rule. The 32 kings would have been the rulers of the provinces and areas which were then under the control of Benhadad.

1Ki 20:2 He sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said to him, Thus says Ben Hadad-

An example of the Hebrew word *malak* meaning simply "messengers". It is elsewhere translated "messenger", such as here. The word can therefore be used about human beings, who can sin. But the Angels as in the Divine beings cannot sin as they all have God's nature, and there is no rebellion or division in Heaven.

1Ki 20:3 'Your silver and your gold is mine. Your wives also and your children, even the best, are mine'-

This was an intentional humiliation of Ahab. To agree to give a man your wealth, wives and children was to admit total failure as a man to protect yourself. Many men would have preferred to die fighting rather than agree. The strange sequence of events here can too easily be read as a reflection of Ahab's weak character. But in fact they were designed to humble him. For humility is of such value to God, and the whole story of the weak Ahab ends up with him doing the most amazing, bravest thing which most men who have ever lived would have flinched at and failed: Ahab the weak became strong in that he repented, and will, it seems, be saved eternally because of it. That is the end product in view, and must be remembered as we read this chapter with the strange turns of fortune and event.

1Ki 20:4 The king of Israel answered, It is according to your saying, my lord, O king. I am yours, and all that I have-

As noted on :3, this was an incredible reflection of weakness of character. Ahab had not met Benhadad in the field in battle, and now he was surrounded, he refuses to accept what is surely an invitation to come out and fight. For that is what that kind of insulting demand was intended to elicit. But Ahab just agrees.

1Ki 20:5 The messengers came again and said, Ben Hadad says, 'I sent indeed to you, saying, You shall deliver me your silver, and your gold, and your wives, and your children-

Benhadad wanted to provoke Ahab to come out and fight. He did this by making an insulting demand, which in Semitic terms was not intended to be taken literally. But Ahab does take it literally, and he agrees.

1Ki 20:6 but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house, and the houses of your servants; and it shall be, that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away'-

As noted on :3, the whole purpose of this situation was to humble Ahab and force him to grow up and take personal responsibility. The demand to come out and fight is now made again, seeing Ahab had taken literally the insulting demand of :4 and had agreed to it. So now an even more insulting demand is made. Ahab would take any humiliation rather than fighting and trusting in God to save him. So he had to be humbled yet more.

1Ki 20:7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land and said, Please notice how this man seeks mischief; for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, my gold; and I didn't deny him-

Benhadad "sought mischief" by demanding his wealth and family. Ahab makes out that this was a demand he could agree to for the sake of avoiding war. But clearly the insulting demand to take absolutely everything from everybody was tantamount to declaring an invasion of the city.

1Ki 20:8 All the elders and all the people said to him, Don't listen, neither consent- "Listen and consent" is a phrase used of how Israel were to listen and consent to God, and they would be punished for not doing so (Lev. 26:21; Dt. 13:8; Is. 1:19; 28:12; 30:9 etc.). The phrase must have got Ahab thinking. And that was the intention of these events.

1Ki 20:9 Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben Hadad, Tell my lord the king, 'All that you sent for to your servant at the first I will do; but this thing I cannot do'. The messengers departed, and delivered the message-

The second demand was tantamount to declaring an invasion and sacking of the city. There was no way Ahab could agree. As explained on :3, the whole series of events was to bring him to humility and taking personal responsibility, and it did finally work- for he repented at the end of his life.

1Ki 20:10 Ben Hadad sent to him and said, The gods do so to me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people who follow me-

The second demand was indeed tantamount to saying that the city was going to be sacked, and even the dust of it taken away.

1Ki 20:11 The king of Israel answered, Tell him, 'Don't let him who puts on his armour brag like he who takes it off'-

LXX "let not the humpbacked boast as he that is upright". This was a statement of confidence, and we wonder where Ahab got that confidence from, seeing he had just recently agreed to the humiliating demand to surrender his wives, children and wealth.

He had no military strength, so we wonder whether, as intended, he was beginning to have a personal faith in Yahweh. For He alone would help in this situation.

1Ki 20:12 It happened, when Ben Hadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings, in the pavilions, that he said to his servants, Prepare to attack! They prepared to attack the city-

Benhadad comes over as an overconfident drunkard, leading from the rear.

Sometimes God apparently supports the lesser of two sinners because He wishes to judge pride and fleshly confidence more than anything else. But that doesn't thereby justify the lesser sinner, Ahab in this case.

1Ki 20:13 Behold, a prophet came near to Ahab king of Israel and said-

The prophet is not named. If indeed 1 Kings 21 is before this incident (see on :1), it surely would have been noted if it were Elijah. Perhaps the point is that Elijah was so wrong to arrogantly claim that he was the only prophet of Yahweh left. There were others, such as this anonymous prophet, and the schools of the prophets mentioned in 2 Kings. Not to mention the 100 prophets Obadiah had hidden in a cave.

Thus says Yahweh, 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand this day; and you shall know that I am Yahweh' -

As explained on :3, the intention of this series of events was to bring Ahab to Yahweh. And finally, it worked. It is a parade example of how we should never give up with those who apparently have no interest in the ways of God. The victory was given by God's grace and not because of Ahab's faith or spirituality. And thereby he came to "know Yahweh", for the essence of Yahweh is His grace in giving undeserved favour. For Ahab was indeed ripe for judgment, and Benhadad appeared the logical person to use for that.

1Ki 20:14 Ahab said, By whom? He said, Thus says Yahweh, 'By the young men of the princes of the provinces'. Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? He answered, You-

Part of the purpose of these events was to bring Ahab to greater personal responsibility, rather than living the life of an overgrown pampered adolescent, born into wealth and rulership, with a dominant wife who arranged everything for him. And so he was told that he was to lead off the battle; he who had no military experience and was clearly a coward by nature. The object of all this was that Ahab would "know Yahweh" (:13). So God was showing what He was like in that the victory was to be won by "young men" from the provinces, and by a cowardly king with no military experience.

1Ki 20:15 Then he mustered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two. After them, he mustered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand-

"Thousand" may not mean a literal 1000, but rather a division or regiment. But they were not used in the initial conflict. Just 232 young men were the vanguard of the Israelite attack. And they were followed by the army (:19), who only played a role in pursuing the much larger Syrian army once the 232 young men had won the battle and turned them to flight. As explained on :14, the purpose of this was that Ahab would "know Yahweh", the God who saves by the weak, the young, the inexperienced; because grace and humility are foremost in the things He values, and which comprise His Name.

1Ki 20:16 They went out at noon. But Ben Hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty-two kings who helped him-

Battles were usually won by lightning strikes at night or dawn. To attack at noon continues the theme discussed on :15; God was granting this victory by grace, when everything was very weak on the Israelite side, in secular terms. As it happened, noon was no bad time to attack in this case because Benhadad and all the leaders of the Syrian army were drunk.

1Ki 20:17 The young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben Hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, Men are coming out from Samaria-

LXX "sons of the leaders". We get the impression that the leaders of the Syrian army were too drunk and distant to really be leaders, and the leaders of Israel feared to fight themselves, with Ahab their king a weak minded coward.

1Ki 20:18 He said, If they have come out for peace, take them alive; or if they have come out for war, take them alive-

The arrogance of Benhadad is clear. He assumed that his soldiers could easily capture alive 232 young men. As noted on :12, sometimes God apparently supports the lesser of two sinners because He wishes to judge pride and fleshly confidence more than anything else.

1Ki 20:19 So these went out of the city, the young men of the princes of the provinces, and the army which followed them-

As explained on :15, it was the 232 young men who won the battle. The army which followed them played no role in the victory apart from to chase the fleeing Syrians. The idea was that cowardly Ahab, a king with no military experience, should march at the front of those young men. For he was to 'lead forth' the battle (see on :14). There is no record that he did as he was asked; he only "went out" after the young men had won the battle (:21).

1Ki 20:20 They each killed his opponent. The Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them. Ben Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with horsemen-

As with the duel between David and Goliath, the idea may have been that these young men fought the Syrian young men, as also seen in 2 Sam. 2:14. Each of those young Israelites killed the man they were given to fight.

1Ki 20:21 The king of Israel went out, and struck the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter-

Ahab was to 'lead forth' the battle (see on :14), at the head of the 232 young men. But it seems he didn't; he only "went out" once the battle had been won, to lead the chase. The point of it all was to make him realize that he, the coward, had been given a great victory and had gone down as a king who won a battle against great odds. This was all by the grace of the Yahweh whom he had so resisted. And so through this grace he came to "know Yahweh" (:13). They destroyed very many horses and chariots (:25). Ahab loved horses, for he personally had gone around Israel during the drought seeking for fodder for them. For him, the worst thing about the drought was the damage done to his horses. So we wonder why the horses were "struck" or destroyed (:25). Was it not because he knew that the king of Israel should not have horses and chariots, and he wished to follow Joshua's example in destroying them when he

captured them (Josh. 11:6)? We see the beginnings of faith and response, as intended.

1Ki 20:22 The prophet came near to the king of Israel and said to him, Go, strengthen yourself, and mark, and see what you do; for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against you-

For "the prophet", see on :13. The repeat of the situation was because as discussed on :3, these events were carefully designed to develop Ahab's faith, humility and sense of personal responsibility. "See what you do" is a phrase often used about seeing what God does or works (Ex. 6:1; 14:31; Num. 14:22; Dt. 4:3; 11:7 and often). Perhaps he was to take the hint that he would only win again if he recognized that God would work through him. Ahab was also being led to self awareness, personal responsibility and forward planning, rather than just leaving it all to Jezebel and living his life as he pleased.

1Ki 20:23 The servants of the king of Syria said to him, Their god is a god 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-

Their impression was perhaps because of Israel's tendency to worship Yahweh on the "high places", mixing idolatry with Yahweh worship. Again, as noted on :12, there are times when God may apparently give blessing or victory to one side in a conflict because the other side is so blasphemous. But that doesn't necessarily mean that the winning side, Ahab in this case, are right before Him. He even considered sparing Israel from destruction in the desert because of what the nations would say about Him and His people.

1Ki 20:24 Do this thing: take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their place-

This was a tacit recognition that no army can achieve victory if it is led by political rather than military leaders, who get drunk at the rear during a battle.

1Ki 20:25 Muster an army, like the army that you have lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot. We will fight against them in the plain, and surely we will be stronger than them. He listened to their voice, and did so-

We see here the great extent of the first Israelite victory, involving destroying many horses and chariots. See on :21 for the significance of this.

1Ki 20:26 It happened at the return of the year, that Ben Hadad mustered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel-

"Aphek" means 'strength', and the Syrians were determined to "be stronger than them" (:25), and Ahab had been told to make himself strong for this battle (:22). It was all about strength, and the purpose of the battle was to make Ahab trust in God's strength; for he was clearly weaker than Benhadad.

1Ki 20:27 The children of Israel were mustered and were provisioned, and went against them. The children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of young goats; but the Syrians filled the country-

The Israelites seemed doomed to destruction. They were outnumbered, and are described as goats and not sheep; for they were condemned before God. So again, the lesson was to be of salvation by grace, when they didn't deserve it; so as to teach

Ahab to "know Yahweh" (:28), to see what He was really like, and His grace is His lead characteristic.

1Ki 20:28 A man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, Thus says Yahweh, 'Because the Syrians have said, Yahweh is a god of the hills, but He is not a god of the valleys; therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am Yahweh' -

This "man of God" would appear to be a different one from the prophet who previously came to Ahab. Again the point is being made that Elijah was so wrong in assuming he was the only true prophet of Yahweh. There were others, and he was wrong to consider each of them to be astray on some point or other, and he alone right before Yahweh. The phrase "I will deliver this multitude into your hand" is a quotation from Jud. 4:7, where again a spiritually weak Israel, led by a woman [perceived as weak] were given victory over Sisera. And if Ahab had thought about it, he would have noticed that this victory was at the river Kishon, the place where Elijah had slain his prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:40).

Although unrecorded, it is an inference of :42 that at this time the prophet of Yahweh had told Ahab to destroy Benhadad.

1Ki 20:29 They encamped opposite one another seven days. So it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one hundred thousand footmen of the Syrians in one day-

"Thousand" often doesn't mean 1000, but refers instead to regiments or military divisions. The seven day period would have been a time for Ahab to consider how weak Israel were, as nothing before the hugely superior forces of Syria (:27). The camping opposite each other was to recall the situation with David and Goliath. Ahab was being humbled, and made to trust in God's strength (see on :3).

1Ki 20:30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand men who were left. Ben Hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner room-

Again, "thousand" may refer to some kind of military division. The battles of Israel often feature some supernatural element behind their total victory, and that was intended to teach them that the victory was of God's grace and not solely their own bravery, tactics or strength. And surely in this case, this again was intended as part of Ahab's spiritual education.

There is a connection between Benhadad going into an inner room to hide when Ahab was given victory against him (1 Kings 20:30), and the false prophet Zedekiah going into an inner room to hide when Ahab was defeated (1 Kings 22:25). The same Hebrew words are used, and the connection becomes more apparent if we accept that 1 Kings 20 and 21 should be placed the other way around, as in LXX. This would mean that the hiding of Benhadad is recorded just a short time before that of Zedekiah. The connection would be to show that the false prophets were in fact bracketed together by God with Israel's enemies; whereas they had claimed that they were nationalists on Israel's side, proclaiming Israel's certain victory against their enemies. God sees not as man sees, and the real spiritual realities are often the very opposite of what appears. See on :31.

1Ki 20:31 His servants said to him-

The very men who had advised and urged Benhadad to go into this battle (:23). The

situation repeats in the context of Israel when the false prophet Zedekiah predicts Israel's victory and is proven wrong (1 Kings 22:25).

See now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please let us put sackcloth on our bodies, and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel. Maybe he will save your life-

None of the kings of Israel are recorded as being particularly spiritual. But they apparently had a reputation for being merciful. Something of God's grace had rubbed off upon them.

1Ki 20:32 So they put sackcloth on their bodies and ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Your servant Ben Hadad says, 'Please let me live'. He said, Is he still alive? He is my brother-

Ahab had still not been humbled as intended; see on :3. For suddenly (and probably unexpectedly) being placed in such a position of power and glory, he acts in pride. The fawning of a powerful king before him led him to play God, assuming he could give life to those whom God had commanded to be slain. Although unrecorded, it is an inference of :42 that the prophet of Yahweh had told Ahab to destroy Benhadad. And now Ahab repeats the sin of Saul concerning Amalek, and allows him to live.

1Ki 20:33 Now the men observed diligently, and hurried to take this phrase; and they said, Your brother Ben Hadad. Then he said, Go, bring him. Then Ben Hadad came out to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot-

This was indeed merciful and gracious in a secular sense, but it was not the grace of God. We must note that difference, between grace in a secular sense and in a Divine sense. Ahab was condemned for not destroying Benhadad.

1Ki 20:34 Ben Hadad said to him, The cities which my father took from your father I will restore-

If these are the cities of 1 Kings 15:20, then they were taken from Baasha, who was not any relative of Ahab. Perhaps Benhadad uses the term "father" as meaning a previous king.

You shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. I, said Ahab, will let you go with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and let him go-

These streets would likely have been dedicated to the gods of Syria, whom the Israelites worshipped. Ahab agrees to the offer. But what names, then, was he to give the streets of Damascus? They were to be named after the gods of Israel. If Ahab named them after the gods Israel worshipped, then the names wouldn't have been changed at all. For Israel worshipped the Syrian gods. So Ahab was forced to assume that he would have to name the streets of Samaria after Yahweh. Israel only had one true God- Yahweh. So as "streets" in the plural were to be named after Israel's gods- what were they to be called, seeing Israel had only one national Deity? These practical questions were designed to bring Ahab to acceptance of Yahweh as Israel's only God.

1Ki 20:35 A certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his fellow by the word of Yahweh, Please strike me! The man refused to strike him-

Again the point is made that Elijah was so wrong in thinking that he was the only prophet of Yahweh. The record shows how that during Elijah's lifetime there were other prophets of Yahweh active in His service (1 Kings 20:13,35). And yet the lesson

is that God still works through the conceited, the spiritually superior, those who despise their brethren. God didn't give up on Elijah because he was like this, and neither should we give up in our relationship with such brethren.

1Ki 20:36 Then he said to him, Because you have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh, behold, as soon as you are departed from me, a lion shall kill you. As soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and killed him-

The message was that God's word must be obeyed, even if it seems utterly counter instinctive to us. We are not to assume that we know better. It is all leading up to how Ahab is to be condemned for refusing to slay Benhadad. The use of a lion to kill him connects with how the prophet of Judah in 1 Kings 13 was slain by a lion for not being strictly obedient to God's word not to eat or return by the way he had come.

1Ki 20:37 Then he found another man, and said, Please strike me. The man struck him, smiting and wounding him-

Maybe we are intended to infer that the slaying of the first prophet by a lion encouraged this prophet to zealously obey what he was commanded. But Ahab surely knew the story of 1 Kings 13. A man had been slain by a lion for lack of careful obedience to God's word. He should have known from this that he must be carefully obedient.

1Ki 20:38 So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way-

He was the equivalent of the lion meeting the first prophet by the way. The prophetic word of future death was as powerful as death.

And disguised himself with his headband over his eyes-

The idea is of a bandage over his eyes (LXX), which also served to hide his face from Ahab, who apparently would have otherwise recognized him; see on :41.

1Ki 20:39 As the king passed by, he cried to the king; and he said, Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man! If by any means he be missing, then your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver'-

The implication is that Ahab had been told beforehand that he must destroy Ahab, or else lose his life. Although see on :42 for another possibility. We note in this story that the man had to either give his life, or pay a talent of silver. Possibly there is here the hint that Ahab need not die for what he had done, but could somehow be redeemed from it- by repentance. But we simply learn that he went home depressed because of his judgment (:43), with no thought as to repentance.

1Ki 20:40 As your servant was busy here and there, he was gone. The king of Israel said to him, So your judgment shall be; you yourself have decided it-

Ahab's sin was in fact also his own judgment. For he was to meet his death fighting the Syrians in 1 Kings 22. If he had slain Benhadad, this situation would not have occurred. It is a common theme that the wicked snare themselves, falling into their own pit, judged by their own words, rather than God specifically snaring them (e.g. Ps. 7:15; 9:15; 57:6; Prov. 26:27; 28:10; Ecc. 10:8). From their own mouth and words men will be judged (Mt. 12:37; Lk. 19:22 cp. 2 Sam. 1:16; 1 Kings 20:40). It could even be that the Lord cites the condemnatory words of the rejected uttered during their lifetimes and leaves these as their condemnation. Woe, therefore, to he or she who has said unrepentantly that they don't want to be in the Kingdom if brother x or

sister y are going to be there. "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips [in this life] shall have destruction" at judgment day (Prov. 13:3).

1Ki 20:41 He hurried, and took the headband away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized that he was of the prophets-

This implies that the prophets were known to Ahab because they risked death at the hands of Jezebel by witnessing to him; as Elijah did. But Elijah obviously considered them all to be somehow insincere and fake, because he proudly considered himself the only prophet of Yahweh.

1Ki 20:42 He said to him, Thus says Yahweh, 'Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people'-

Ahab's sin was in fact his own judgment. For he was to meet his death fighting the Syrians in 1 Kings 22. If he had slain Benhadad, this situation would not have occurred.

Ahab was rebuked for not killing Benhadad, in obedience to God's command (1 Kings 20:35,42). But it could be argued that Ahab is not recorded as ever having been told to do this. What he had been told was that Yahweh would deliver the Syrians into his hand (:28). Presumably, God expected Ahab to infer from this that he should kill Benhadad; and rebuked him for his lack of perception, just as Jesus rebuked the disciples after the resurrection. The New Testament also has examples of our being expected to deduce things which at first glance we might find somewhat demanding. 1 Cor. 14:21 rebukes the Corinthians for speaking to each other in languages which their brethren didn't understand. Paul considered that they were immature in their understanding because they hadn't perceived that Is. 28:11,12 states that it will be the Gentile non-believers who will speak to God's people in a language they don't understand.

1Ki 20:43 The king of Israel went to his house sullen and angry, and came to Samaria-

See on :39. The character portrayal of Ahab is consistent, as we would expect from a Divinely inspired record. There is a clear connection with how he "came into his house sullen and angry" because Naboth would not sell him his vineyard (1 Kings 21:4). We get the impression of an overgrown spoilt child. He sulked over Naboth's vineyard because he wasn't obedient to God's word. And in 1 Kings 20:43 again Ahab "went to his house sullen and angry" because he was condemned for not having obeyed God's word. The LXX puts 1 Kings 20 and 21 the other way around. The experience with Naboth was intended to teach him obedience to God's word. He failed, so he "went to his house sullen and angry". He didn't learn from that lesson. And so he does the same again, when he fails to be obedient on an even more significant level.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 21

1Ki 21:1 It happened after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, right next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria- Josephus and the LXX have chapters 20 and 21 the opposite way around. It was Ahab's incredibly selfish behaviour over the vineyard which led to the judgment at the

hand of the Syrians described in 1 Kings 20. "The Jezreelite... in Jezreel" emphasizes how Naboth was part of the land he lived upon. It was his because he was from Jezreel.

We note throughout the similarities with David's sin against Uriah over Bathsheba in 2 Sam. 11. David likewise was in the king's house when he covets that which belongs to his neighbour (2 Sam. 11:2). He tries to get Bathsheba by offering Uriah a "present"- "there followed him a present from the king" (2 Sam. 11:8). Uriah's "I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11) matches Naboth's refusal. David summons Uriah and makes him eat and drink, just as it seems there was some kind of feast when Naboth was set on high amongst the people. David's plan to set up Uriah's death so he could take what was personally Uriah's [his wife] matches the plan of Ahab to get Naboth executed. Both David and Ahab [through Jezebel] write letters to bring about the death of the man who is getting in the way of their coveting. Naboth is put at the head of the people, Uriah is put at the battle front. The report sent to Jezebel that Naboth had died (:14) is recorded in the same manner as the report to David that Uriah had died (2 Sam. 11:18,24). Ahab takes possession of that which is Naboth's, just as David takes Bathsheba- and then they are both rebuked by a prophet, and both genuinely repent, although the resulting Divine judgment involved the suffering of their sons and family going forward. The similarities are intentional. We see here that the process of sin is as it were standard- whether in the slip of a righteous man [David], or yet another sin in the long catalogue of sins in a sinner like Ahab. God works to some kind of template with man, but it is also so that all men pass through the same broad process of temptation and failure.

1Ki 21:2 Ahab spoke to Naboth saying, Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near to my house; and I will give you for it a better vineyard than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money- "House" is LXX "threshingfloor". Ahab is acting exactly as Samuel predicted the kings of Israel would act, in taking away vineyards and inheritances from God's people (1 Sam. 8:14). "Naboth" means 'fruitful' so he was identified with the fruitfulness of his vineyard. To take it from him was to take him away from who he was as a person. But Ahab didn't care for that. Ahab comes over as the spoilt child who never grew up. We recall how Ahab loved horses, for he personally had gone around Israel during the drought seeking for fodder for them. For him, the worst thing about the drought was the damage done to his horses. And this demand for a vineyard next to his own house seems to reflect the same characteristics. The Divinely inspired record presents his character in an absolutely consistent and realistic way, unheard of in contemporary national histories.

Naboth wanted to turn the vineyard into a "garden of herbs", a vegetable patch, presumably to provide food for his servants in his house. We get the impression that he paid no attention to the fact he was downgrading the work of generations in building up a vineyard. His intention was to uproot the vines and turn it into a vegetable patch. Typical of the flesh, he focused upon an idea and became obsessed with fulfilling it. Again we see the psychological credibility of the Biblical record.

1Ki 21:3 Naboth said to Ahab, May Yahweh forbid me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!-

Naboth was a worshipper of Yahweh, obedient to the relevant parts of the Mosaic law about inheritances. "The inheritance of my fathers" is clearly alluding to the law (Lev. 25:27,28; Num. 36:7,8). This yet again shows how wrong Elijah had been to insist

that he was the only true worshipper of Yahweh left. He maybe knew Naboth, for he was told to go to Naboth as if he knew the place and man (:18). But Elijah judged him to be unfaithful to Yahweh, for this or that petty reason. The record brings before us several individuals who were faithful to Yahweh at this time, yet Elijah considered none of them genuine. And yet despite his arrogance and wrong sense of spiritual superiority, God still works through Elijah and seeks to bring him to the humility which is the acme of spiritual maturity.

1Ki 21:4 Ahab came into his house-

Ahab returned to Samaria from his other home in Jezreel. It's clear the vineyard was in Jezreel not Samaria (2 Kings 9:16,26).

Sullen and angry because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers. He laid himself down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread-

The character portrayal of Ahab is consistent, as we would expect from a Divinely inspired record. There is a clear connection with how he "came into his house sullen and angry" because Naboth would not sell him his vineyard (1 Kings 21:4) and how in 1 Kings 20:43 again Ahab "went to his house sullen and angry" because he was condemned for not having obeyed God's word. We get the impression of an overgrown spoilt child. The LXX puts 1 Kings 20 and 21 the other way around. The experience with Naboth was intended to teach him obedience to God's word. He failed, so he "went to his house sullen and angry". He didn't learn from that lesson. And so he does the same again, when he fails to be obedient on an even more significant level.

1Ki 21:5 But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, Why is your spirit so sad, that you eat no bread?-

Ahab comes over as pathetically weak and dominated by his wicked but far stronger wife. Away from her, he appears to have more potential for spirituality. The Divinely inspired record achieves perfect and credible characterization of the individuals. The sad spirit of Ahab is matched by Jezebel telling him to be of a merry heart in :7. The spirit is the heart, and this interprets what is the work of the Holy spirit.

1Ki 21:6 He said to her, Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it'. He answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard'-

LXX adds "the inheritance of my fathers". Such argument from the law of Moses (see on :3) was of no value to Jezebel, who was a Gentile idolater.

1Ki 21:7 Jezebel his wife said to him, Do you really now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let your heart be merry. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite-

She could have phrased this another way. But the way she puts it, she seeks to put herself above God and to play God. For the whole argument in :3 and :6 LXX was that God had given specific inheritances to His people, and they were not to be sold or traded. But she claims to be able to give Naboth the vineyard. Perhaps too her emphasis is upon the way she had a plan to "give" Naboth the vineyard for free, without him even needing to pay for it. We are left with the question as to what Ahab ought to have done or said at this stage. He surely knew his wife was going to hatch a plan which was wrong. But he says nothing, and is happy to go along with inheriting

the vineyard. Jezebel totally doesn't understand that being the king of Israel meant ruling only as representative of God, Israel's true king. She wrongly assumed that the leadership position meant power to have what you wanted.

Jezebel was a Gentile. She was used to the system of Tyre, where [as in Egypt] all land belonged to the king, in that case, her father. She failed to accept that under Yahweh, the land belonged not to the monarch but to Yahweh, and to those to whom He had given it. For it seems that Joshua split up the land between the heads of families, looking forward to how we shall each have our own unique inheritance in God's Kingdom. This likewise is hard for Gentiles to understand- that all land is God's, and He has given it to His people only as temporary possession in this life, and in that sense the concept of freehold ownership is null and void when God is in the equation.

1Ki 21:8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and to the nobles who were in his city, who lived with Naboth- Presumably at Jezreel, not Samaria. Ahab was deeply upset that he couldn't have the vineyard next to his holiday home in Jezreel; it wasn't even next to his palace in Samaria. That the "elders and nobles" went along with her evil plan shows their fear of her and their deep moral weakness.

1Ki 21:9 She wrote in the letters saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people-

The wicked hypocrisy was that a fast was proclaimed because of the realization of sin (1 Sam. 7:6; Joel 2:12). Naboth was apparently held in high repute, and was to be given a prominent seat at the ceremony for repentance. Some evidence was to be given that things weren't going well in the town, and there needed to be repentance. Naboth was given a place of high honour and prominence because Jezebel knew that when a person in high public visibility is convicted of sin, especially sin which has made others suffer, there is an immediate upsurge of public anger against them. And this would allow Naboth to be killed without undue public protest. Obadiah likewise was in a senior position in Jezebel's corrupt system and yet was faithful to Yahweh. Naboth likewise. They are set in contrast to Elijah who was more public about his faith and yet lacked any care for people. Naboth was perhaps known as a worshipper of Yahweh, and so possibly he, like Elijah, was blamed for the drought. It's quite possible this chapter describes an event during the drought, especially seeing God had fired Elijah from his ministry in 1 Kings 19.

1Ki 21:10 Set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them testify against him saying, 'You cursed God and the king!' Then carry him out, and stone him to death- To curse God's representative was seen as cursing God (1 Kings 21:10; Ex. 22:28). And so to curse "Yahweh's anointed" was seen as cursing Yahweh (2 Sam. 19:21) and worthy of death. The two witnesses were supposed to be enough to convict someone. In this case, the fact Naboth was known as a Yahweh worshipper and could prove it... was willingly ignored. It was to be a kangaroo court knowingly set up to prove a man guilty of death from the start. We note that Jezebel used scripture and Yahweh worship in order to destroy Naboth, perhaps a tacit reflection of how Yahweh's law was still partially respected; for she alludes to the law that two witnesses were required for capital punishment (Dt. 17:6; 19:15). It recalls the petty obedience to the law during the Lord's condemnation and crucifixion.

We could equally render "You cursed the gods [idols] and Moloch", as if Jezebel was accusing Naboth of unfaithfulness to the Baal cult.

1Ki 21:11 The men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, according as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them-

Their careful obedience to this woman rather than to God is an allusion to Dt. 16:18, where such elders were to "judge just judgment", and they did the very opposite.

1Ki 21:12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people-
To "proclaim a fast" is a phrase used specifically for calling a fast and special meeting for repentance. The idea was that someone had sinned and everyone in town was suffering because of it. It is the term used in Is. 58:5 for how God was intensely angry with the proclamation of such fasts for sinful agendas.

1Ki 21:13 The two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him. The base fellows testified against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people saying, Naboth cursed God and the king! Then they carried him out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones-

There was a semblance of obedience to the Mosaic law, as there was in the condemnation and execution of the Lord Jesus. There were two witnesses (Dt. 17:6; 19:15); and stoning was indeed the punishment for blasphemy (Lev. 24:16), and was conducted outside the city according to the spirit of Lev. 24:14, just as the Lord Jesus died "outside the camp". Naboth's sons were also killed, so that there could be no possibility of any argument in future about the inheritance (2 Kings 9:26). Elijah is never set up as a type of the Lord Jesus, whereas Naboth is- because as the Lord Himself observed, Elijah didn't have His spirit.

1Ki 21:14 Then they sent to Jezebel saying, Naboth has been stoned, and is dead-
Ahab immediately and eagerly took possession of the vineyard, riding to Jezreel along with Jehu and Bidkar (2 Kings 9:25). We should not therefore think that he was merely manipulated by Jezebel, he was willing and eager himself.

1Ki 21:15 It happened, 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 you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead-
The taking possession was apparently in the sense of permanently having the vineyard registered in his name. For he could have leased it from Naboth until the next Jubilee year. And possibly renewed the lease after that. But Ahab was so obsessive about what he wanted. He wanted the vineyard as his permanent possession. This was why Naboth had to be killed, along with his sons (2 Kings 9:26) so that they would not have any argument for inheriting it later. Ahab is reasoning in a very long term manner, forgetting his own mortality. He 'just loved the idea' not only of the vineyard, but of adding it to his inheritance. And so Naboth and his sons had to die, and the people and leaders of Jezreel led into major sin. And yet legally it is hard to see how he could have added it to his inheritance, unless he was some relative of Naboth. So all the drama was to obtain a piece of legal documentation that was always going to be questionable as to its validity. Therefore he did this evil "in vain" (:20 LXX, MT "sold yourself to do evil").

1Ki 21:16 It happened, 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-
Ahab "tore his clothes and put on sackcloth, in sorrow for what he had done" (1 Kings 21:16 LXX- omitted in the AV). See on :27. He repented and yet continued in his sin at the same time. This is psychologically credible. Men do this all the time. But in :27 it seems he did come to true repentance. See on 1 Kings 18:41 for another example of his genuine but momentary repentances.

1Ki 21:17 The word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite saying-
"The Tishbite" is perhaps added in accordance with the theme developed here. Naboth is repeatedly called the Jezreelite, and Ahab, we are reminded, was from Samaria (:18). Israel were to abide in the inheritances they had been given, and not do what Ahab had done, and covet those of others.

1Ki 21:18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwells in Samaria. Behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it-

The idea was that Ahab was from Samaria but had taken possession of property in Jezreel. "Go down" may mean Elijah was then in Carmel. Perhaps Elijah was being directed back to Gideon (Jud. 7:9), David (1 Sam. 23:4) and Moses, who were addressed by God with the same words (Dt. 9:12). He would have earlier seen Moses as Judaism does today, the unreachable acme of spirituality and closeness to God. But now he was being taught, as we are, that no Biblical character is a mere Sunday School figure; but rather our real practical inspiration. But as discussed on 1 Kings 19, Elijah was set up with the possibility of being like Moses, but ultimately failed to rise up to his humility.

1Ki 21:19 You shall speak to him saying, 'Thus says Yahweh, Have you killed and also taken possession?'

The sin of taking possession (see on :15 for what it involved) is seen as separate to the murder. We note that Ahab is held as culpable for the murder. Even if Jezebel was likewise responsible. The guilt for sins like this never rests with just one person. Neither Ahab nor ourselves can wriggle out of responsibility by complaining we were manipulated into it. Otherwise human behaviour becomes of no real value before God, and man is reduced to a mere puppet of others and situations with no real individual personality and election in how we live life.

You shall speak to him saying, 'Thus says Yahweh, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs will lick your blood, even yours'

According to 1 Kings 22:38 the dogs [LXX "the swine and the dogs"] licked Ahab's blood in the pool of Samaria, just outside the gate of Samaria; not in Jezreel. It could be argued that "the place" refers not to a geographical locality, but rather to the place where the garbage was thrown outside a city gate. The Lord uses 'Gehenna' to describe such a place as a figure for condemnation. Another option is that Naboth was executed and had his blood licked up in Samaria, at the court of Ahab there. The way 1 Kings 22:38 triumphs in the fulfilment of the prophecy suggests there was no perceived gap between the prediction and its fulfilment. But another possibility is that because of Ahab's repentance, the sentence was modified, just as that upon Adam was (for he didn't die in the day he sinned, although he did die). This reflects God's openness to human repentance in response to His stated judgments. In the gap between statement and fulfilment, there can be repentance and a change of outcomes.

This is what gives intensity to our living in that gap. LXX adds to 1 Kings 21:19 "and the harlots shall wash in thy blood". 1 Kings 22:38 LXX says that this was fulfilled. Perhaps the idea is that they washed themselves in a spring in the rubbish dump where Ahab's blood as it were was eternally present.

2 Kings 9:25,26 appears to see this prophecy as fulfilled in the death of Joram, Ahab's son: "Lift him out, and throw him on the plot of ground belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember, when you and I rode side by side behind his father Ahab how the Lord uttered this oracle against him: 'For the blood of Naboth and for the blood of his children that I saw yesterday, says the Lord, I swear I will repay you on this very plot of ground.' Now therefore lift him [i.e. Joram] out and throw him on the plot of ground, in accordance with the word of the Lord". So we see here how because of Ahab's repentance, the judgment was reinterpreted and reapplied, transferred as it were, to his son. This shows how open and flexible God is, and how extremely sensitive He is to human repentance. Even when, as in Ahab's case, that repentance is very nuanced and unstable. And we see many cases of where God clearly intended a ministry for someone but they let the ball drop, and it was transferred [with some amendments] to another person. Elijah and Elisha are a classic case.

1Ki 21:20 Ahab said to Elijah, Have you found me, my enemy? He answered, I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of Yahweh- What appeared to be mere manipulation of a weak minded man by his wicked, dominant wife was in fact judged as a selling of himself to do evil. Weak mindedness was indeed Ahab's problem, but it did not thereby make him less culpable for what he actually did. Selling oneself is the language of prostitution. The implication is that Ahab was in covenant relationship with Yahweh, but had prostituted himself to do evil. The reasons he did this aren't allowed to ameliorate that judgment- his spoilt upbringing, the dominance of his wicked wife over his naturally weak mind, all these factors were weighted in God's judgment of him, but didn't finally ameliorate what he had done. LXX adds that he sold himself "in vain". I explained on :15 that the whole obsession of "taking possession" of the vineyard probably didn't even work out for Ahab in legal terms as he so coveted.

1Ki 21:21 Behold, I will bring evil on you, and will utterly sweep you away and will cut off from Ahab every male, and him who is shut up and him who is left at large in Israel-

Elijah simply announces to Ahab: "Behold I will bring evil on you...". We expect this to be prefaced by a "Thus says the Lord"- but Elijah was so close to God he assumed he was speaking directly from Him. And yet Elijah doesn't repeat what God had told him to say in :19. Was he too familiar with God? Assuming he knew God's will and words? But it must be said that he improves- in 2 Kings 1:6 he says that what he says is the word of Yahweh, and he repeats verbatim what he was told to say. We too know God's word. We know the Bible text well. But this can lead to an assumption that we speak for God; that we must be right in all our attitudes and positions we adopt on issues. This is rather similar to how initially he says there will be no rain according to *his* word. He knew it was God's will that there be no rain if Israel sinned. But it raises the same issues- was he over familiar with God? Lacking humility? Or was his style reflective rather of a deep intimacy with God which came from familiarity with His word? Or, most likely, a bit of a mixture of these strands.

The destruction of Ahab's children, including those "shut up" as too young to go outdoors alone, and those "at large" and independent, matches how Ahab had

murdered the sons of Naboth in order to ensure the inheritance would be unquestionably his (2 Kings 9:26). All his obsession with getting "possession" of the vineyard (see on :15) were to be "in vain" (:20 LXX) because his descendants would all be destroyed.

1Ki 21:22 I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah for the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and have made Israel to sin-

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

The charge that Ahab made Israel to sin refers not just to his idolatry, but specifically in this context to what he did to Naboth. He had involved the elders and people of Jezreel in this sin, and set an example to others that they could despise God's principles about inheritance (see on :3). Sin is sin largely because of the effect it has upon others.

1Ki 21:23 Yahweh also spoke of Jezebel saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel-

The "rampart" of Jezreel where Jezebel was to be eaten (1 Kings 21:23) is s.w. "trench" in 2 Sam. 20:15. It would refer to the trench immediately below the city wall. Jezebel was in a house on the city wall when she was thrown out of it (2 Kings 9:36,37), and her body would have landed in the drainage ditch which was probably dry. Dogs wandered there looking for scraps of food thrown out of the windows of the houses on the city wall.

1Ki 21:24 The dogs will eat him who dies of Ahab in the city; and the birds of the sky will eat him who dies in the field-

This repeats the judgment upon Jeroboam in 1 Kings 14:11. Ahab was another example of how Jeroboam made subsequent generations to sin, and thereby to share his judgment. Ahab was intended to have learnt from the history of Jeroboam, and we who have far more Biblical history available to us than he did... are intended to do the same from the biographies which the Bible is full of. Our responsibility is thereby the greater.

1Ki 21:25 But there was none like Ahab, who sold himself to do that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh-

See on :20.

Whom Jezebel his wife stirred up-

The idea may be that there was no man who did so much evil at the stirring up of his wife. So many turn down the call of Christ because their partner is against it. We see here for all time the call to brave individuality, to totally personal response to God's principles. The word "stirred up" means to persuade or entice, suggesting Ahab was resistant, but allowed himself to be persuaded against his basic conscience. And his naturally weak minded personality was no excuse. Zedekiah likewise was persuaded against his basic conscience (Jer. 38:22 s.w.), and was still judged for allowing himself to be persuaded.

Chronicles says "Ahab persuaded Jehoshaphat to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead", just as Jezebel persuaded Ahab to do wickedness (1 Kings 21:25 Heb.). It is a story of sin leading to sin, and sinful attitudes and behaviour spreading through wrong and unwise associations.

1Ki 21:26 He did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom Yahweh cast out before the children of Israel-

The idea is that they followed the idols just as the Amorites did. And that may be a general term referring to the local Canaanite population. The idea is that a worship of their gods was revived by Ahab. He did exactly what people did who were driven out of the Kingdom for doing those things. He utterly refused to learn from Biblical history.

1Ki 21:27 It happened, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly-

"They that will be rich... have erred from the faith, and *pierced themselves through* with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9,10). The Greek translated "pierced themselves through" is related to the verb 'to crucify'. We are asked to crucify ourselves, to give up the brief materialism of this life. Yet if we refuse to do this, we still pierce ourselves through, we crucify ourselves, with the pain which comes from a mind dedicated to materialism and self-fulfilment, a life devoted to reaching the end of a rainbow. So what is the logical thing to do? It's crucifixion either way. The idea of piercing self through with sorrow is actually a direct quote from the LXX of 1 Kings 21:27, where Ahab was pierced with sorrow as a result of his coveting of Naboth's vineyard. And yet when Naboth was dead, Ahab tore his clothes and put on sackcloth, in sorrow for what he had done (1 Kings 21:16 LXX- omitted in the AV); but these very words are used in describing how when Ahab heard the words of his condemnation, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth (21:27). His sin brought him to tare his clothes, just as he did when his condemnation was pronounced. In his seeking for happiness he pierced himself through with the sorrow of condemnation.

I suggested on :19 that his repentance at least ameliorated the nature of the judgment upon him, and :29 says the same. If as suggested on :1, 1 Kings 21 should come before 1 Kings 20, then Ahab's subsequent failure to be obedient in 1 Kings 20 is the more tragic. His repentance here was genuine, so much so that God did take note of it, although He knew that the weak minded Ahab would again fail to retain that intensity.

1Ki 21:28 The word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite saying-

Surely Elijah was meant to tell Ahab this but there is no evidence Elijah spoke the words of mercy to Ahab of :29. If he did, we can imagine they would have gone right against the grain of his judgmental nature. He would have been the first to point out reasons to think Ahab's repentance wasn't complete or even genuine. But Elijah was being taught God's extreme sensitivity to human repentance, even if it is incomplete and the intensity of it may not be maintained. God is eager to respond to any slight movement towards Him, as we see in the prodigal son parable.

1Ki 21:29 See how Ahab humbles himself before Me? Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil on his family-

And God kept His word about this (2 Kings 9:25), although if 1 Kings 20 follows 1

Kings 21 (see on :1), then Ahab's repentance was not totally maintained. We see here how Divine prophecies can be modified; the essence of them comes true, but at different times and in amended ways to what was originally spoken. Elijah could have been the prophet like unto Moses, but that prophecy was reinterpreted and reapplied to the Lord Jesus at a later point. And so it is with the many restoration prophecies, which could have come true at the return from Babylon but were reapplied to the last days.

God knew all Elijah's weakness as He knows ours, and He perceives them far better than we do. And He actively worked with Elijah to bring him to a greater perception of Him. Elijah was told by God that Ahab "humbles himself *before Me*". And Elijah was asked to "see" this, to perceive it, to notice it and think about. Yet Elijah also lived a life "before the Lord" (1 Kings 17:1); it's as if God was trying to get Elijah to see himself in a similar position to Ahab. Living "before the Lord" is not only about faith in prayer and being aware of God. It's also about being contrite before our Father, aware of our own very personal spiritual desperation. And it was this humility which Elijah lacked. And the Father sought to teach him it by drawing a similarity between Elijah and the man whom he spiritually despised- Ahab. In many Christian lives, we are much more spiritual than others around us. Yet we may be led to perceive that actually we are in essence no better than those to whom we consider ourselves so spiritually superior. See on 1 Kings 19:11.

1 KINGS CHAPTER 22

1Ki 22:1 They continued three years without war between Syria and Israel-
I suggested on 1 Kings 20:1; 21:1 that 1 Kings 20 and 21 should be the other way around, as they are in the LXX. In this case, 1 Kings 22 continues straight on from 1 Kings 20. That concluded with Ahab making a treaty with Benhadad of Syria, allowing him to go free if he renamed streets in Damascus after Ahab's God, and restored the cities his father had captured from Israel. Had Ahab done what he was told to and slain Benhadad, the events in this chapter which led to his death may not have happened. And all the treaty achieved was three years without war. Ahab is represented as a weak minded fool in making that agreement, caught up in the pride and glory of the moment. And it ends up that the man and people Ahab lets go from Divine judgment is the one who slays him.

1Ki 22:2 It happened in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel-

One sin and weakness led to another. We learn from Chronicles that Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram had wrongly married Ahab's daughter, Athaliah; probably under some false mantra of 'unity amongst God's people'. The visit was likely in connection with this. Had Jehoshaphat not fraternized with wicked Ahab, the possibility of the doomed venture which follows wouldn't have arisen. And if Ahab had slain Benhadad as commanded, Ramoth Gilead would have been returned to Israel. And indeed if Benhadad kept his covenant, it should have been returned anyway (1 Kings 20:34).

1Ki 22:3 The king of Israel said to his servants, You know that Ramoth Gilead is ours, and we are sitting still, and don't take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?-

"Ours" suggests he was playing on the false mantra of "unity amongst God's people" noted on :2. Ahab clearly intended the city to remain under his control and not that of Judah. So much foolishness, unwisdom and sacrifice of basic Godly principle has

gone on under this mantra of "unity". In the context, we have just read of Ahab's desiring and taking of Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21. Ahab presents as simply not ever learning from anything. His conscience ought to have prodded him over that matter; but now he again embarks upon grabbing a piece of territory that he fancies. "We are sitting still and don't take it..." is the essence of what Jezebel says to Ahab about Naboth's vineyard. He was willing to kill the righteous Naboth through lies to get the vineyard, and now he is willing to slay Micaiah, again through getting a crowd to lie.

1Ki 22:4 He said to Jehoshaphat, Will you go with me to battle to Ramoth Gilead? Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses-

Chronicles says "Ahab persuaded Jehoshaphat to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead", just as Jezebel persuaded Ahab to do wickedness (1 Kings 21:25 Heb.). It is a story of sin leading to sin, and sinful attitudes and behaviour spreading through wrong and unwise associations. We note they both have "horses", which were forbidden for the kings of Israel under the law of Moses. Jehoshaphat likely reasoned that a weak Syria on the east bank of Jordan was good for Judah, but he was also caught up in the false mantra of "unity" which had led his son to marry Ahab's daughter.

1Ki 22:5 Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, Please inquire first for the word of Yahweh-

Ahab responded to the request for a word from Yahweh by summoning the group of 400 false prophets (:5). He had so mixed Yahweh worship with paganism that he considered their word to be that of Yahweh. And he gathered such a huge group in order to argue that the majority must surely be right. And the Bible consistently teaches that in these situations, the majority is usually wrong.

1Ki 22:6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?- Ahab had 400 false prophets earlier in his reign (1 Kings 18:19), who were slain on Carmel. So it seems that he didn't learn his lesson, and raised up another such group. This fits with the common theme of purges and repentances at the time of the kings needing to be repeated. For the purges were only surface level, despite all the evidence for them at the time. "Forbear" means 'to cease'. Ahab, like us at times, had already started the project without asking God's guidance, and his request for guidance in the project was compromised in integrity by the fact he had already begun it.

They said, Go up; for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king- This recalls the instant answer of Nathan when David enquired about building a temple for Yahweh. Too easily we assume we know the will of God, and speak and act as if we have His blessing on our endeavours already.

1Ki 22:7 But Jehoshaphat said, Isn't there here a prophet of Yahweh, that we may inquire of Him?-

Ahab had provided the 400 prophets of Baal in response to the request for a word from Yahweh. Jehoshaphat realized this; and ought to have immediately pulled out of working with someone who was presenting Baal worship as Yahweh worship. He means of course 'an old time, old school prophet of Yahweh who is not also a prophet of Baal and repudiates Baal'.

1Ki 22:8 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man-

The idea is, "one more man". He considered that the 400 prophets of Baal were also in touch with Yahweh (see on :5), and Micaiah was just one more who could do that, although he repudiated Baal worship. We wonder why Ahab would immediately think of Micaiah, rather than Elijah or Elisha, who were surely around at this time. We have read of Elijah rebuking Ahab in the preceding chapter. We again reflect that the Biblical narrative focuses upon just a few characters, and yet there were many others faithful to the Lord at their time. Of course it could be that Micaiah was the only known prophet of Yahweh in the immediate locality. But we again see how wrong and arrogant Elijah was to claim that he was the sole remaining faithful prophet of Yahweh (1 Kings 19:14). "There is yet one man" seems to allude to [and deconstruct] Elijah's claim that "I alone am left" faithful.

By whom we may inquire of Yahweh, Micaiah the son of Imlah-

Again we are introduced to a true prophet of Yahweh who existed at the time of Elijah. His claim to be the only prophet of Yahweh is continually demonstrated to be false. Presumably Elijah knew these other prophets, but considered that they had all gone wrong on this or that point of doctrine or practice. And perhaps they had, but God still counted them as His prophets, and used them as such. And it was Elijah who was removed from the prophetic ministry because of his arrogance in considering none of them genuine, and he alone being the true representative of Yahweh. Micaiah had previously spoken critical things to Ahab in Yahweh's Name, hence Ahab says that this prophet only says "evil" about him and he doesn't want to consult him. Elijah was quite wrong to discount all these brave prophets as somehow not genuine.

But I hate him; for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.

Jehoshaphat said, Don't let the king say so-

Again we sense the pouting, spoilt kid characteristics of Ahab. His characterization in the records is absolutely consistent and credible, as we would expect of a Divinely inspired history. We have here a parade example of how men come to God's word having already decided what they want to hear. Indeed there is a tendency to have "itching ears", heaping up teachers to confirm us in our own desires, lusts and hunches (2 Tim. 4:3; maybe a reference to Ahab heaping up 400 such teachers to tell him what he wanted to hear). This is why there are so many different interpretations of the Bible. Because readers / hearers like to hear only what confirms that which they already had a hunch about. To achieve a second naivety as we come to God's word, to be a born again virgin, is hard indeed. Jehoshaphat realized what Ahab was doing, and asked him not to talk like that- but to accept Yahweh's word. The fact Jehoshaphat himself still went into battle shows how he himself perceived the truth of all this, but didn't do accordingly. The "evil" prophesied was presumably of Ahab's condemnation, confirming Elijah's words.

1Ki 22:9 Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Quickly get Micaiah the son of Imlah-

"Who is like Yah?" was a direct challenge to the idea that Yahweh could be worshipped through Baal worship (see on :5). According to :26, Micaiah was imprisoned at this time. The 'quick' summoning from prison by an officer to speak God's word would have recalled to Micaiah the example of faithful Joseph.

1Ki 22:10 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, in an open place at the entrance of the gate of

Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them-

This was an impressive sight, and the area had clearly been especially prepared so that so many prophets could prophesy together. It was designed to sway Jehoshaphat according to the false maxim that the majority must be right, and how could so many be wrong. See on Ez. 10:5.

This mention of the kings sitting on their thrones in the place of judgment [the city gate, "the threshing floor" as some versions offer, the symbol of judgment] is not for random interest. It connects directly with the upcoming declaration of the vision of Yahweh enthroned in judgment in Heaven, with His "spirits" before Him, just as the kings had the prophets before them. The situation on earth was reflected in Heaven, as we often see in the Bible. Ahab and Micaiah were in awe of the court sitting on earth, the court of public opinion. Even religious opinion. But they were to be shown that they in fact stood before the Heavenly court, right at one and the same time.

1Ki 22:11 Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron and said, Thus says Yahweh, 'With these you shall push the Syrians, until they are consumed'- Zedekiah, like a typical apostate, is mixing the truth of God out of context with wrong ideas. He alludes to Moses' blessing of Joseph in Dt. 33:17 to the northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh: "Buffalo horns are his (Joseph's) horns, with them he thrusts down nations". But of course he overlooked the fact that the blessings of Moses were predicated upon obedience to the covenant. He probably made the horns and held them on his forehead. Micaiah's response is to also quote from the law of Moses, but about the judgment for disobedience to the covenant (:17).

1Ki 22:12 All the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth Gilead, and prosper; for Yahweh will deliver it into the hand of the king-

These 400 prophets of Baal [for they were the equivalent of the 400 executed on Mount Carmel] still used the name of Yahweh. Their position was that they conducted Yahweh worship through Baal worship. Perhaps their usage of the Hebrew word for "prosper" alluded to how the word is four times used of the prospering of Abraham's servant on his journey and mission (Gen. 24:21,40,42,56). And this is probably our most common temptation as believers; to mix the flesh and the spirit, to justify sin in the name of serving God. But Ahab had broken the covenant, and would not prosper (s.w. Dt. 28:29). Jehoshaphat later learnt this lesson, for he uses the word in saying that only those who hear Yahweh's prophets will "prosper" (2 Chron. 20:20).

The background is that a victory for a king was seen as a victory for his gods. The most powerful god won the victory; the king and his god[s] were closely associated. But the Biblical record inverts all this. The God of Israel caused the enemy to win and to kill Israel's king. So often the Biblical, Godly worldview is at total variance with that of surrounding society.

1Ki 22:13 The messenger who went to call Micaiah spoke to him saying, See now, the prophets declare good to the king with one mouth. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak good-

We sense the build up of pressure upon Micaiah. He was imprisoned for having spoken God's word against Ahab (see on :9,26), and would be under huge pressure from the presence of the 400 prophets and the audience watching (:28 "all you people"). And as the officer led him from prison towards the huge crowd of people gathered before the two kings, he too added his pressure. The request of the officer was perhaps because he actually liked Micaiah and could foresee the death sentence being given if he again "spoke evil" and not "good" to Ahab, and he didn't want to

have to carry that out. But he still totally fails to perceive that God's word cannot be changed or controlled by man.

1Ki 22:14 Micaiah said, As Yahweh lives, what Yahweh says to me, that I will speak- If Micaiah was at that time imprisoned for prophesying evil against Ahab (see on :9,26), bearing in mind Naboth had been slain for allegedly cursing the king, he would have been sorely tempted to now buy his freedom by saying what Ahab wanted to hear. And despite his determination not to do so, I suggest on :15 that he did temporarily fail. The pressure on him was intense. Micaiah uses the words and ideas of Balaam when pressured to not say Yahweh's word. He was clearly a spiritually minded man who was deeply aware of Biblical precedent for his situation, as we ought to be.

1Ki 22:15 When he had come to the king, the king said to him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? He answered him, Go up and prosper; and Yahweh will deliver it into the hand of the king- It could be argued that by repeating the very words of the false prophets, Micaiah was just repeating them sarcastically, with the tone of his voice indicating that. But I prefer to conclude that this faithful man, who had gone to prison for his witness of God's word to Ahab, now faltered under the pressure of the presence of the 400 false prophets. He acted like Nathan when David enquired about building a temple for Yahweh, who gave the answer that his enquirer wanted to hear. Such failure of a moment would be absolutely true to human experience and would be psychologically and spiritually credible. See on :14. For we all have a strong human tendency to perceive what others want us to say, and to say it.

1Ki 22:16 The king said to him, How many times do I have to adjure you that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of Yahweh?- See on :15. We are left to speculate which singular "king" it was who said this, Ahab or Jehoshaphat. The Biblical record is intentionally open ended at some points, to encourage us to think ourselves into the situation. The king sensed that Micaiah was cowed by the situation, and really wanted to know what Yahweh thought. So we sense "the king" in view was Jehoshaphat.

1Ki 22:17 He said, I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. Yahweh said, 'These have no master. Let them each return to his house in peace'-

As explained on :11, Zedekiah had quoted Moses' blessings of the tribes as justification for a successful battle- which were conditional upon obedience to the covenant. Zedekiah like many today, glories in the promises of the Spirit whilst ignoring the conditions. Micaiah responds by quoting the curses for disobedience to the covenant (Num. 27:16,17). The removal of the master / shepherd implies that the shepherd or king of Israel is to be slain, and the sheep would return to their homes once the shepherd was slain. And that is just what happened when it was recognized that Ahab had been slain.

"These have no master" or "masters" plural could mean that the focus of the battle was to be upon the masters, the kings, rather than the ordinary soldiers. Jehoshaphat fails to grasp this. This is a prophecy of the death of the shepherds. It seems the Syrians were aware of this prophecy, and therefore aimed to kill only the

king of Israel. Otherwise we wonder why their soldiers were told to only kill the king of Israel.

1Ki 22:18 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Didn't I tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?-

Ahab intuitively sensed what Yahweh's true word was even before Micaiah pronounced it. His insistence on going ahead was therefore the more culpable. And God's word is often intuitively recognized as "truth" even by those who reject it, which is why they tend towards anger and other psychological reactions appropriate to denial.

1Ki 22:19 Micaiah said, Therefore hear the word of Yahweh-

There does not follow a "Thus says the Lord", but rather a description of the vision Micaiah had seen, a peek into the heavenly throne room, the court of heaven. Discerning the vision was perhaps the essential "word of Yahweh" which the kings were to "hear".

I saw Yahweh sitting on His throne, and all the army of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left-

Note "Standing by Him" rather than "before" Him. The Angels in the Divine council are not merely servants, awaiting words of command, but the advisors / decision makers who work with the King towards policy and operations in practice. "The army [host] of heaven" is a term used for the planets etc. (Dt. 4:19; 17:3). Possibly the connection is because these are the Angels who control all the universe. The context here is of the need to remove Ahab from being king. Such councils are described in the contemporary literature, and it has been observed "A significant function of the divine council is the removal of kingship in the Mesopotamian and Ugaritic sources". The parallel is to show that in fact human kings and their councils are not at all omnipotent; there is a higher King and Council.

The visions of 1 Kings 22:19-23, Isaiah 6 and Rev. 4 show God seated on a throne with Angels before Him, bringing information and requests to Him and departing with commands to obey; the idea of a council in Heaven is clearly hinted at in Job 1; Gen. 1:26; Ps. 89:7. God sitting on a throne implies that each request or piece of information presented is 'judged' and an appropriate decision made. The 'case' of the adversaries to God is presented by a 'satan' Angel in Job.

1 Kings 22:19-23 gives perhaps the most detailed picture of the Heavenly council. God told them His desire- for Ahab to die at Ramoth-Gilead. He then asked which Angel wanted to effect this- "Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one (Angel) said on this manner, and another said on that manner". We thus learn that like us, on hearing God's desire the *elohim* all have different ways of trying to fulfil it. One "Spirit" (Angel) suggested that He would put a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, and this was the suggestion chosen and enabled by God. This shows that the Angels do not all automatically know the best way of bringing about God's purpose, and therefore they need to seek His advice and perhaps discuss things amongst themselves first before acting. Note that "*all* the host of Heaven" were there around the throne of God participating in this decision. And so all the Angels are involved in the decisions God and the Angels make about us. Lk. 15:6 implies the same.

The division of the Angels into groups on His right and left is interesting. Why would it be mentioned, if it were insignificant? All the Angels are of God's nature and

obedient to Him, there are no sinful Angels. But there are Angels of evil, Angels specifically tasked with bringing evil (see on Ps. 78:49). We think of the Angel called "the destroyer" at Passover time, who was restrained by the Passover Angel from destroying the Israelite firstborn. And so one wonders whether "the destroyer" was one of those on the left hand side, and the Passover Angel one of those on the right hand.

We have here one of several insights into the Divine council, presided over by Yahweh (consider Is. 6:1-3; 40:1-8; Ps. 82; Ps. 89:5-8; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Jer. 23:16-22; Zech. 3:1-10). But there is discussion amongst the Angels- some have ideas which aren't "used". We have here a profound insight into what it is like to have Divine nature, into how we shall eternally be.

1Ki 22:20 Yahweh said, 'Who shall entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?' One said one thing; and another said another-

"Entice" is the word elsewhere translated 'deceive'. Clearly God does deceive; for He confirms men in the mental path in which they themselves wish to go. Ez. 14:9 uses the word very clearly in this connection (see commentary there); and the teaching is confirmed in 2 Thess. 2:11. The Hebrew for "entice" or "deceive / lure" is in fact from the root 'to be foolish' (s.w. 2 Sam. 3:25; Hos. 7:11 "a silly bird"). As discussed on :10, to go to this battle, to bow to the court of public opinion, was in fact the foolish thing to do.

In Revelation we see the incense of human prayers arising into Heaven, resulting in Angels coming to earth, pouring out bowls, blowing trumpets, and major events happening on earth (Rev. 5:8; 8:3). Prayer is noticed; it brings forth quite out of proportion responses. The Angels discuss their plans for us in the court of Heaven, coming up with various possibilities of how to act in our lives, discussing them with God (1 Kings 22:20-22). They play some part in the whole process of our prayers. When we read that "Surely the Lord does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets" (Am. 3:7), we might tend to take that as a statement of absolute principle that is obvious to all the Angels. But we find an Angel discussing with others: "Shall I hide from Abraham [who was a prophet] what I am about to do?" (Gen. 18:17). The Angels have more debate, expend more mental and physical energy than we surely realize, in order to operationalize things which we might consider to be standard and automatic in God's work with men. In our context, what this means is that when men reject the machinations and schemings of God's love, they reject an awful lot; and it grieves and disappoints Him, and appears tragic to those like the prophets who see things from His viewpoint.

1Ki 22:21 A spirit-

God makes His Angels "spirits" (Ps. 104:4), and Angels are in view here. But the word 'spirit' has a wide range of meaning. It can refer to power, but also to the thought which is then expressed through the power of action. The Angel is here called a "spirit" because the idea was to place a thought in the mind or spirit of the false prophets, and thereby Ahab.

Came out-

This is the same word as in :22 "I will go out". The Angel was as it were demonstrating how he intended acting.

And stood before Yahweh-

It was the true prophets who stood before Yahweh (1 Kings 17:1). The connection is to show that the true prophets were represented by the Angels in the court of heaven,

and this Angel was as it were on their side. But the Spirit / Angel whose idea was chosen was in control of the false prophets and was going to judge them for persecuting Micaiah the true prophet. In Jer. 23:18,22 we have another connection between prophets and the Divine council: "For who has stood in the council of Yahweh, that he should perceive and hear His word? Who has noted My word, and heard it? ... I sent not these prophets, yet they ran: I didn't speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My council, then had they caused My people to hear My words".

And said, 'I will entice him' -

Ahab had been persuaded or enticed to do evil by Jezebel, and had enticed or persuaded Jehoshaphat to go to battle. But this was because he had himself been persuaded or enticed by God. He was being treated according to how he had treated others- enticing to do evil.

1Ki 22:22 Yahweh said to him, 'How?' He said, 'I will go out and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets'. He said, 'You will entice him, and will also prevail-

God deceived prophets to speak things in His Name which were actually false (1 Kings 22:20-22; Ez. 14:9 "If the prophet is deceived when he speaks a word, I, Yahweh, have deceived that prophet"). He sends strong delusion, so that those who don't love the truth will believe a lie. He chose Israel's delusions by making their idols answer them (Is. 66:3,4). Jeremiah feared God had deceived *him* (Jer. 20:7)- showing he knew such a thing was possible. Dt. 13:1-3 warns Israel not to believe prophets whose prophecies came true although they taught false doctrines, because they may have been raised up to test their obedience. God deceived Israel by telling them about the peace which would come on Jerusalem in the future Kingdom; they didn't consider the other prophecies *which were given at the same time* concerning their imminent judgment, and therefore they thought that God was pleased with them and was about to establish the Messianic Kingdom; when actually the very opposite was about to happen (Jer. 4:10). This is why the Bible is confusing to those who aren't humble to God's word.

Go out and do so' -

This describes the Angels being sent out from the court of Heaven to do God's word. So when we read of God sending lions (2 Kings 17:25,26), sending wild beasts and famine (Lev. 26:22; Ez. 5:17; Dt. 32:24), sending locusts (Joel 2:25), it would seem that Angels are sent forth from God's throne in order to command animals to obey God's word. And moreover, He sends an evil spirit between men (Jud. 9:23 "God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech") and stubborn hearts are also sent from God (Ps. 81:13). The same Angels who are sent to control the animals can also therefore work to give men certain attitudes of mind.

1Ki 22:23 Now therefore, behold, Yahweh has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and Yahweh has spoken evil concerning you-

This was exactly what Micaiah had said before about Ahab, and Ahab intuitively knew that this was coming. Ahab had lied in order to take Naboth's vineyard, and he is being punished appropriately- by his prophets lying to him, and leading him to his death. We naturally enquire what the point was of telling Ahab that he had been deceived because God had planned that he die in the upcoming battle. "Evil" or "disaster had been decreed, and the execution of it arranged by the Angels. But even at this late stage, outcomes could be changed. For the purpose of sharing the vision

was surely was that even at this late stage, Ahab could have repented- and so the earlier prophecy that he would "die in peace" would have come true- and likewise 1 Kings 21:25-29: "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days". We see how open God is to change, and how desperate He is for human repentance. We also note that Micaiah initially spoke as the false prophets did. By sharing this vision, he is confessing his own weakness- that he had been open to the "lying spirit" and had accepted it and spoken according to it. That "spirit" was his own mind or spirit wanting to say what was acceptable and popular. His spirit was confirmed by a Divine spirit. Just as Saul's was. But then he had the humility to realize what had happened, and to speak the truth and thus refuse the lying spirit confirming his own wrong spirit.

1Ki 22:24 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way did the Spirit of Yahweh go from me to speak to you?- "Cheek" can be "ear". The idea was that Zedekiah implied Micaiah was saying that the spirit had left him and entered Micaiah through his ear. And so he smote that ear. To strike on the cheek was the punishment for a heretic, and was applied to the Lord Jesus (Mic. 5:1).

1Ki 22:25 Micaiah said, Behold, you will see on that day when you go into an inner room to hide yourself-

The idea of going into an inner room is to pray- the idea may be that when Zedekiah would in future be hiding from catastrophe, brought down small and desperately praying to God, he would find God silent. And that is the greatest condemnation. We think of king Saul. When Ahab was defeated and slain, everyone in Samaria would be looking for the false prophets to kill them. Not least Jezebel. For the defeat would have been blamed upon them. So Zedekiah would have hid from shame and fear of being killed. There is a connection between Benhadad going into an inner room to hide when Ahab was given victory against him (1 Kings 20:30), and the false prophet Zedekiah going into an inner room to hide when Ahab was defeated (1 Kings 22:25). The same Hebrew words are used, and the connection becomes more apparent if we accept that 1 Kings 20 and 21 should be placed the other way around, as in LXX. This would mean that the hiding of Benhadad is recorded just a short time before that of Zedekiah. The connection would be to show that the false prophets were in fact bracketed together by God with Israel's enemies; whereas they had claimed that they were nationalists on Israel's side, proclaiming Israel's certain victory against their enemies. God sees not as man sees, and the real spiritual realities are often the very opposite of what appears.

1Ki 22:26 The king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son-

These men were those who ran the prison, for "carry him *back*" means Micaiah was already in prison. See on :9. Again we see how wrong Elijah had been to claim that no prophet of Yahweh existed apart from himself. Micaiah had gone to prison for speaking God's word to Ahab. But Elijah presumably considered there was some curious point of theology or matter of legal practice which enabled Elijah to rubbish Micaiah as not sincere and not a true prophet. It reminds us of how truly committed Christians who have gone to jail or even death for their witness... are trashed by others as somehow not the real Christians. And only they the critics are in fellowship with

God. They really need to learn the lesson of Elijah. For he was ejected from his ministry because of those attitudes.

1Ki 22:27 Say, 'Thus says 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'-

I suggest on :9,26 that he was already in prison for his faithful witness against Ahab. So the idea here seems to be that he was to be put in the inner prison and given a very tough regime.

1Ki 22:28 Micaiah said, If you return at all in peace, Yahweh has not spoken by me. He said, Listen, all you people!-

If I were Micaiah, I think I would have just shrugged and remained silent, fearing the harsh regime of punishment in :27 could easily be changed into the death sentence. For Naboth had been slain for 'cursing the king'. But Micaiah bravely invites the large audience to listen and take note, because he seeks their conversion.

1Ki 22:29 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead-

The record is intentionally silent about the utter folly of Jehoshaphat in going ahead with this. He was keenly interested to 'know the truth' from God's word, and didn't want to hear false teaching. But when the truth was presented, he didn't follow it. We can take a huge lesson from this. He allowed the intense pressure of the crowd of prophets, and his family relationship with Ahab as the in-law of his son, to lead him to walk right against the 'truth' he had sought. And there are many who seem to rejoice more in 'searching for the truth' than in actually following it when they are find it or have it presented to them.

1Ki 22:30 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and go into the battle; but you put on your robes. The king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle-

LXX even suggests that Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to wear Ahab's robes. The next verse describes why this was; Ahab was aware of the king of Syria's desire to resolve the issue by capturing or killing Ahab. The incident is a parade example of 'bad friends'. We marvel at Jehoshaphat's stupidity in agreeing. For surely he must have foreseen what could happen. This was the pressure he felt from Ahab and Jezebel, the in-laws of his son. And so often family pressure leads otherwise solid believers into uncharacteristic actions, seriously unwise behaviour and positions which are utterly the opposite of all they stand for. Because quite simply, they do not really commit to following God's word, even if they stand with their backs to the world.

The fact Ahab disguised himself reflects how he secretly believed the words of prophecy in :17 that he would die in the battle. For all man's bravado, there is a conscience within every man that discerns that God's word is true.

1Ki 22:31 Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots saying, Fight neither with small nor great, except only with the king of Israel-

Only three years previously (see on :1), the king of Syria had been foolishly spared by Ahab. Perhaps he couldn't live down that humiliation, and wanted to kill the man who had shown him so much mercy. That again is absolutely true to observed human experience, and the record time and again is absolutely psychologically credible.

We note the similarities with 1 Kings 20:1, where Ahab was again attacked by 32 captains under Benhadad's control. Likewise we read of victory as being 'given into the hand' in both 1 Kings 20:6,13 and also in 1 Kings 22:6,15. Clearly Ahab had utterly failed to learn from his own history. And therefore God was angry with him and slew him. Our world is likewise full of folk who refuse to learn from their own history, who refuse to accept Divine jogs and nudges, who fail to see history repeating itself in their lives or between their lives and Biblical history. And this refusal to join the dots is not mere intellectual failure; in Ahab's case, it was seen as worthy of severe judgment. It is a form of resisting the Holy Spirit. Not only did Ahab fail to learn; Ahaziah later likewise repeated the same mistake of joining the king of Israel to fight the Syrians at Ramoth Gilead: "[Ahaziah] went with Joram the son of Ahab to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth Gilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram" (2 Kings 8:28,29). Perhaps this is why Ahab is repeatedly referred to as "the king of Israel" in 1 Kings 22, because the history is being recorded as a general warning to any who would seek fellowship with any idolatrous "king of Israel". 2 Kings 3-13 describe many conflicts with Syria- and always the lesson taught by the history of 1 Kings 22 was ignored.

1Ki 22:32 It happened, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely that is the king of Israel! And they turned aside to fight against him.

Jehoshaphat cried out-

The Hebrew implies that they surrounded him. He was clearly "lucky" to escape with his life. It was only by Divine grace that he did. His 'crying out' was surely to God to save him from his foolishness.

1Ki 22:33 It happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him-

This was in response to his crying out to God for salvation in :32. Chronicles adds: "and the Lord helped him and turned them off from him". And yet he was strongly rebuked by God in 2 Chron. 19:2. His actions provoked "the wrath of Yahweh", but God saved a man by grace whilst at the same time having great wrath against him. This is so different to human wrath and attempts to show grace, which seem usually to be displayed without any other pole of feeling in mind. But God had both in perfect balance at the same time. This is the wonder of His Name, which includes all these poles of feeling toward men within His personality.

1Ki 22:34 A certain man drew his bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of the armour. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, Turn your hand, and carry me out of the battle; for I am severely wounded-

The gaps in armour around vital organs would have been relatively small. This is evidence for all time that there is no such thing as "random". This was so clearly of God.

1Ki 22:35 The battle increased that day. The king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out of the wound into the bottom of the chariot-

The weak minded Ahab genuinely wanted to do the best for his troops, and therefore remained in his chariot, propped up. Presumably Israelite soldiers knew where and who he was. It was this policy of not being removed from his chariot which resulted

in the blood accumulating within it, which was required for the fulfilment of the prophecies about his blood.

1Ki 22:36 A cry went throughout the army about the going down of the sun saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his country!-

This was the exact fulfilment of Micaiah's prophecy that the shepherd of Israel would be slain, and the sheep would return to their homes (:17).

1Ki 22:37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria-

The double emphasis upon the death and burial of "the king" is perhaps to signpost attention to the fact that the prophecy of Micaiah about the death of the shepherd / master of the flock had been fulfilled (:17).

1Ki 22:38 They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood where the prostitutes washed themselves; according to the word of Yahweh which He spoke-

The idea may be that the women were washing in the pool whilst the blood of Ahab was washed off into it. According to 1 Kings 21:19 "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs will lick your blood, even yours" (Ahab's). But in 1 Kings 22:38 the dogs [LXX "the swine and the dogs"] licked Ahab's blood in the pool of Samaria, just outside the gate of Samaria; not in Jezreel. It could be argued that "the place" refers not to a geographical locality, but rather to the place where the garbage was thrown outside a city gate. The Lord uses 'Gehenna' to describe such a place as a figure for condemnation. The way 1 Kings 22:38 triumphs in the fulfilment of the prophecy suggests there was no perceived gap between the prediction and its fulfilment. But another possibility is that because of Ahab's repentance, the sentence was modified, just as that upon Adam was (for he didn't die in the day he sinned, although he did die). This reflects God's openness to human repentance in response to His stated judgments. In the gap between statement and fulfilment, there can be repentance and a change of outcomes. This is what gives intensity to our living in that gap. LXX adds to 1 Kings 21:19 "and the harlots shall wash in thy blood". 1 Kings 22:38 LXX says that this was fulfilled. Perhaps the idea is that they washed themselves in a spring in the rubbish dump where Ahab's blood as it were was eternally present.

1Ki 22:39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he built, and all the cities that he built, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?-

This may not refer necessarily to the same books of Chronicles we have in our Bibles. Houses adorned with ivory were condemned by God in Am. 3:15. All of the Bible seems to cry out against high luxury living, in a world of such great spiritual and material need.

1Ki 22:40 So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his place- Ahab's naming his sons with the 'Yah' suffix in their names (he had another son called Jehoram, 2 Kings 3:1) would be a nod toward Yahweh worship. And yet he is famed as a Baal worshipper. This helps us better understand the nature of the Baal worship then practiced; it was a mixture of Yahweh worship with Baal worship, claiming to worship Yahweh through Baal worship. This is why when Ahab is asked to produce a

prophet of Yahweh, he calls up the 400 prophets of Baal who had replaced those slain by Elijah on Carmel. And this is typical of so much of our failure; justifying sin in the name of worshipping God.

1Ki 22:41 Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel-

Jehoshaphat means 'whom Jehovah judges'. And this is largely the point of his life, which Chronicles records in more detail. He made major mistakes in his relationships with Israel, incited the wrath of God against him (2 Chron. 19:2), died without removing the high places, and yet overall was judged as having a faithful *heart* before God (:43; 2 Chron. 19:3). And so we have a parade example of how indeed 'Jehovah judges', factoring in the various dimensions of a man's life in a way in which we cannot. The lesson is indeed that we cannot judge, nor should we be tempted to judge a person according to the high and low points on their spiritual graph, nor upon the fact they may die with unconquered weaknesses.

1Ki 22:42 Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi-

Again the mother is maybe mentioned because of her great influence upon the spiritual path of her children. However, there is also the theme that believers arise from unbelieving backgrounds. "Azubah" means "forsaken". It is the same word used in 2 Chron. 15:2, where Jehoshaphat's father Asa was told of God "If you forsake Him, He will forsake you". It could be that Asa forsook Azubah and she was effectively a divorced woman; or perhaps the wife was renamed this because Asa felt she had forsaken Yahweh, which is how the word "forsaken" ('Azubah') is usually used.

1Ki 22:43 He walked in all the way of Asa his father; he didn't turn aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh: however the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places-

Again we marvel at God's positive overall opinion of Jehoshaphat. For he rejected Yahweh's word in going to fight at Ramoth Gilead, and was condemned by God for working together with those who hated Him, and "therefore is wrath upon you from Yahweh" (2 Chron. 19:2). A man may fail repeatedly, as Jehoshaphat did in his relations with Ahab and allowing his son to marry Jezebel's daughter, and even experience God's wrath. And yet finally be judged as having done what was right in God's eyes. That doing of right may refer therefore not to a spotless track record of behaviour, but rather to a basic faith in God, repentance and what the New Testament calls "abiding in Him". It is not the dramatic ups and downs on the graph of human spirituality over time which are significant to God. It is the overall state of the heart. And we can take courage from this in our own lives, and be guided therefore not to think too highly of those who at specific points show great commitment, nor to think too lowly of those who fail in specific points of their journey. We also learn that some men die with weaknesses, such as not taking away the high places. But this does not necessarily tip the balance towards their condemnation. This needs to be factored in to our thinking about the spiritual fate of those who die committing suicide.

1Ki 22:44 Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel-

Or, "kings". Ahab, Ahaziah, and Joram were all contemporary with Jehoshaphat, and

he seems to be commended for this. And yet the Chronicles record clearly shows that he was too close to them. His son married a daughter of Ahab (2 Chron. 18:1), and his insistence on supporting Ahab was seen as loving those who hated Yahweh, and the wrath of God was upon him because of it (2 Chron. 19:2). And yet he is commended for having peace with the kings of Israel (1 Kings 22:44), even though that desire for peace with them led him into major sin. But he was judged as having a heart right with God (2 Chron. 19:3). We sense God weighting Jehoshaphat's sins with his relations with Israel against his genuine desire for peace within God's people. And overall, as he was judged on the state of his heart, his desire for unity and peace was judged as his dominant desire. We simply cannot factor in or weight all the dimensions in a man's heart. Only God can. And the reason we are not to judge is because in fact we cannot judge, in that we don't have access to human hearts.

1Ki 22:45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed, and how he warred, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?-

This is the common rubric found in the histories of the kings (1 Kings 15:23; 16:5,27; 22:45; 2 Kings 10:34; 13:8,12; 14:15,28; 20:20). "His might that he showed" uses a word for "might" which has the sense of victory / achievement. But the contrast is marked with the way that David so often uses this word for "might / victory / achievement" in the context of *God's* "might"; notably in 1 Chron. 29:11, which the Lord Jesus places in our mouths as part of His model prayer: "Yours is the power [s.w. "might"], and the glory and the majesty". The kings about whom the phrase is used were those who trusted in their own works. It therefore reads as a rather pathetic memorial; that this man's might / achievement was noted down. But the unspoken further comment is elicited in our own minds, if we are in tune with the spirit of David: "But the only real achievement is the Lord's and not man's". All human victory and achievement must be seen in this context. The same word is used in Jer. 9:23,24: "Don't let the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might [s.w.]... but let him who glories glory in this, that he has understanding, and knows Me, that I am Yahweh who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth". The glorification of human "might" is often condemned. "Their might [s.w.] is not right" (Jer. 23:10; also s.w. Jer. 51:30; Ez. 32:29; Mic. 7:16 and often).

1Ki 22:46 The remainder of the sodomites, from the days of his father Asa, he put away out of the land-

Here we again encounter the theme of partial purges and partial living according to God's standards; and also the reality of the fact that no soon was one apostacy stamped out by a king that it rose up again. It was this lack of abiding spiritual change which led the nation to a downward spiral which climaxed in their rejection by God as having sinned worse than Israel (Ez. 16,23).

1Ki 22:47 There was no king in Edom: a deputy was king-

This explains why Solomon could have access to Ezion Geber (:48) which was in Edom (1 Kings 9:26). The "deputy" was surely one imposed by Jehoshaphat (s.w. 1 Kings 4:7). Perhaps this effective subjugation of Edom (2 Kings 8:20,22) by Jehoshaphat is part of the overall scene of his power over the surrounding nations which we find in 2 Chron. 17:10,11. Hadad of Edom had been an adversary to Solomon, who also traded through Ezion Geber (1 Kings 11:14); but not to

Jehoshaphat.

1Ki 22:48 Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they didn't go; for the ships were broken at Ezion Geber-

2 Chron. 20:36,37 says that this was a joint venture with Ahab's son Ahaziah. He was so slow to learn the lesson that he should not work together with the apostate ten tribe kingdom. He had almost lost his life because of this whilst fighting at Ramoth Gilead. And like us, the situations were repeated, but he was so slow to learn.

"Ships of Tarshish" is clearly a technical term for a long distance trading vessel. "Tarshish" appears to have been the source of gold, peacocks, silver etc., which are only found together in southern India. But a ship of Tarshish wasn't necessarily a ship which went to Tarshish. "Tarshish" means 'endurance' and refers to vessels which had a capacity for long distance trading. At that time, India was the end of the earth for someone living in Israel. There is an analogous situation with how 19th century long distance trading vessels were known as "Indiamen", not because they necessarily sailed the routes to India, but because they were long distance vessels of the kind which had sailed to India. This is why 'going to Tarshish' in 2 Chron. 20:36,37 is paralleled with 'going to Ophir in ships of Tarshish' in 1 Kings 22:48.

"Ophir" may have been a generic name for areas to the east, including southern Arabia (famed for gold in Ps. 72:15; Ez. 27:22) and India; Ophir was in Arabia according to Gen. 10:29. Sheba was nearby and was famed for gold, so it was through this trading that the Queen of Sheba heard of the wisdom of Solomon. 1 Kings 10:1 goes on to speak of her after mentioning gold of Ophir in 1 Kings 9:28, connecting her with this gold trade with Ophir. But 1 Kings 10:11 connects Ophir with "almug trees and precious stones". "Almug" appears to refer to sandalwood, "the Hebraized form of the Deccan word for sandal". This points to "Ophir" as being in the east, possibly as far as the Indian coast where these trees grow.

1Ki 22:49 Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with your servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not-

Jehoshaphat learned his lesson of not associating with the ten tribes because of their apostasy. But he was so very slow in learning it. We would have thought that his experience in the battle at Ramoth Gilead would have taught him. But it didn't. His ships had to be broken by the wind / storm of God's wrath (:48). And then when Ahaziah proposes another join venture, Jehoshaphat apparently learns the lesson. I say apparently, because after Ahaziah dies, Jehoshaphat again repeats the same mistake with Ahab's other son Jehoram (2 Kings 3:7). And yet he was finally counted righteous with God because his basic state of heart was for Him. We marvel again at God's patience with men. This means that we are to continue seeking the repentance of men and never cut them off, as is typically done by small minded churches 'disfellowshipping' people.

1Ki 22:50 Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; Jehoram his son reigned in his place-

"Jehoram", 'Raised by Yah', would reflect spirituality in Jehoshaphat. We note that so many of the kings of Israel didn't have the covenant Name within their names, whereas the kings of Judah did.

1Ki 22:51 Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel-

The fact Ahab gave his son a name with the 'Yah' suffix ['Yah has seized'] indicates that Ahab did have some desire to show commitment to Yahweh despite Jezebel; for Jezebel surely would have been against this name. But he failed to raise the boy to be a follower of Yahweh, and in the end, Jezebel's influence was stronger upon him. We again see in Ahab a man who knew better than to live how he did, and who showed moments and aspects of commitment to the true God, but lived a life of overall failure until his final repentance.

1Ki 22:52 He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, in which he made Israel to sin-

The language here and in :53 appears to give no credit to Ahab for his repentance which had so pleased Yahweh. Perhaps that was of no abiding value, seeing that immediately before his death he specifically rejected the word of Yahweh for that of the false prophets, which led him to his death.

1Ki 22:53 He served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked to anger Yahweh, the God of Israel, according to all that his father had done-

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.