



KINGDOM POLITICS

Part Three

Forty Daily Devotions
from the Book of 1 Kings
(Based on the NKJV)

Introduction

Like the books of Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings were originally one large book known as “Kings” in the Hebrew Scriptures. The author, or compiler, of this book is never named and there is no conclusive evidence as to who should be credited with this work. It is apparent that the author, or authors, of this book was/were very familiar with the Laws of God, and particularly the Book of Deuteronomy. Three other books are mentioned in the Book of 1 Kings, namely “the book of the acts of Solomon” (11:41), “the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel” (14:19), and “the book of the annals of the kings of Judah” (14:29). It is believed that these books were like our Public Records files today. If so, these records certainly contained some very detailed, personal information about the people who are described in 1 and 2 Kings! You will meet some of God’s finest people as you read these pages. However, you will also read about some people who sinned greatly against God and who caused great harm to come to God’s people. May your time spent in this book of the Bible equip you to be like the former and not the latter!

Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	1 Kings 1:1-14	6/22/23
2	1 Kings 1:15-31	6/23/23
3	1 Kings 1:32-53	6/24/23
4	1 Kings 2:1-25	6/25/23
5	1 Kings 2:26-46	6/26/23
6	1 Kings 3:1-28	6/27/23
7	1 Kings 4:1-19	6/28/23
8	1 Kings 4:20-34	6/29/23
9	1 Kings 5:1-18	6/30/23
10	1 Kings 6:1-17	7/01/23
11	1 Kings 6:18-38	7/02/23
12	1 Kings 7:1-22	7/03/23
13	1 Kings 7:23-51	7/04/23
14	1 Kings 8:1-21	7/05/23
15	1 Kings 8:22-43	7/06/23
16	1 Kings 8:44-66	7/07/23
17	1 Kings 9:1-28	7/08/23
18	1 Kings 10:1-29	7/09/23
19	1 Kings 11:1-25	7/10/23
20	1 Kings 11:26-43	7/11/23

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	1 Kings 12:1-16	7/12/23
22	1 Kings 12:17-33	7/13/23
23	1 Kings 13:1-17	7/14/23
24	1 Kings 13:18-34	7/15/23
25	1 Kings 14:1-16	7/16/23
26	1 Kings 14:17-31	7/17/23
27	1 Kings 15:1-17	7/18/23
28	1 Kings 15:18-34	7/19/23
29	1 Kings 16:1-14	7/20/23
30	1 Kings 16:15-34	7/21/23
31	1 Kings 17:1-24	7/22/23
32	1 Kings 18:1-19	7/23/23
33	1 Kings 18:20-46	7/24/23
34	1 Kings 19:1-21	7/25/23
35	1 Kings 20:1-22	7/26/23
36	1 Kings 20:23-43	7/27/23
37	1 Kings 21:1-29	7/28/23
38	1 Kings 22:1-16	7/29/23
39	1 Kings 22:17-30	7/30/23
40	1 Kings 22:31-53	7/31/23

• Day 1: 1 Kings 1:1-14

*“Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm.”
(1 Kings 1:1)*

The opening words of 1 Kings find David in the closing days of his illustrious life. He is only 70 years old, but he is far beyond the ability to function normally. His system was so close to shutting down that he could not even stay warm. When “they sought for a lovely young woman” (1:3) to lie close to the king and share her body warmth with him, the purpose was purely medicinal and was far from immoral. Just after Jesus died on the cross, arose, and was resurrected, a man named Josephus was born. He became a historian and writer. One of his historical accounts was called *The Antiquities of the Jews*. In that account he wrote about this day in the life of David and referred to the actions of those at David’s deathbed as a medical treatment. Josephus even referred to the “servants” mentioned in 1:2 as “physicians.” However pure and noble these actions might have been, one cannot help but see that they specifically “sought for a lovely young woman” to fulfill this purpose. (I would have to say that they knew David well!) When Nathan was sent by God to confront David about his sin concerning Bathsheba and his husband, Uriah, he was told to tell David that God said, “Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house” (2 Samuel 12:11). We read about many of those “adversities” as we read through the last half of the Book of 2 Samuel. Although David’s sin had been long forgiven, the consequences hounded him until the day of his death. Here in the first chapter of 1 Kings we see another of his sons, Adonijah, conspiring to steal the throne for himself even before his father was dead.

Prayer Emphasis: Read verse 10 again and **note** the people that Adonijah did *not* invite to his meeting! When conversations turn to what is less than constructive, look around and see who is *not* there. **Refuse** to act on biased or incomplete information. When forced to choose sides – choose wisely and carefully.

Day 2: 1 Kings 1:15-31

“Then King David answered and said, ‘Call Bathsheba to me.’ So she came into the king’s presence and stood before the king. And the king took an oath and said, ‘As the LORD lives...just as I swore to you by the LORD God of Israel, saying...Solomon your son shall be king after me...so I will certainly do this day.’” (1 Kings 1:28-30)

The verses that precede our focus verses describe the plans and actions of the scheming Adonijah to become king. As amazing as it may seem, this usurper to the throne was not even willing to wait for his father to die before he tried to seize the throne. Verse 18 clearly indicates that Bathsheba was convinced that Adonijah had already accomplished his selfish purposes. She said, “Adonijah has (past tense) become king; and now my lord and king, you do not know about it.” She told David that Adonijah “has (past tense) sacrificed oxen and fattened cattle and sheep in abundance and has (past tense) invited all the sons of the king, Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army; but Solomon your servant he has not invited” (1:19). However, Bathsheba informed David there were many who were still looking to David to see who he believed God would have to succeed him as king. She said, “O king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, that you should tell them who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him” (1:20). David reassured her that he had every intention of fulfilling his “oath” to her that Solomon would be the next king of Israel.

Prayer Emphasis: Realize the danger that is often attached to selfish pride and ambition. **Choose** to fulfill the role to which God has called you and avoid trying to do God’s job for Him! **Pray** daily for wisdom, humility, and God’s guidance in all that you do.

Day 3: 1 Kings 1:32-53

“And King David said, ‘Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoida.’ So they came before the king” (1 Kings 1:32)

As we saw in yesterday’s Scripture, Adonijah invited many loyal followers of David to his coronation, but they were still looking to David to see if this was his plan or only the plan of the ambitious Adonijah. Nathan came to David and asked, “Has this thing been done by my lord the king?” (1:27). Even though David was “old” and “advanced in years” (1:1), he certainly appeared to be thinking and speaking with clarity when he told “Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet” that they were to “anoint him (Solomon) king over Israel” (1:34) and that “he (Solomon) shall be king in my place” and “be ruler over Israel and Judah” (1:35). David’s promise to make Bathsheba’s son, Solomon, king after his death was not just a promise based on the king’s love for Bathsheba. 1 Chronicles 22 records a conversation that God had with David when David first wanted to build a temple for God. David described that conversation by saying, “the word of the LORD came to me” (1 Chronicles 22:8). In that “word” God told David that a son who was yet to be born to him would become king after him and God would “establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever” (1 Chronicles 22:10). Although the story never mentions that God specifically told David that Solomon was the son to follow him on the throne, David must have been very sure that it was God’s intention and he had obviously shared that information with Bathsheba (1:30).

Prayer Emphasis: **Focus** on doing things that accomplish God’s will. **Refuse** to go about your spiritual responsibilities with a “that’ll do” attitude. **Pray** for God’s will to be accomplished but, whenever possible, take definite actions to see to it that God’s plans are fulfilled.

Day 4: 1 Kings 2:1-25

“Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying, ‘I go the way of all the earth; be strong therefore, and prove yourself a man.’” (1 Kings 2:1-2)

The last part of yesterday’s reading described how God thwarted Adonijah’s attempt to steal the throne from David and how David, with the assistance of some very loyal friends and followers, had Solomon installed as king. Now, near death, David “charged Solomon his son” and admonished him to “prove yourself a man.” While the world in which we live may have its own opinions of manliness, David clearly believed that a man should be marked by at least three things. Those three things are all found in verse three of today’s text. First, *a man was to honor God’s will*. David charged Solomon to “keep the charge of the LORD your God.” Second, David reminded Solomon that *a man was to honor God’s ways*. He told Solomon to “walk in His ways.” The word that is translated “ways” there is a Hebrew word that was often used to describe a road or path. David wanted Solomon to know that God had a designed “path” for his life. He also wanted his son to know that it was a very manly thing to take the path of God’s design. Anyone can take the path of least resistance, but it takes a “man” (a mature believer) to identify and follow the path that God would have him walk. As such, God was saying that it takes a big man to humble himself enough to follow God. Third, David wanted Solomon to know that *a man was to honor God’s Word*. Solomon was to “keep His statutes...commandments...judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses.”

Prayer Emphasis: **Believe** there is no better plan for you than the one God has designed. **Pray** for God’s will to be revealed to you daily. **Include** God in every detail of all your circumstances and situations.

Day 5: 1 Kings 2:26-46

“Then news came to Joab, for Joab had defected to Adonijah, though he had not defected to Absalom. So Joab fled to the tabernacle of the LORD, and took hold of the horns of the altar.” (1 Kings 2:28)

Although Joab had been faithful to King David when another of his sons, Absalom, tried to take the throne from him, he failed to be faithful to David in his efforts to see Solomon follow him as the new ruler over God’s people. When Adonijah’s coup failed, Joab realized he was in a very dangerous position. In chapter one we read where Adonijah did the same thing when his rebellion was thwarted, and ultimately that action possibly had some influence on Solomon sparing Adonijah’s life. Exodus 30:10 explains that the horns of the altar played an important role in the annual sin offering that was made by the high priest while Exodus 21:12-14 imply it was to this altar that one who had caused the accidental death of another might flee for safety. Perhaps Joab fled to the altar simply because he knew that Adonijah had done so, and his life was spared. Perhaps Joab fled to the altar, and refused to leave it, because of what he learned from the Law of Moses. However, whatever his reasons or motivations, this action did not lead to the sparing of his life. Solomon demanded that Joab be killed because of “the innocent blood” which he had shed (2:31). Joab’s life and death becomes another example to us of God’s laws of sowing and reaping.

Prayer Emphasis: **Realize** that not all of the examples in the Bible are good examples. **Learn** from the mistakes of others and **seek** to avoid them in your own life. **Remember**, the Bible was given to us to help us live godly lives that bring glory to our Heavenly Father.

Day 6: 1 Kings 3:1-28

“Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married Pharaoh’s daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall all around Jerusalem.” (1 Kings 3:1)

It was difficult to decide which part of this chapter should be emphasized in today’s devotional. 1 Kings 3 is filled with interesting stories and valuable information. Royalty marrying royalty was a common strategy in Bible lands and times. Verse one clearly indicates that Solomon’s marriage to a daughter of the current Pharaoh was part of a “treaty” between the two kings and their nations. By comparing Scripture to Scripture, we know this was not Solomon’s first marriage. Later, in 1 Kings 14:21, we will learn that Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, came to the throne when he was 41 years old. 1 Kings 11:42 tells us “the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.” Since Solomon did not marry Pharaoh’s daughter until *after* he was king, then she could not possibly have been his first wife. Solomon’s marriages to foreign women introduced a lot of trouble and sorrow into his life, and thusly, the life of his nation, the people of God. In Nehemiah’s days, when the people requested permission to intermarry with foreigners, God had Nehemiah tell them, “You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. *Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?* Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, pagan women caused even him to sin. Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?” (Nehemiah 13:25-27).

Prayer Emphasis: If you are already married, **praise** God for your Christian spouse and remember to **pray** for them on a daily basis. If you are not married, begin praying now that the right person – the mate of God’s own choosing – would be introduced into your life. **Refuse** to compromise on spirituality when it comes to choosing your life partner.

Day 7: 1 Kings 4:1-19

“And Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each one made provision for one month of the year.” (1 Kings 4:7)

We have already witnessed how Solomon put the wisdom he received from God to practical use when we read about his handling of the dispute between the two mothers (3:16-28). Now we read about the wisdom that was exhibited in the way he structured his kingdom. Verse two mentions his “officials.” These were men who served Solomon in much the same way that the cabinet serves the president of our country. The list found in verses four through six includes positions similar to our Secretary of State, Secretary of Labor and even a Secretary of Defense. We know that “Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud” who served as “recorder” held that same position under King David (2 Samuel 8:16 and 20:24). Beyond these “officials,” Solomon established a system of “governors” (4:7). These 12 men represented districts that were taxed in order to support the work of the kingdom. Each district was assigned the responsibility of providing one month’s supply of the money needed to support the national structure. As you read through the names of these men, notice how many of them have the prefix “Ben.” That prefix literally means “son of.” In verses three through five we actually read the words “the sons of” or “the son of.” This information helps us see that Solomon had a new generation of leaders that joined him and served under him during his reign.

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for those who have come into our church and assumed positions of leadership. **Pray** for God to continue to provide workers for His Kingdom. **Speak** to someone who is serving in our church and let them know that you appreciate them, and you are praying for them.

Day 8: 1 Kings 4:20-34

“Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.” (1 Kings 4:20-21)

When we read that “Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude,” we cannot help but recall the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 22:17. There God said, “I will bless you, and...I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven *and as the sand which is on the seashore.*” Today’s Scripture reading is a great reminder that God always keeps His promises! The extent to which God “multiplied” Abraham’s descendants is evidenced by the large number of supplies it took to feed those involved in Solomon’s household for just one day. Verses 22-23 report that “Solomon’s provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour, sixty kors of meal, ten fatted oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl.” It is hard to really grasp how much food this represents, but some have estimated that this would be adequate to feed up to 35,000 people daily. A “kor” is estimated to be equal to about 55 gallons. Most of us can remember and visualize a 55-gallon drum. Imagine the size family and royal staff that could consume enough flour to fill 30 of those drums and enough meal to fill another 60 of them in just one day. That’s a lot of biscuits and cornbread!

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** daily for our government officials. **Pray** for wisdom as our nation goes through our election processes. **Remember**, if you *pay* your taxes, you have earned the right to *pray* for those who benefit from them and to also have a *say* in how those taxes are spent!

Day 9: 1 Kings 5:1-18

“Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying: ‘You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which were fought against him...until the LORD put his foes under the soles of his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side...and behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God...’ (1 Kings 5:2-5)

Two words came to mind when I read this chapter about Solomon’s plans for the building of the temple. The first word that comes to mind is *quality*. Solomon desired that the temple be constructed using “cedars...from Lebanon” (5:6). These trees were considered to be the very best for architectural uses. They grew in limited areas, and some were as much as 40 feet in circumference! Besides the best lumber available, Solomon also demanded “costly stones” for the laying of “the foundation of the temple” (5:17). Even though the foundation stones may not be visible to the eye, nothing but the best was to be used for the house that was to be built for God! The second word that comes to mind as I read this chapter is the word *quantity*! One of the reasons given for David not having the time to build the temple for God was that he was busy at war, and therefore, the majority of his men were assigned to tasks related to *battling* and obviously had no time for *building*. If we total the number of men that verses 13-16 state were assigned to this great work, we will find that 183,300 people were occupied with the building of God’s house!

Prayer Emphasis: We may not all be asked to do big things for God, but we can all **ask** God to help us do what we do for Him in a big way! **Evaluate** the time, effort, and money that you allow for God’s service and make sure you are not short-changing Him!

Day 10: 1 Kings 6:1-17

“And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel...” (1 Kings 6:1)

The Bible records some interesting information about the building of the temple. Our focus verse helps us to know exactly *when* the temple was built. In fact, the sixth chapter of 1 Kings helps us place a date on a couple of the key events recorded in the Bible. Since we know Solomon began his reign somewhere close to 971 BC, and since we just read that Solomon began to build the temple “in the fourth year” of his reign, we can conclude that the exodus from Egypt had to have taken place around 1448 BC. But our chapter goes beyond simply telling us when the temple was built. God provides us with the details as to exactly *what* was built. The dimensions of the temple proper, and its accompanying buildings, are provided for us in this chapter. Including the space allowed for the storage compartments and the outside walls, the temple structure was somewhere close to 110 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. This magnificent structure was built by a plan that David had earlier given to Solomon. 1 Chronicles 28:11 states, “David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat.” But the Bible not only discloses when the temple was built, and what was built, it also discloses *where* the temple was built! 2 Chronicles 3:1 discloses, “Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah.” Bible students can clearly identify Mount Moriah as the place where Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac on an altar for God as well as the place where Jesus would ultimately die on the cross for our sins!

Prayer Emphasis: Although God is not going to call us to build a temple for Him, He most certainly has a work for each of us to do. **Look** for ways that you can be a blessing to God and His people through acts of charity and kindness. **Seek** opportunities to express your love to God on a daily basis.

Day 11: 1 Kings 6:18-38

“And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its details and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it.” (1 Kings 6:38)

Yesterday’s Scripture was centered around the actual structure of the temple building itself while today’s verses will deal more with the way the building was finished on the inside. In the New King James Version, today’s verses contain the word “inside” five times and the word “inner” 10 times. The word “inner” is used to describe the “inner sanctuary” and the “inner court.” Verse 20 describes the “inner sanctuary” as being “twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high.” That would make this most holy part of the temple approximately 30 feet x 30 feet x 30 feet. That same verse tells us that Solomon “overlaid it with pure gold.” Verse 21 states, “he stretched gold chains across the front” of it. These gold chains were probably there to remind the people of the inaccessibility of this most holy place. The temple was built with an abundance of gold. The walls were covered with gold (vs. 20-22), the floor was covered with gold (v. 30) and gold covered the carvings and decorations (v. 32). The “inner court” was the court of the priests where the altar and laver were located and where the sacrifices were made. Because of the way we New Testament believers “come boldly” before God, it is difficult for us to imagine that the temple was not open for the people of Israel. It was where the priests came to meet with God on behalf of the people. The people were only allowed to gather and worship in the outer courtyard.

Prayer Emphasis: Allow God to define your role in His divine service. **Remember** that there is no greater service than service that is performed for God. **Bow** before God daily and do so as a humble servant that is willing to do whatever is asked of you.

Day 12: 1 Kings 7:1-22

“Then he set up the pillars by the vestibule of the temple; he set up the pillar on the right side and called its name Jachin, and he set up the pillar on the left and called its name Boaz. (1 Kings 7:21)

While the first part of chapter seven deals with the construction of Solomon’s personal residence, the majority of the chapter deals with the pillars and furnishings for the newly constructed temple. Solomon brought the best workers in bronze from Tyre and had them design and construct the equipment and furnishings for God’s house. Our focus verse mentions two “pillars” that were located in the vestibule of the temple. (A “vestibule” was much like what we might call a covered and partially enclosed “porch” today.) One of the pillars sat on “the right side” of the vestibule and the other “on the left.” Although we are not specifically told so, we can imagine that the names of these pillars were somehow identifiable to the priests and temple workers. The name “Jachin” means “God establishes” and the name “Boaz” means “God strengthens.” Thus, every time a person entered this great place of worship, they were reminded that God “established” it and God was the one Who would “strengthen” it. In other words, they were to understand that God *put* it there and that only God could *keep* it there. In my opinion, these pillars were meant to symbolize what the house of God was all about. The house of God was a place to which people could come and be “established” and “strengthened” in their personal relationship with God. We would do well to make every effort to ensure that the “house” where we gather and worship is committed to doing the same thing.

Prayer Emphasis: **Realize** that the *church* can only be what God desires *it* to be when individual *Christians* in the church are what God desires *them* to be. **Commit** to being an established and strengthened believer by spending time in Bible reading and prayer every day.

Day 13: 1 Kings 7:23-51

“Hiram made the lavers and the shovels and the bowls. So Hiram finished doing all the work that he was to do for King Solomon for the house of the LORD.” (1 Kings 7:40)

For the most part, the temple, and everything in it, was modeled after the tabernacle that served as God’s house as Israel travelled through the Wilderness and then in at least two more permanent locations in the Holy Land. The temple, being a permanent structure, had several differences in its *construction*. The tabernacle had curtains for much of its outer and inner walls and roof while the temple had walls and a roof made of wood and stone. But there was an even more noticeable difference between the tabernacle and the temple in its *contractors*. Perhaps the most important distinction about the tabernacle was that it was built *by Jews for Jews*. No one who was not a Jew was allowed into the tabernacle or temple proper. We know this law was enforced as late as the times described in Acts 21:28 where Paul was accused of bringing “Greeks into the temple” and, by doing so, had “defiled” it. For reasons unknown to us, Solomon employed “Hiram” (spelled “Hiram” in some translations) to do the finishing carpentry and to build the furnishings and tools for the temple. Hiram was only half Jewish – his mother was a Jew, but his father was “a man of Tyre” (7:14). Why would God direct Solomon to use Hiram as one of the contractors for the temple work? Perhaps He wanted then to say to His people what he later said in Isaiah 56:7: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for *all* nations.”

Prayer Emphasis: Seek to be a part of making our church an inclusive place for all who visit and attend. **Reach** out to our guests and do everything possible to make their visit with us a pleasant experience. Be willing to **sacrifice** some personal comforts for the sake of those who need to attend and meet with God.

Day 14: 1 Kings 8:1-21

“So all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. Then they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that were in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up. (1 Kings 8:3-4)

As you read the words of our focus verses, it is almost as if the Holy Spirit is placing a special emphasis on the fact that “the priests took up the ark” and “the priests and the Levites” were the people who transported the ark and the tabernacle furnishings to the temple. It might be that David, Solomon’s father, warned him against mishandling the ark as he had earlier done back in the move recorded in 2 Samuel 6:1-8. If you recall, that failure to comply with God’s instructions for how the ark was to be transported proved to be very costly and created a considerable delay in the ark reaching Jerusalem. And, if not David, perhaps the Holy Spirit spoke directly to Solomon – or even to Solomon through the wise counsel of the priests – telling him there was a right and Scriptural way to handle the ark and the furnishings for the temple. The Ark of the Covenant was the most important furnishing for the temple, but there were other furnishings as well. There was the table of showbread, the altar of incense, and the lampstand that would also have to be brought to this new place of worship. Verse nine informs us that “nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb.” At an earlier point in Israel’s history there were three items in the Ark of the Covenant. The ark had earlier also contained a golden pot filled with manna (Exodus 16:33) and Aaron’s rod that budded (Numbers 17:6-11). The Bible never informs us as to what became of those two items.

Prayer Emphasis: Remember that we are required to do God’s work God’s way! **Research** God’s Word before taking any action that might create a violation of God’s commandments.

Day 15: 1 Kings 8:22-43

“Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven; and he said: ‘LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You...’” (1 Kings 8:22-23)

At the dedication service for the new temple, Solomon “stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel.” We know there are times when our prayers should be private, but public worship should always include public prayer. I want us to notice at least four things about this public prayer that Solomon spoke on this very important day. First, it began with *praise*. We can hardly read the high praises recorded in verse 23 without remembering the model prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples. He said they were to pray “in this manner” saying, “Our Father in heaven *hallowed* be Your name” (Matthew 6:9). It appears that Solomon knew how to pray New Testament prayers even in Old Testament times. Second, Solomon’s prayer was based on God’s *promises*. Verse 24 mentioned promises past that God had kept while verse 25 addresses faith that God will continue to honor His promises in the future. Verse 26 reminds God of a past promise that Solomon desires to see answered in the present. Solomon implored God to “let (His) word come true, which (He) had spoken to...David (his) father.” Third, Solomon prayed for God’s *presence*. He prayed that God’s “eyes may be open toward this temple night and day” (v. 29). Last, and perhaps most important of all, Solomon prayed for *pardon* when he added, “Hear in heaven...and when You hear, forgive” (v. 30).

Prayer Emphasis: Pray faithfully and intelligently. **Seek** to offer to God prayers that are organized, well thought out, and presented in an orderly fashion. **Prepare** your heart and mind to pray by remembering Who He is, what He has done, what He can do, and how His grace has changed your life forever!

Day 16: 1 Kings 8:44-66

“And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.” (1 Kings 8:54)

If you recall, verse 22 told us when Solomon began this prayer, he “*stood* before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel.” Today, as this prayer comes to a close, we read that Solomon, sometime during that prayer, had gone to his *knees* before God. Our focus verse mentions Solomon “arose from before the altar of the LORD, from *kneeling* on his *knees*.” I love to visualize as I read the Bible, and I enjoy “watching” the stories play out in my mind as I am reading them. In this story I see a king who humbly, unashamedly, fell to his knees sometime during a public prayer that began with him standing. And, most importantly, I see him suddenly falling to his knees “in the presence of all the assembly of Israel” (v. 22). The Bible records several occasions where great men prayed on their knees. Men like Ezra and Daniel prayed on their knees (Ezra 9:5; Daniel 6:10). In the New Testament, men like Stephen, Peter, and Paul prayed while kneeling (Acts 7:60; Acts 9:40; Acts 20:36). Acts 21:5 teaches us that a large group of people met to pray and all “knelt down” to do so. But our greatest example of such posture in prayer might be found in Luke 22:41 where we are told that Jesus “knelt down and prayed” in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Prayer Emphasis: Humble yourself enough to sometimes kneel before God when you pray. **Model** such humility before those whom God has put under your authority. **Provide** your children an opportunity to *look up* to a parent who is willing to *bow down* before God!

Day 17: 1 Kings 9:1-28

“...When Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD...the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time...and the LORD said to him: ‘I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built...’” (1 Kings 9:1-3)

By comparing Scripture to Scripture, we know the events recorded in 1 Kings 6:1-9:1 occurred over a 20-year period and the events recorded in chapter nine occurred in the 24th year of Solomon’s reign. 1 Kings 6:1 informs us “it was in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign...that he began to build the house of the LORD.” 1 Kings 6:38 teaches us that, referring to the temple, Solomon was “seven years in building it.” The first verse of the seventh chapter then tells us “Solomon took thirteen years to build his own house.” So, if it took Solomon seven years to build the temple and thirteen years to build his house – and if he began to build in the fourth year of his reign – then 20 years have passed between 1 Kings 6:1-9:1 and Solomon has now been king for 24 years. Why is that important? It is important because God appeared to Solomon in a dream immediately after he ascended to the throne after David’s death (1 Kings 3:5-15) and now he is appearing to Solomon a “second time” (9:2). Solomon’s earlier meeting with God had been sufficient enough to carry the young king through 24 years of ministry and leadership before God “appeared...the second time!”

Prayer Emphasis: Note the partnership that Solomon had with God. Solomon was to be in charge of the *construction* and God was to be in charge of the *consecration*! In 1 Kings 9:3, God, speaking to Solomon, referred to the temple as “this house which *you* have built” but only after He said, “*I* have consecrated this house.” **Believe** that God will always do His part if we will be faithful to do ours.

Day 18: 1 Kings 10:1-29

“The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, besides that from the traveling merchants, from the income of traders, from all the kings of Arabia, and from the governors of the country.” (1 Kings 10:14-15)

Today’s focus verses serve as sort of an income statement for Solomon. “Six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold” represented an enormous amount of money – and that “came to Solomon yearly”! Some have taken the time to calculate the value of that amount of gold in recent markets and concluded that Solomon was receiving what would be nearly one billion dollars in gold annually. When we notice the word “besides” in verse 15, we get the idea that Solomon had at least four different “side” income streams. I am not sure if you noticed it, but the number “666” is pretty distinguishable in verse 14. Verses 16-18 include a list of some very extravagant items that Solomon purchased with his income. The 200 larger “shields of hammered gold” mentioned in verse 16 would cost approximately \$250,000 each at recent market values! The 300 smaller shields “of hammered gold” mentioned in verse 17 would have cost close to \$60,000 each today! And to think that Solomon decorated his vacation house in Lebanon with these expensive items! The throne that Solomon had built for himself was “overlaid...with pure gold” (v. 18). Verse 21 explains that “silver...was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon” to the point that it was considered “as common...as stones” in Jerusalem (v. 27)! It is hard to believe that this is the same man who spoke about the vanity in riches later in the Book of Ecclesiastes!

Prayer Emphasis: **Refuse** to believe that more money is the answer to all of life’s problems or that money can buy happiness. **Invest** your money wisely – first in the tithe that belongs to God – and then in sound, Scriptural ways, and you will see that God will faithfully partner with you in your financial matters.

Day 19: 1 Kings 11:1-25

“But King Solomon loved many foreign women...from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.” (1 Kings 11:1-3)

Today’s focus verses open with two statements in one. It states that “Solomon loved *many* women” and at the same time discloses that he loved “*many foreign*” women. The specific issue with the foreign women was that they were “from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you.’” God seldom issues commands or prohibitions without some disclosure as to their purpose. In this case, the purpose for this prohibition was to prevent the hearts of the people from being turned away after the gods of their foreign wives. Before Israel entered the Promised Land, God gave some specific instructions for future kings. In Deuteronomy 17:17, God said that those who served as kings over His people should not “multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away.” From what we read today, we can only conclude that Solomon failed to heed this warning and the result was that “his wives turned away his heart” (11:3). Yesterday’s Scripture reading revealed that Solomon also ignored the second half of God’s warning issued through Moses on that same day. Deuteronomy 17:17 concludes with these words: “Nor shall he (the king) multiply silver and gold for himself.”

Prayer Emphasis: Solomon once stated, “The eyes of man are never satisfied” (Proverbs 27:20). **Realize** that lust, greed, and other fleshly desires can lead you to stray from the right path in life. **Refuse** to be distracted by the glamour of the things of this world. As opposed to Solomon, **practice** what you preach!

Day 20: 1 Kings 11:26-43

“Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?” (1 Kings 11:41)

Throughout the Scriptures, there are at least 15 books that are mentioned, but not included, as a part of the Bible. “The Book of the Acts of Solomon” is one of those books. The “Book of the Wars of the LORD” is mentioned in Numbers 21:14 and “The Book of Jasher” is mentioned in Joshua 10:13. Not all of these books are named. In 1 Samuel 10:25 we read where “Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty, and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the LORD.” After 1 Kings we can read about other books, such as, “The Chronicles of David,” “The Chronicles of Nathan and Gad,” “The Prophecy of Ahijah,” “The Book of Shemaiah the Prophet,” “The Treatise of the Prophet Iddo,” “The Book of Jehu,” “The Book of the Kings,” and “The Sayings of Hozai,” all found in 1 & 2 Chronicles. Many Bible scholars have expressed opinions about the book referenced in today’s focus verse. The most likely explanation is that this book likely contained court or temple records, treaties, and private journals about the events that transpired during Solomon’s reign. Wesley was of the opinion that this book “was only a political, not a sacred book.” In any case, there is no reason for believers to fear that they have an incomplete Bible. I assure you that the Word that God has preserved for us is “given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, (and) for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Prayer Emphasis: **Read** from the Word that God has placed in your hands and believe that it contains all that you need to live a godly life in Christ Jesus. **Share** something from the Word of God with someone you encounter today.

Day 21: 1 Kings 12:1-16

“And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king.” (1 Kings 12:1)

Yesterday’s closing verse informed us that “Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place” (11:43). I find it rather amazing that Solomon, a man who had “seven hundred wives...and three hundred concubines” (11:3) has only one son mentioned in the Bible. Note the singular expression, “his son,” quoted from the last verse of chapter 11. Then, in 1 Chronicles 3:10 we read, “Solomon’s *son* (again singular) was Rehoboam.” Verse two of today’s Scripture mentions Jeroboam. We first read about him in chapter 11 where he was called “Solomon’s servant” in 11:26 and one of Solomon’s “officers” in 11:28. This man ultimately conspired and rebelled against King Solomon’s son and won the hearts of the ten northern tribes known as Israel. As a result of that conspiracy, Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, was left to lead only Judah. Israel was known as the Northern Kingdom while Judah was known as the Southern Kingdom. Thus, the unity that was established shortly after David became king was utterly broken and lost during the 40-year reign of Solomon. As a result, Jeroboam became the first king of Israel while Rehoboam ruled over Judah, and God’s people became a divided kingdom that ultimately warred one against the other. It might surprise some people to know that the first war fought between the north and south was fought in the Promised Land.

Prayer Emphasis: **Realize** that Satan’s greatest strategy is to divide and conquer. **Seek** to promote unity among the church and all believers. **Pray** for unity in our church and in the efforts of the churches in America and around the world.

Day 22: 1 Kings 12:17-33

“And Jeroboam said in his heart, ‘Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.’ Therefore the king...made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel...’ (1 Kings 12:26-28)

When Jeroboam said, “Now the kingdom *may* return to the house of David,” he was not granting his followers permission to reunite with their brothers from Judah. Rather, he was expressing a concern that his people might leave him and return to Solomon’s heir, Rehoboam. Apparently, he questioned the commitment and conviction of those who followed him and did not trust them to remain loyal to him. So, he appealed to their desire for *convenience*. Until this time, the center of all of Israel’s worship had been the temple in Jerusalem. Jeroboam feared that his people might become reunited with their brothers in Judah if they returned there to worship. So he “made two calves of gold” and expressed his concern that it was “too much” for them “to go up to Jerusalem” to worship. So, he set up the calves of gold, “one in Bethel, and the other...in Dan.” Satan seems to be able to continually trip mankind up without ever having to use any new tricks or schemes. Compare Jeroboam’s words to his people in 1 Kings 12:28 (“Here are your gods’ O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt”) to the words of Aaron to the people after he created the golden calf for them to worship and you will see that Satan used the same trap these many years later in the Promised Land that he had used earlier with the people in the wilderness.

Prayer Emphasis: **Seek** to serve the Lord out of *commitment* and *conviction* and not just when it is *convenient*. **Become** the kind of follower that will remain loyal to God and His church in the good times and bad.

Day 23: 1 Kings 13:1-17

“And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel...and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. Then he cried out against the altar...and said, ‘O altar, altar! Thus says the Lord: Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men’s bones shall be burned on you.’” (1 Kings 13:1-3)

There are three important things to consider in the first 10 verses of today’s Scripture reading. First, let’s consider the *prophet*. We are told that “a man of God went from Judah to Bethel.” The fact that God had to send “a man of God...from Judah to Bethel” should certainly not escape our attention. How sad it is to imagine that there was no one willing or able to speak for God from the 10 tribes that made up the Northern Kingdom ruled by Jeroboam. If there were men of God residing in Israel, they were obviously not willing to confront Jeroboam and his sin. One has to wonder if it might have been considered “politically incorrect” to say that a king was leading their nation down a sinful path toward corruption and decay. Second, let’s consider the *prophecy*. The nameless, fameless prophet “cried out against the altar” and prophesied of a future king (Josiah) who would destroy the altar by which Jeroboam was standing. Over 300 years later, that prophecy was fulfilled just as this man had spoken (see 2 Kings 23:15). Last, let’s consider the *problem*. When Jeroboam didn’t like this *message*, he attacked the *messenger* by demanding that the man of God be arrested.

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for those who boldly stand and deliver God’s message and ask that they be protected from those who desire to silence the messengers. **Pray** that our church will always stand for the truth and faithfully deliver it to everyone who is willing to hear it.

Day 24: 1 Kings 13:18-34

“After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places.” (1 Kings 13:33)

The “event” referenced in our focus verse is the deception, death, and burial of the “man of God” who had been sent “from Judah to Bethel” that we read about yesterday. After that prophet spoke against the altar that Jeroboam corrupted, he departed for his home country only to be met by a local man who claimed to be “a prophet” who had been spoken to by “an angel” in accordance with “the word of the LORD” (v. 18). The last part of yesterday’s reading disclosed that the first prophet – the one sent from Judah to Bethel – stated that he had “been told by the word of the LORD” that he should “not eat bread nor drink water” in Bethel (v. 17). The second prophet claimed that he, too, had heard from the LORD and had been told he was to bring the prophet from Judah to his home “that he may eat bread and drink water” (v. 18). The Holy Spirit clearly reveals his opinion of what the second prophet said: “He was lying to him.” Even though the local prophet was speaking a word to the prophet from Judah that contradicted the instructions he received from God, the prophet from Judah went home with the older man and “ate bread in his house, and drank water” (v. 19). The younger prophet ultimately died a tragic death because of his disobedience, and the older prophet declared that the prophecy that the first man had been sent from Judah to speak to Jeroboam at Bethel would be fulfilled. Even after all of this, “Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way” and took it upon himself to appoint priests from whatever tribe he might desire.

Prayer Emphasis: Once again, we see that government attempting to replace God is nothing new! **Pray** for our government officials and **ask** God to remind them that *their* authority ends where *His* authority begins!

Day 25: 1 Kings 14:1-16

“...I exalted you from among the people, and made you ruler over My people Israel...but you have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molded images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back; therefore behold! I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam...” (1 Kings 14:7 & 9)

Our focus verses contain a harsh message that God delivered to King Jeroboam through the prophet Ahijah. Jeroboam's son had fallen ill so Jeroboam sent his wife to visit the prophet and seek his help. However, because of his sinful activities, and the division he helped bring into the lives of God's people, he asked his wife to disguise herself so the prophet might not recognize her. This action is a strong indication that Jeroboam knew his actions were not pleasing to God. When the woman arrived at “the house of Ahijah,” the blind prophet was informed by God as to her true identity. Upon hearing “the sound of her footsteps as she came through the door” (v. 6), the old prophet revealed that he knew her true identity and told her to go home and deliver a very harsh message to her husband. In that message God accused Jeroboam of doing “more evil than all who were before” him. Among other things, God wanted Jeroboam to know that, in His opinion, Jeroboam had “cast (Him) behind (his) back” (v. 9). To “cast” something “behind your back” meant to completely forget it. The Bible teaches that this is what God does with our sins. In Isaiah 38:17, Hezekiah prayed, “For you have cast all my sins *behind your back*.”

Prayer Emphasis: Thank God for the fact that our sins are *forgiven* and *forgotten*! **Recognize** that it is a great *blessing* when God forgets our sins and casts them “behind His back” but it is a great *blunder* when we forget God!

Day 26: 1 Kings 14:17-31

“Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned, indeed they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. The period that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years. So he rested with his fathers. Then Nadab his son reigned in his place.” (1 Kings 14:19-20)

Today's Scripture reading closes the book on Jeroboam and Rehoboam. The first verses of our reading provided some final comments on Jeroboam's reign over Israel. I wrote an earlier devotional that discussed some of the books that are mentioned in the Bible that were not made a part of the Bible. In today's focus verses we find the Book of Chronicles mentioned, and this reference is to the two books by that name that *are* included in the Bible. Today's Scripture also includes one of the saddest epithets mentioned in the Bible. Verse 16 includes this phrase about Jeroboam: “Jeroboam...who sinned and who made Israel sin.” The remaining verses in chapter 14 deal with the summary of Rehoboam's reign over Judah. We are told “he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem” (v. 21) and, under his reign, “Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD” and “provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their father's had done” (v. 22). Because of his evil ways, God allowed a foreign enemy, “Shishak king of Egypt” (v. 25) to plunder Jerusalem and Judah. We are told that Shisak “took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything” (v. 26). Perhaps the saddest concluding remark about the two kings who came from the same family is found in verse 30: “And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days.”

Prayer Emphasis: Realize that God's work and the church suffer when Christians cannot get along with one another. **Promote** unity at your every opportunity and **refuse** to go to war against anyone but the devil and his forces.

Day 27: 1 Kings 15:1-17

“In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah...and he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God...” (1 Kings 15:1 & 3)

After Saul, David, and Solomon ruled over the combined tribes of Israel, a combined total of 39 different people served as king over the divided nations of Israel and Judah. Today’s Scripture reading provides some important information about two of them: Abijam and Asa who ruled over Judah. The last verse in chapter 14 told us that Abijam (referred to as Abijah in Chronicles) became king after his father, Rehoboam “rested with his fathers.” Abijam’s reign lasted only three years (v. 2) and they were not good years, to say the least. It is sad to say, but Abijam was what we often refer to as “a chip off of the block.” He “walked in all the sins of his father, which he (Jeroboam) had done before him.” I think our focus verses pretty much sum up God’s opinion of the reign of Abijam. After Abijam, “Asa his son reigned in his place” (v. 8). Asa was a good king whom God referred to as “a lamp (light) in Jerusalem” (v. 4). This good king “reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem” (v. 10), and “did what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (v. 11). His deeds are recorded in verses 12-15 of today’s reading and clearly mark some distinctive changes that this godly king brought about during his long tenure. Verse 14 reveals a much more positive epithet that might have been written on Asa’s tombstone: “Asa’s heart was loyal to the LORD all his days.”

Prayer Emphasis: Thank God for faithful believers that have had a positive witness and impact in your life. **Pray** for them and **ask** God to continue to use them to be “lamps” to those around them. **Speak** with them and let them know how much their faithful witness has meant to you.

Day 28: 1 Kings 15:18-34

“Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin.” (1 Kings 15:25-26)

Yesterday’s devotional focused on two kings that followed Rehoboam as rulers over Judah. Today’s devotional is going to discuss two men that followed Jeroboam as rulers over Israel. Those two men are Nadab and Baasha. It was surprising to see that Rehoboam’s son, Abijam, ruled for only three years after his father. We now see that Jeroboam’s son, Nadab, ruled for only *two* years after his father. Nadab’s testimony is not any better than that of some of the others we have mentioned. We are told “he did evil in the sight of the LORD,” and, just like Abijam had done in Judah, Nadab “walked in the way of his father, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin” (v. 26). Nadab was killed when “Baasha the son of Abijah...conspired against him...and killed him” (v. 27) during a long siege on Gibbethon. When Baasha became king “he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam anyone that breathed” (v. 29). Verses 33 and 34 tell us that this cruel man “reigned twenty-four years” over the 10 tribes of Israel and “he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin by which he made Israel sin.”

Prayer Emphasis: Note the phrases, “he walked in all the sins of his father” (15:3) and “walked in all the way of his father and in his sin” (15:26). **Ask** God to help you to be the kind of parent that sets a godly example for your children. **Encourage** them to walk faithfully in the ways of God today.

Day 29: 1 Kings 16:1-14

“In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel, and reigned two years in Tirzah.” (1 Kings 16:8)

Today’s Scripture reading brings closure to the story of one king of Israel (Baasha) and introduces two more to us. One of those two is Elah. Although “Elah” is found in the Bible in several places before we get to 1 Kings 16, the previous mentions of that name have been about other people or places. There is even a mention of another “Elah” earlier in 1 Kings 4:18. However, when we read this name in our focus verse, it is the first mention of this person in the Bible. Elah was the son of Baasha, and in his life and murder, the prophecies of “Jehu...against Baasha” (16:1-4) were fulfilled. Verse seven clearly explains that “the word of the LORD came...against Baasha and his house, because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD” (v. 7). God had Jehu specifically mention the fact that Baasha “killed” all of the descendants of Jeroboam (see 15:29) when he rose to the throne. This is where Zimri enters the story. Just two years after Elah became king, while he was at a party “drinking himself drunk” Zimri “conspired against him” (v. 9) and “went in and struck and killed him...and reigned in his place” (v. 10). Verse 11 reports that “it came to pass, when he (Zimri) began to reign, as soon as he was seated on his throne...he killed all the household of Baasha; he did not leave him one male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends.” Thus, Baasha’s story becomes another place in the Bible where God so clearly emphasizes the law of sowing and reaping – and the fact that we always reap *more* than we sow. Baasha killed all the descendants of Jeroboam and Zimri killed all the descendants of Baasha, and also the descendants of Baasha’s “relatives” and “friends” (v. 11).

Prayer Emphasis: Meditate on the words of Galatians 6:7 today: “Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, *that* he will also reap.” **Sow** some good things into the lives of others today.

Day 30: 1 Kings 16:15-34

“In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri had reigned in Tirzah seven days...the people...said, ‘Zimri has conspired and also has killed the king.’ So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp.” (1 Kings 16:15-16)

Just as yesterday’s Scripture brought closure to the stories of Baasha and Elah, today’s verses bring closure to the stories of Zimri and Omri. Notice that our focus verse discloses that Zimri “reigned...seven days.” You might also note that the first part of our focus verse indicates that Zimri’s seven-day reign over the 10 tribes of Israel came “in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah.” During Asa’s 41-year reign over Judah, six different kings sat on the throne of Israel. It began with Nadab, who “became king over Israel in the second year of Asa” (15:25) and ended with Ahab who became king of Israel “in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah” (16:29). In between those two were Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri. Omri, who had been “the commander of the army” led the people of Israel (rightfully so) in a revolt against Zimri. The Bible states that “when Zimri saw that the city was taken...he went into the citadel of the king’s house and burned the king’s house down upon himself with fire, and died” (v. 18). Verse 23 states that, after Zimri’s suicide, “Omri...reigned twelve years.” Perhaps the saddest comment about Omri is found in verse 25: “Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all who were before him.”

Prayer Emphasis: Realize that things seldom just get better without some concentrated efforts on the part of God’s people. **Commit** to being a good influence on those around you and **seek** to make a positive impact on every group with which you are associated.

Day 31: 1 Kings 17:1-24

“And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.’” (1 Kings 17:1)

Today’s focus verse introduces us to the prophet Elijah for the first time. We will see this man’s name 41 more times before we finish the Book of 1 Kings. We were introduced to this godly prophet’s nemesis, Ahab, for the first time in the closing verses of yesterday’s reading. Yesterday we read where “Ahab, the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, *more than all who were before him*” and he “did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger *than all of the kings of Israel that were before him*” (16:30 & 33). There are those who believe those verses to actually say Ahab did more evil than all of those before him *combined!* That may seem hard to imagine, but we should probably wait and render our own opinion on Ahab after we have finished all of our reading about him. Way back in Deuteronomy 28:15, we read where God told His people, “It shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments...which I command you today, that...curses will come upon you.” One of those “curses” was “your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze” (Deuteronomy 28:23). When Elijah went before Ahab and declared “there shall not be dew nor rain these years” (v. 1), he was simply trusting God to do what He had said He would do. You will not find a time in the Bible where God ever sent judgment without first sending a warning.

Prayer Emphasis: Read James 5:17-18 and see the impact Elijah’s statement of faith had on those who were living much later in the New Testament times. **Claim** some of God’s promises in prayer and you will see for yourself that our God still lives up to His Word.

Day 32: 1 Kings 18:1-19

“And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, ‘Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.’” (1 Kings 18:1)

One can only imagine what might have been going through Ahab’s mind as the days, months, and years passed and there was no rain! He had probably dismissed Elijah as a spiritual nut after their first meeting, but, as time passed, he probably thought about Elijah every single, *dry* day of his life. With the drought, had come famine. Verse two of today’s reading states, “there was a severe famine” due to the lack of rain. After Elijah’s first meeting with Ahab, God told him to “get away...and *hide* by the brook Cherith” (17:3). Now, approximately three years later, God told Elijah to go and *present himself* to Ahab and say that “I (God) will send rain upon the earth.” The words that are translated “present himself” was much like today’s phrase “get in his face.” The idea was that it was time for Elijah to once again make his presence known to the evil king Ahab. God had Elijah return to Ahab’s palace and deliver God’s message at a time when Ahab’s evil wife, Jezebel, was having “the prophets of the LORD” killed (v. 4). Even though Elijah is the main character in this story, we cannot read these verses without giving due to the man named Obadiah who had “taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them bread and water” (v. 4). No matter how dark the world may become, God is never without His witness. There are at least 13 men named Obadiah mentioned in the Bible – but this one is one of my favorites.

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for the courage to stand for what is right – even if it means standing alone and at great personal risk. **Pray** for our missionaries and for others who put themselves in harm’s way in order to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Day 33: 1 Kings 18:20-46

“So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him.’ But the people answered him not a word.” (1 Kings 18:20-21)

The last verse of yesterday’s reading left us with Elijah demanding that Ahab “gather all Israel...on Mount Carmel.” At the same time, Elijah instructed the evil Ahab to bring “the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal” along with “the four hundred prophets of Asherah” (18:19). It is not easy to imagine a humble prophet giving orders to a king, but perhaps Ahab was so arrogant and proud that he feared neither God nor God’s man. He might have assumed that the people – because of the long drought – were angry with God and Elijah and that they would revolt against both if they were provided an opportunity to do so. In the times of the Books of the Kings, Baal was a very popular god who was associated with the weather and crop productivity. The pagan people of that day believed that Baal was speaking to them through the thunder that accompanied the rains. Needless to say, Baal had not spoken to them in at least three years! When the people were gathered, Elijah asked, “How long will you falter between two opinions?” His question revealed the people’s true problem. They were trying to serve God *and* the false gods at the same time. Our final focus verse tells us the people “answered him (Elijah) not a word.” They simply refused to choose or take a position. They were apparently content to straddle the fence and to continue trying to keep one foot in both camps.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to serve God on a God “and” basis. **Realize** it is God “or” nothing! **Live** your life in such a way that there is no question as to where you stand or which side you are on! **Encourage** someone to take their own stand today.

Day 34: 1 Kings 19:1-21

“Then as he lay and slept...an angel touched him, and said to him, ‘Arise and eat.’ Then he looked, and there...was a cake...and...water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came back...and touched him, and said, ‘Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you’...he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.” (1 Kings 19:5-8)

It was very difficult to narrow today’s devotional thought down to just a few verses of Scripture. Much has been said about Elijah’s “lapse of faith” (so called) that is discussed here. I will not take the time to speculate on the *causes* of Elijah’s lapse because God never revealed them to us in His Word. However, I can say a few things about the weakened warrior’s *cure* because Scripture does speak very plainly about it. First, *God addressed Elijah’s physical needs*. An angel delivered bread and water to Elijah and instructed him to “arise and eat.” Elijah obeyed and then “lay down again.” Nourishment and rest are necessities if we are to serve God at our best. Burn out is as bad as a blow out if it keeps us from faithfully performing our spiritual duties. Second, *God addressed Elijah’s spiritual needs*. He strengthened His prophet enough to get him to “Horeb,” which was Mount Sinai – the mountain where Moses often met with God and where Moses received God’s commandments. The “journey” was “too great” for Elijah, so God gave him the spiritual nourishment he needed to make it. Third, *God restored Elijah’s purpose*. He let Elijah know that He was not finished with him and that there was at least one more “journey” he was to take with God.

Prayer Emphasis: Take care of your body and watch your health. **Nourish** your spirit daily by partaking of the “bread” and “water” that is provided for you in God’s Word. **Discover** God’s purpose for your life and prepare yourself to fulfill it. **Realize** that there is *power in purpose!*

Day 35: 1 Kings 20:1-22

“Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD.’ So Ahab said, ‘By whom?’ And he said, ‘Thus says the LORD: By the young leaders of the provinces.’ Then he said, ‘Who will set the battle in order?’ And he answered, ‘You.’” (1 Kings 20:13-14)

“Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together...and besieged Samaria...and made war against it” (20:1). “He sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel” (v. 2) informing him that it was his intention to take all that Ahab had for his own. The words of verse six clearly indicate that Ben-Hadad intended to take everything that meant anything to Ahab away from him. At the advice of “all the elders of the land” (v. 7) Ahab refused to allow Ben-Hadad’s servants to come and plunder his city. In response, Ben-Hadad threatened to annihilate the entire city (v. 10). That’s when God stepped in. He sent a prophet to Ahab to tell him that He (God) was to deliver Ben-Hadad and his armies into his (Ahab’s) hands in one day! God declared His purpose by saying, “Behold, I will deliver it (the great multitude) into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD” (v. 13). Why would God come to the aid of an evil king like Ahab? There is at least one very good reason. God deals with man according to *His mercy* and not *man’s merit*! There are two things we should know about God’s great mercy. First, *God’s mercy is preeminent*. If there is any characteristic of God that stands out above all others, it may very well be His great mercy. Second, *God’s mercy is perpetual*. David was a man who understood the mercy of God. In Psalm 136 you will find the phrase “for His mercy endures forever” in every one of its 26 verses.

Prayer Emphasis: Remember that grace is getting what we do not deserve, and mercy is *not* getting what we *do* deserve. **Realize** that we, like Ahab, are often blessed according to God’s mercy and not our merit. **Show** mercy to someone who needs it today.

Day 36: 1 Kings 20:23-43

“Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, ‘Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain; (valley) surely we will be stronger than they.’” (1 Kings 20:23)

Today’s focus verse is one that has received a lot of mention and attention from those who strive to preach and teach the Word of God. I am sure you have heard many Bible lessons and sermons on this story. However, the truth that this verse contains is just too good for the preacher in me not to write about it. After Israel’s God-given victory over the Syrians and their allies, “the servants of the king of Syria said to him, ‘Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain (valley), surely we will be stronger than they.’” The servants advised the king to muster an army that was the same size as the one that had earlier been defeated and assured him that that army would be enough if only they could lure the Israelites to fight with them in the valley. They wanted very much to prove a point. They wanted the king of Syria to know that Israel’s God was not mightier than their own gods. But God wanted to prove a point, too! He sent word to Ahab saying, “Because the Syrians have said, ‘The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,’ therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand” (v. 28). I am sure that you, too, have had some God-given “Valley Victories”!

Prayer Emphasis: Encourage someone who is experiencing some “valley” times today. **Reach out** to them and let them know you are praying for them. **Remember** that a kind word goes a very long way!

Day 37: 1 Kings 21:1-29

“So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, ‘Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.’ But Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you.’” (1 Kings 21:2-3)

Even after God told Ahab, on at least two occasions, that He was going to bless him greatly so “you shall know that I am the LORD” (20:13, 28), Ahab soon returned to his sinful and selfish ways. Today’s Scripture finds Ahab desiring the vineyard of a man named Naboth and offering to trade a better vineyard for it or to purchase it for a fair price. However, Naboth rejected the king’s offer, saying, “The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!” Faithful Israelites, like Naboth, believed that God allotted the land to the various tribes according to His will. Men like Naboth had been taught that God commanded that “the land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine” (Leviticus 25:23). He had probably also been taught that God said, “the inheritance of the children of Israel shall not change hands from tribe to tribe, for every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers” (Numbers 36:7). Naboth’s refusal to sell his vineyard to Ahab caused the king to become “sullen” to the point that “he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food” (v. 4). When Jezebel walked in on Ahab’s pity party, she said, “Let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth” (v. 7). Ultimately, Naboth was killed because he refused to compromise his position on the Word of God. It is clear that Naboth was a man of *courage* and *conviction*, as well as a man who honored God’s *commandments*.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to compromise your convictions and boldly stand for the Word of God. **Excuse** yourself from becoming involved in any activity that would require you to violate God’s commands.

Day 38: 1 Kings 22:1-16

“Then it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, ‘Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?’” (1 Kings 22:2-3)

Back in chapter 20, we read that Ben-Hadad and Ahab entered into a treaty after the armies of Israel defeated the allied forces of Ben-Hadad and 32 other kings – not once, but twice! One of the conditions of that treaty was a promise from Ben-Hadad to restore some of the cities that had been taken away from God’s people (20:34). When “Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel” (22:2), “the king of Israel said...Ramoth Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria” (v. 3). It was not a comment, but rather a question. Ahab was simply saying, “There is a very important city that belongs to us and the only reason we don’t have it is because we haven’t made the effort to take it.” Since the beginning of Israel’s time in the Promised Land, Ramoth-Gilead had been an important city. It had been one of the cities allotted to the Levites and it also served as a city of refuge (Deuteronomy 4:43; Joshua 20:8). This city had been the residence of one of King Solomon’s “governors” (1 Kings 4:13). Since Ramoth-Gilead was only about 40 miles from Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah, it would be in the interest of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to assist Ahab in its capture. Although we are not told so in 1 Kings, 2 Kings 8:28 and 9:14 indicate that Ramoth-Gilead was retaken by Israel.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to not claim and take all that God has promised you! **Establish** godly alliances that help you to succeed in your endeavors to experience God’s best in your life.

Day 39: 1 Kings 22:17-30

“Then he said, ‘I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd.’ And the LORD said, ‘These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.’ And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?’ (1 Kings 22:17-18)

There are at least seven men in the Bible named Micaiah. However, 1 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 18 are the only chapters in which this particular Micaiah is mentioned. We read yesterday where, after being asked to join forces with Ahab, Judah’s King Jehoshaphat said to Ahab, “Please inquire for the word of the LORD today” (22:5). Even after hearing “about four hundred” prophets assure Ahab that “the LORD (would) deliver it (Ramoath-Gilead) into” his hands (v. 6), Jehoshaphat was still not convinced. He asked if there was still another prophet from whom they could hear, and Ahab reluctantly mentioned Micaiah, but stated that he “hated” him because he never prophesied good things about him (v. 8). At first it seemed that Micaiah was content to allow Ahab to believe what he wanted to hear, but something must have made Ahab suspicious that Micaiah wasn’t telling him the whole story. After Ahab’s demand for “nothing but the truth” (v. 16) Micaiah uttered the prophecy contained in today’s focus verses. Since the king was to be a shepherd-like leader to God’s people, Micaiah’s prophecy certainly seemed to imply that Israel was about to lose their king! Ahab obviously thought the same thing because he asked Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?” (v. 18). Micaiah then went on to prophesy that Ahab would die in the battle for Ramoth-Gilead (vs. 19-20).

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for our nation’s leaders. **Ask** God to guide their thoughts and actions. **Encourage** and **enlist** others to pray for our nation on a regular basis.

Day 40: 1 Kings 22:31-53

“So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria.” (1 Kings 22:37)

If you recall, just after the murder of noble Naboth, God sent Elijah to Ahab to prophesy that “dogs shall lick your blood” (21:19). Today we read about the death of Ahab, and we saw where, when his bloody chariot was washed “the dogs licked up his blood...according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken” (v. 38). Ahab had put in place a traitorous, cowardly scheme in an attempt to avoid being killed in battle – even though that scheme put his ally, Jehoshaphat, at great risk. But, in the heat of battle, God allowed a nameless archer to draw a bow “at random” and then guided his aimless arrow to a seam “between the joints” of Ahab’s armor (v. 34). When the Syrians focused their attention on only Jehoshaphat – the only man dressed like a king – Jehoshaphat “cried out” (v. 32). 2 Chronicles 18:31 contains another account of this same story. In that verse we read about when Jehoshaphat was thought to be Ahab and was attacked by the enemy, he “cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from him.” Our account here in 1 Kings 22 states, “when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him” (v. 33). Verse 39 mentions some of the successes – so called – of Ahab’s reign when it mentions “the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built.” But, like the very prosperous man in Luke 12, there was a certain day that Ahab’s “soul (would) be required” (Luke 12:20). May we all be prepared for the day we meet the Lord face to face!

Prayer Emphasis: **Be faithful** to your daily Bible reading and **pray** for our church and ministries on a daily basis. **Encourage** others to be faithful to the Lord and His church every time you have an opportunity to do so. **Contact us** at 850-562-8069 or gary@seminolebc.com if we can pray for you or minister to you or your family in any way.