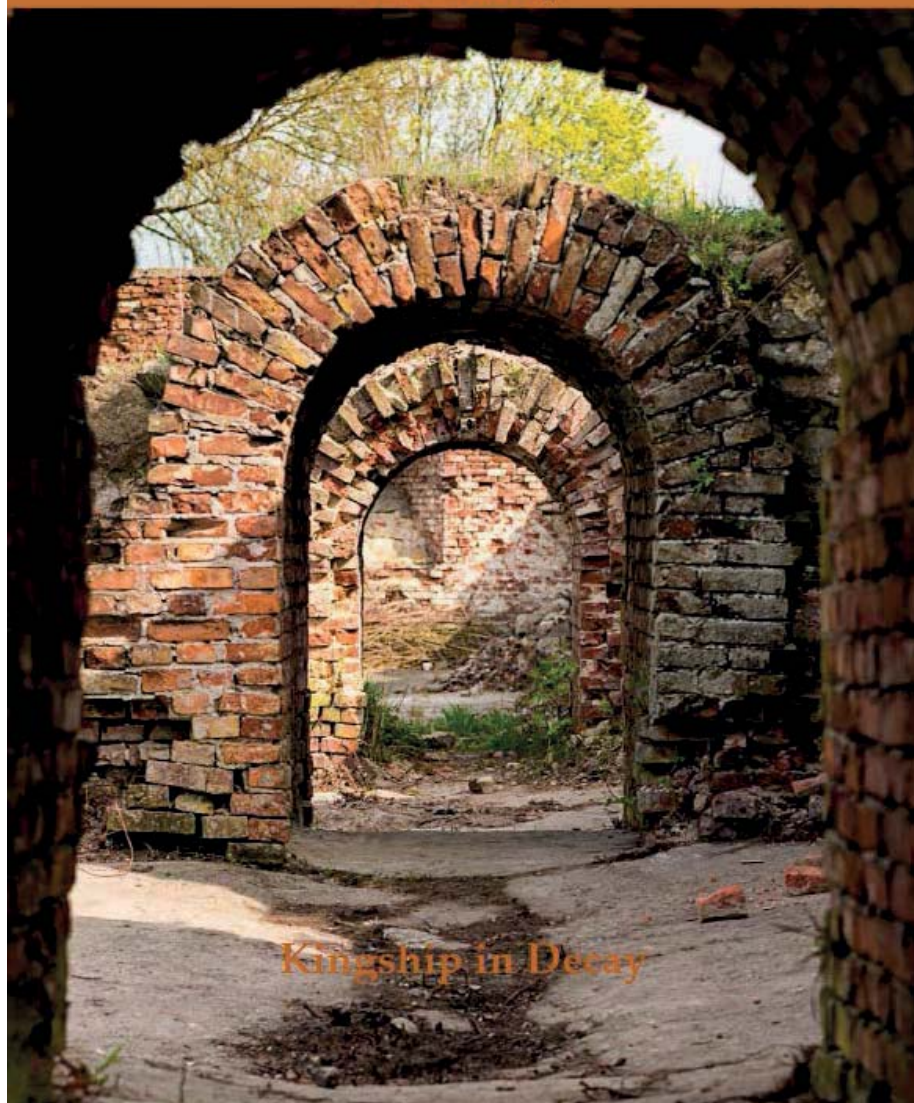


# 1 Kings Explained & Applied 11

Ger de Koning



*Kingship in Decay*



# **1 Kings**

## Explained & Applied



# 1 KINGS

## **Explained & Applied**

The Kingship in Decay

Ger de Koning

Dutch version:

1 Koningen – Toegelicht en toegepast 11

© 2017 Uitgeverij Daniël, Zwolle, NL.

ISBN: 978-90-5798-434-1 (Paperback)

Web shop: [www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl](http://www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl)

Layout for website: Jan Noordhoek

Available as pdf, EPUB and MOBI file on

<https://www.oudesporen.nl/artikelen.php?lang=EN>

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## Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

### Old Testament

|      |                   |
|------|-------------------|
| Gen  | Genesis           |
| Exo  | Exodus            |
| Lev  | Leviticus         |
| Num  | Numbers           |
| Deu  | Deuteronomy       |
| 2Ko  | 2 Korinthiërs     |
| Jos  | Joshua            |
| Jdg  | Judges            |
| Rth  | Ruth              |
| 1Sam | First Samuel      |
| 2Sam | Second Samuel     |
| 1Kgs | First Kings       |
| 2Kgs | Second Kings      |
| 1Chr | First Chronicles  |
| 2Chr | Second Chronicles |
| Ezra | Ezra              |
| Neh  | Nehemiah          |
| Est  | Esther            |
| Job  | Job               |
| Psa  | Psalms            |
| Pro  | Proverbs          |
| Ecc  | Ecclesiastes      |
| Song | Song of Songs     |
| Isa  | Isaiah            |
| Jer  | Jeremiah          |
| Lam  | Lamentations      |
| Eze  | Ezekiel           |
| Dan  | Daniël            |
| Hos  | Hosea             |
| Joel | Joel              |
| Amos | Amos              |
| Oba  | Obadiah           |
| Jona | Jonah             |
| Mic  | Micah             |
| Nah  | Nahum             |
| Hab  | Habakkuk          |
| Zep  | Zephaniah         |
| Hag  | Haggai            |
| Zec  | Zechariah         |
| Mal  | Malachi           |

### New Testament

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| Mt    | Gospel of Matthew                  |
| Mk    | Gospel of Mark                     |
| Lk    | Gospel of Luke                     |
| Jn    | Gospel of John                     |
| Acts  | Acts of the Apostles               |
| Rom   | Letter to the Romans               |
| 1Cor  | First Letter to the Corinthians    |
| 2Cor  | Second Letter to the Corinthians   |
| Gal   | Letter to the Galatians            |
| Eph   | Letter to the Ephesians            |
| Phil  | Letter to the Philippians          |
| Col   | Letter to the Colossians           |
| 1Thes | First Letter to the Thessalonians  |
| 2Thes | Second Letter to the Thessalonians |
| 1Tim  | First Letter to Timothy            |
| 2Tim  | Second Letter to Timothy           |
| Tit   | Letter to Titus                    |
| Phlm  | Letter to Philemon                 |
| Heb   | Letter of the Hebrews              |
| Jam   | Letter of James                    |
| 1Pet  | First Letter of Peter              |
| 2Pet  | Second Letter of Peter             |
| 1Jn   | First Letter of John               |
| 2Jn   | Second Letter of John              |
| 3Jn   | Third Letter of John               |
| Jude  | Letter of Jude                     |
| Rev   | Revelation                         |

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

## The First Book of the Kings

### Introduction

The first book of the Kings and the second book of the Kings are one book in the Hebrew Old Testament. They are seen as the continuation of the historical narrative which started in the books of Samuel. In the first book of the Kings and the second book of the Kings we have to do with the end of a history that started in the book of Joshua and is further described in the book of Judges and the following books. The first book of Chronicles and the second book of Chronicles describe a new beginning, together with the book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah. In it we find a look ahead to the kingdom of peace.

There is a great difference in character between the books of Kings and the books of Chronicles. The books of Kings are written before the exile. The books of Chronicles are written after the exile.

In the first book of the Kings and the second book of the Kings the history is described from the point of view of the responsibility of the kingship, based on the law. There we see the kingship as entrusted to man and through which he is put to the test. That means the fall of the kingship, that especially comes before our attention in the books of Kings in the history of the ten tribes. The judgment consists of the scattering of the ten tribes (722 BC) and having the two tribes (586 BC) carried away into exile. After the fall of Israel (the ten tribes), the fall of Judah (the two tribes), is not long in coming, although in Judah there were times of recovery.

In the books of Chronicles everything is seen from the view point of God's counsel, from the side of grace, how God likes to think back to history. There the history of the two tribes is described, because there is Jerusalem with the temple as the dwelling place of God. In short, in the books of Chronicles we see the priestly side, while both the books of Kings represent the prophetic side.

The books of Kings, in which the end of the history of God's people and then mainly the ten tribes kingdom is described, start with a new development. A few things are added to what is already said, but its aim is to introduce

the new. What is still said of David is to introduce the new king, Solomon. We also have this history in the books of Chronicles. In the first book of the Kings we see how Solomon becomes king. The dangerous conditions require him to become king quickly. There is a lot of acting of people.

That is different in the first book of Chronicles. There David makes Solomon king (1Chr 23:1) and everything happens in complete peace. The anointing of Solomon also happens in rest, without dangers and revolt, because everything happens according to the intention of God (1Chr 29:22). Thus the Lord Jesus will be introduced into the world entirely according to God's plan and independent of man.

The history we have in the books of Kings shows the other side, the other viewpoint, which is just as true. The bad deeds of man are the reason for the kingship of Solomon. He becomes king, humanly spoken, by the vigilance of faithful servants of David, his friends. God uses our actions in His ways, so that through our actions what He has intended to do will happen.



# 1 Kings 1

## Verses 1-4 | The Old David

*1 Now King David was old, advanced in age; and they covered him with clothes, but he could not keep warm. 2 So his servants said to him, "Let them seek a young virgin for my lord the king, and let her attend the king and become his nurse; and let her lie in your bosom, that my lord the king may keep warm." 3 So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. 4 The girl was very beautiful; and she became the king's nurse and served him, but the king did not cohabit with her.*

These verses show the weakness and old age of David. He is almost seventy years old here (2Sam 5:4). We see nothing of that in the first book of Chronicles. He is old early. This is the result of an eventful life with many hardships. Thus, before he became king, he was always on the run from Saul. And when once he was king, he waged many wars (1Chr 22:8). His adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent dramas in his family have also marked him and robbed him of his strength.

David has become bedridden and can't rule anymore. The decisions are taken for him. If blankets no longer give him warmth, the proposal is made to look for a young woman to give him warmth. This proposal does not encounter any resistance from him. They think and act for him. He gets a wife, but does not treat her like his wife, he does not cohabit with her. She is his nurse. This fact is the reason for Adonijah, when his first plan to become king has failed, to try to gain possession of the kingdom through her (1Kgs 2:17).

## Verses 5-10 | Adonijah Wants to Become King

*5 Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. 6 His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?" And he was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom. 7 He had conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest; and*

*following Adonijah they helped him. 8 But Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and the mighty men who belonged to David, were not with Adonijah. 9 Adonijah sacrificed sheep and oxen and fattlings by the stone of Zoheleth, which is beside En-rogel; and he invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants. 10 But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the mighty men, and Solomon his brother.*

The sword would not depart from David's house because of his sin with Bathsheba (2Sam 12:10). He must, according to the judgment that he has pronounced upon himself, pay fourfold for his sin (2Sam 12:6). That is what has happened. God strikes four of His sons. The child of Bathsheba is taken away by God, Amnon is killed by the hand of Absalom, Absalom is killed by Joab and Adonijah will be the fourth one to die.

Adonijah (meaning 'my Lord is Yahweh') is now the eldest son. He was born after Absalom, but from another mother (2Sam 3:3-4). He wants the kingdom, to which he lays a claim as the oldest living son. It is clear to everyone that God has determined it differently. Adonijah knows that too. He betrays this by not inviting Solomon. He resists the word God has spoken concerning Solomon. He is a picture of the antichrist. This is evident from what he says: "I will be king" (verse 5; cf. Isa 14:13-14; Dan 11:36). This is self-will, the principle of sin (1Jn 3:4). This statement shows his pride and his rebellion against God. He follows the same way as Absalom (2Sam 15:1).

Adonijah is a beautiful boy, but with a depraved character. The reason for this is that David never crossed or punished him throughout his life. Here David is not a picture of the Lord Jesus or the Father, but of the exercises of the Spirit of Christ Who wants to bring him to act in accordance with God. However, David is not up to that. He did not assume his responsibility in his family.

Instead, he has been guided by the beautiful appearance of his children. We have also seen this in his attitude towards Absalom (2 Samuel 15-19). Often the testimony that should go out from the families of believers is damaged by preferential treatment in the upbringing of the children. God acts differently. He proves His love precisely through discipline (Pro 13:24).

David never blamed Adonijah. It seems that he never refused him anything he wanted to have or do. He will also never have asked him to account for what he had done, or where he had been and never have punished him for the wrong. Now David must suffer righteously for his permissiveness to him. Those who honor their sons more than God by not giving them the necessary punishment, lose the honor they can expect from their sons.

Joab and Abiathar join Adonijah. Joab can always be found in the place where he thinks he can get the most benefit. He thinks only of himself. He thinks David can't do anything anymore because of old age and weakness and chooses the side of what he thinks is the strongest party. Abiathar is, as Eli's descendant, the representative of the religion over which the judgment has come. He does not accept that judgment, which is apparent from his choice for Adonijah.

Others, like Zadok, Nathan, Benaiah and the heroes of David, are not invited by Adonijah. The true priest (Zadok), the true prophet (Nathan) and the true servants (the heroes) have nothing to do with someone who claims authority. Adonijah doesn't ask them, because he knows they won't accept his offer to join. They have always been and will always be faithful to David. It's a good thing when people don't ask us to join in an evil cause because they know we will say no.

Adonijah hypocritically gives the conspiracy the appearance of paying homage to God by slaughtering animals, as if it were a peace offering. No doubt Adonijah will have abused his father's weakness and old age to carry out his coup. However, his plans will fail because he overlooks God.

### Verses 11-14 | Nathan's Advice

*11 Then Nathan spoke to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, "Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and David our lord does not know [it]? 12 So now come, please let me give you counsel and save your life and the life of your son Solomon. 13 Go at once to King David and say to him, 'Have you not, my lord, O king, sworn to your maidservant, saying, "Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne"? Why then has Adonijah become king?' 14 "Behold, while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words."*

From verse 11 onwards the Holy Spirit describes in detail how Solomon becomes king through the actions of faithful people. God uses the sensible consultation of people dedicated to Him to fulfill His plans regarding Solomon. What happens in 1 Chronicles in rest – there is no question of Adonijah there – without opposition and consultation, takes place here through many events. It is even presented in such a way, that Solomon and Bathsheba will lose their lives if the faithful do not act (verse 12). Thus God watches over His purpose with Solomon, that it may be carried out and will not be frustrated.

The first one to perform is Nathan, the prophet. Humanly speaking, it is thanks to his alertness and perceptiveness that God's plan does not fail. The prophet is the testimony of God's will and is used by Him to carry out His will. With words of wisdom he informs Bathsheba about the situation that Adonijah has become king and that David doesn't know about it. He gives her advice with a view to saving her own life and that of her son Solomon. If Adonijah became king, he would see them as his political opponents and eliminate them.

It is important to warn others who are in danger of their lives. This is about living in God's people and especially about fulfilling God's plans. If they are at risk, there must be a strong warning and consultation to ward off the danger. Our life is Christ. If there is a danger that we will not be able to show Him as our life, we must issue a warning and look at how we can prevent this.

### Verses 15-21 | Bathsheba With David

*15 So Bathsheba went in to the king in the bedroom. Now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was ministering to the king. 16 Then Bathsheba bowed and prostrated herself before the king. And the king said, "What do you wish?" 17 She said to him, "My lord, you swore to your maidservant by the LORD your God, [saying], 'Surely your son Solomon shall be king after me and he shall sit on my throne.' 18 Now, behold, Adonijah is king; and now, my lord the king, you do not know [it]. 19 He has sacrificed oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king and Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army, but he has not invited Solomon your servant. 20 As for you now, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to*

*tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. 21 Otherwise it will come about, as soon as my lord the king sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be considered offenders."*

The hearts of Bathsheba and Nathan are one. What one says, the other does. There is unity in speaking and acting. Bathsheba does what Nathan has suggested. She goes to the old David, who doesn't even seem to be able to get off his bed anymore. She approaches him with the appropriate acknowledgement that he is her 'lord' (cf. 1Pet 3:6a).

When David asks her what she wishes, she speaks to him the words that the prophet Nathan told her. She reminds him of what he promised her with regard to her son Solomon, and calls him to his responsibility to the people.

### **Verses 22-27 | Nathan With David**

*22 Behold, while she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. 23 They told the king, saying, "Here is Nathan the prophet." And when he came in before the king, he prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. 24 Then Nathan said, "My lord the king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne'? 25 For he has gone down today and has sacrificed oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king's sons and the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest, and behold, they are eating and drinking before him; and they say, '[Long] live King Adonijah!' 26 But me, [even] me your servant, and Zadok the priest and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and your servant Solomon, he has not invited. 27 Has this thing been done by my lord the king, and you have not shown to your servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"*

While Bathsheba is still talking to David, Nathan appears on stage as appointed. He approaches the matter from a different angle than he had let Bathsheba say. He pretends it as if David has ordered Adonijah to succeed him. In doing so, he presents the case as it has been brought about.

He tells David what Adonijah did and said. What he wants to know from David is whether he really gave the command, for none of the faithful knows anything about it. His question is whether David wants to give clarity.

### Verses 28-31 | Solomon Will Be King

*28 Then King David said, "Call Bathsheba to me." And she came into the king's presence and stood before the king. 29 The king vowed and said, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, 30 surely as I vowed to you by the LORD the God of Israel, saying, 'Your son Solomon shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place'; I will indeed do so this day." 31 Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground, and prostrated herself before the king and said, "May my lord King David live forever."*

From verse 28 it appears that Bathsheba left after Nathan's arrival. When Nathan has spoken, she is called again. David addresses the word to her. He swears by the LORD, the God of Israel, because it is His counsel. He wants to execute this council. He seems to be aware of a new attack by the enemy, but also that the LORD will redeem him from it, as He has done so many times before (cf. 2Sam 4:9; Psa 34:22). He solemnly declares that Solomon will sit on the throne in his place. He speaks about "your son Solomon". Thus, three times it is spoken about Solomon as the son of Bathsheba (verses 12,17,30).

Solomon is also the son of the people. One day the people will say: "A Son will be given us" (Isa 9:6). The Bridegroom in Song of Songs speaks of the willing people (Darby Translation) by whom He is put on His royal chariot (Song 6:12). The way is made for him by his people, as David was helped by the heroes in the acquisition of his kingship at the time (1Chr 12:23). So through our faithfulness we can hasten the day of God (2Pet 3:11-12a).

### Verses 32-37 | Command to Make Solomon King

*32 Then King David said, "Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada." And they came into the king's presence. 33 The king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. 34 Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king over Israel, and blow the trumpet and say, '[Long] live King Solomon!' 35 Then you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne and be king in my place; for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah." 36 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, "Amen! Thus may the LORD, the God of my lord the king, say. 37 As the LORD has been with my lord the king, so may*

*He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David!"*

Here David speaks of "my son Solomon" (verse 33), the son of David. David calls Zadok, Nathan and Benaiah. He gives Zadok and Nathan the order to anoint Solomon as king over Israel. They must make his kingship known by blowing the trumpet and saying "[long] live King Solomon!" See also "[long] live King Adonijah!" in verse 25 and "may my lord King David live forever" in verse 31.

It is about who is king in the practice of our lives. Although the kingdom of God has not yet been openly established, we may already be in that kingdom (Rom 14:17-18; Col 1:13). The application of this chapter is whether the Lord Jesus is given the place of dominion in our lives and that from the heart. It is about giving Him the place in the practice of our lives God has given Him, whether He is on the throne in our lives, or whether we ourselves are on the throne of our lives.

David orders Solomon to sit on "my throne". The kingship of Solomon was disputed. Therefore there had to be this action in this way. The kingship of David and also that of Saul has never been disputed. Solomon must sit on the mule, the animal of peace (Zec 9:9). Riding the king's mule is the sign that he who sits on it will take his place on his throne as his successor. David says that he has appointed him ruler over Israel and over Judah. He can say this because he is completely in accordance with God's plan.

Benaiah agrees wholeheartedly. He wishes that the word of the king will be a word of the LORD, and that the LORD will be with Solomon, as he was with David. He even wishes Solomon to be greater than David. This is entirely in accordance with the desires of David. Thus the reign of the Lord Jesus will be many times greater than the way of humiliation He once went on earth.

### **Verses 38-40 | Solomon Anointed King**

*38 So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. 39 Zadok the priest then took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet,*

*and all the people said, "[Long] live King Solomon!" 40 All the people went up after him, and the people were playing on flutes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth shook at their noise.*

The anointing of Solomon is done by Zadok, together with Nathan (verse 45). For this purpose the horn of oil is used from the tent that David erected on Zion for the ark (2Sam 6:17). The tabernacle is still in Gibeon. The oil will have been the holy anointing oil, with which the priests and the objects of the tabernacle were anointed (Exo 30:23-30). There has been shouting and cheering because of the anointing of Solomon.

### **Verses 41-49 | Adonijah Is Informed**

*41 Now 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 the city making such an uproar?" 42 While he was still speaking, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came. Then Adonijah said, "Come in, for you are a valiant man and bring good news." 43 But Jonathan replied to Adonijah, "No! Our lord King David has made Solomon king. 44 The king has also sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites; and they have made him ride on the king's mule. 45 Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon, and they have come up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This is the noise which you have heard. 46 Besides, Solomon has even taken his seat on the throne of the kingdom. 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 his throne greater than your throne!' And the king bowed himself on the bed. 48 The king has also said thus, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has granted one to sit on my throne today while my own eyes see [it].'" 49 Then all the guests of Adonijah were terrified; and they arose and each went on his way.*

The whole event with Solomon takes place during the meal that Adonijah has caused to his own honor. The company is finished with the meal and is about to declare Adonijah king when Joab's skilled ear distinguishes the sound from the trumpet. While he makes a remark about this, Jonathan comes in. Adonijah is not yet aware of any evil. He even sees the arrival of Jonathan as a good omen.



Jonathan is still a messenger, as he was eight or nine years earlier (2Sam 15:27; 17:17). He comes to Adonijah and his company with the message of the kingship of Solomon. He mentions how this was done. It seems that he does so enthusiastically, rather than with fright.

Jonathan testifies to David's choice and what David has arranged to make Solomon king. The faithful have had Solomon sit on the mule of David. Nathan and Zadok anointed him and took him to the city with cheers. There Solomon took a seat on the royal throne. All the ministers of David have agreed. Like Benaiah, they have expressed the wish that God will make Solomon's name greater than that of David and his throne more exalted than David's throne. Finally, Jonathan also tells something we have not read before: that David has bowed down in worship on the bed (cf. Gen 47:31b).

All acting with Solomon and taking his place on the throne is entirely according to David's thoughts. He praises God for what his eyes see. He resembles Simeon who also saw the LORD's salvation with his eyes (Lk 2:29-30). Possibly David also says on this occasion what we read in 1 Chronicles 29 (1Chr 29:10-19). As a matter of fact, it is a great satisfaction for God-fearing parents, when they fall asleep, to see that their children serve God and His people.

The triumph of the wicked is of short duration (Job 20:4-5). Jonathan's message causes enormous shock. Adonijah's company is fleeing. This is the terror that will catch all when they are horrified to learn that God's Anointed returns with power and majesty. This will happen at the moment when people celebrate the results they believe they have achieved in their striving to control everything to their own devices with the exclusion of God (Psa 2:1-3; 1Thes 5:3).

### **Verses 50-53 | Solomon Spares Adonijah**

*50 And Adonijah was afraid of Solomon, and he arose, went and took hold of the horns of the altar. 51 Now it was told Solomon, saying, "Behold, Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon, for behold, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'" 52 Solomon said, "If he is a worthy man, not one of*

*his hairs will fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he will die.”*  
53 *So King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and prostrated himself before King Solomon, and Solomon said to him, “Go to your house.”*

Adonijah and his company flee away. They don't think about resisting. The guests of Adonijah go as fast and as far away as possible, away from Adonijah. What first seemed to be a guarantee of benefit has become a life-threatening place. Now to be found in the company of Adonijah equals suicide.

Adonijah himself flees to the altar. It is not mentioned where it is. There he seeks protection by seizing the horns of the altar (Exo 21:13-14). The horns symbolize power and strength. Seizing the horns of the altar means seeking protection in a place of salvation and life. By seizing the horns, the criminal places himself under the saving and helping grace of God, Who extinguishes sin and thereby takes away punishment.

For the first time and four times in these verses, there is talk of “King Solomon”. Solomon, as *king*, judges Adonijah and has him brought to him. Adonijah recognizes him forced as king. We voluntarily acknowledge the Lord Jesus as Lord.

Solomon not only gives him life, but also his possessions. He is free to go to his house. Solomon also attaches a condition to it. Adonijah will stay alive as long as he does nothing that embarrasses the trust he gets. As soon as he does something wrong, he will be killed. In his first act in government, Solomon shows mercy and demands justice. So it will be when the Lord Jesus reigns (Psa 101:8).

## 1 Kings 2

### Verses 1-4 | David Encourages Solomon

*1 As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, 2 "I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. 3 Keep the charge of the LORD 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 succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, 4 so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'*

David sees that the end of his life on earth is near. That is the moment to command his son Solomon some things. In his introductory words he speaks the word which Joshua also spoke (Jos 23:14) and which applies to all people, except to the believers who belong to the church. Believers who belong to the church do not expect to go “the way of all the earth”, but expect the coming of the Lord Jesus to take them to Himself in the air (1Thes 4:15-18).

David also speaks to Solomon the encouraging words which Moses and the LORD once spoke to Joshua (Deu 31:23; Jos 1:9). Farewells of believers like Moses and David contain encouragements for the next generation (cf. 2Tim 2:1). Just as David refers his son Solomon to what is “written in the Law of Moses” (verse 3), so must the Word of God be the norm for us in maintaining God’s rights. If we keep to this, He will make His Word true to us. This also applies to our children, both physically and spiritually.

Being strong and showing oneself a man, Solomon can do by keeping the commandments of the LORD. He must show the keeping of these commandments by walking in His ways, which means “to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies”. These four words indicate the different intentions of the law and serve to make the rich and multiple contents of the law more individual. Adherence to this is the condition for wisdom and prosperity (Deu 29:9).

The blessings in both books of Kings are always made dependent on obedience, which is indicated by the word “if”. That not a man will lack who will sit on the throne does not mean that there will always be someone who will be sitting on David’s throne. It means that David’s offspring will not be permanently eradicated, and there never will be someone to sit on the throne again. The final fulfilment will take place in Christ.

### Verses 5-6 | Command to Deal With Joab

5 *“Now you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed; he also shed the blood of war in peace. And he put the blood of war on his belt about his waist, and on his sandals on his feet. 6 So act according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to Sheol in peace.*

The murder committed by Joab on Abner should have been punished by David, but he did not do so out of weakness (2Sam 3:39). However, he has no rest and instructs Solomon to do so. Also the murder of Amasa (2Sam 20:10) committed by Joab has yet to be punished. Solomon must exercise God’s right, as the Lord Jesus will do one day.

Justice must have its course. Joab unjustly smeared his service (belt) and his walk (shoes) with blood. Therefore he will not die peacefully, but by the sword of judgment. In the case of Joab, the general, special wisdom is needed in order for the right to have its course in the right way. Otherwise the army could revolt. David connects righteousness to wisdom or understanding (Jer 23:5). Justice must be exercised with Divine wisdom. Only then no mistakes are made. The work of righteousness is peace (Isa 32:17).

### Verse 7 | Kindness for Barzillai

7 *But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for they assisted me when I fled from Absalom your brother.*

David thinks not only of judgment, but also of reward. He did not punish directly, nor did he reward directly, but both are properly exercised. He never forgot the benefit Barzillai did to him by giving him his sons (2Sam

17:27-29; 19:32-38). These sons will be allowed to eat with Solomon in his realm of peace and justice, they will be allowed to lie down in that realm. The dedication of parents to Christ is rewarded in the children (cf. 2Tim 1:5).

The blessings we have received from our friends should not be buried in their graves or in our graves, but our children should reward them to their children. Perhaps Solomon derived the saying from that: "Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend" (Pro 27:10a).

### Verses 8-9 | Command to Deal With Shimei

*8 Behold, there is with you Shimei the son of Gera the Benjamite, of Bahurim; now it was he who cursed me with a violent curse on the day I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' 9 Now therefore, do not let him go unpunished, for you are a wise man; and you will know what you ought to do to him, and you will bring his gray hair down to Sheol with blood."*

David was also weak with Shimei. Or is it the generosity of David that he has endured this evil for so long in his environment? Shimei made a terrible curse when David fled from Absalom (2Sam 16:5-8). That David spared him then (2Sam 19:19-23) can be an understandable and perhaps even admirable weakness. But what Shimei has done must be punished. That is why Solomon is given the task not to let Shimei go unpunished. Solomon's way of dealing with Shimei again bears witness to Divine wisdom.

Both in judging Joab and Shimei, David appeals to the wisdom of Solomon (verses 6,9). These two cases indicate that both bad *deeds*, done by Joab, and bad *words*, pronounced by Shimei, are judged.

### Verses 10-12 | David Dies – Solomon Is King Alone

*10 Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. 11 The days that David reigned over Israel [were] forty years: seven years he reigned in Hebron and thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem. 12 And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.*

What is said here of David (cf. 1Chr 29:28), will unfortunately not be said of Solomon. David has ruled a total of forty years.

When David died, Solomon alone is king. He continued the kingship of his father David on his throne. By God's blessing his kingship becomes great (2Chr 1:1).

Through the one throne on which both David and Solomon sit, we see that together they are a picture of the Lord Jesus in His reign. In David we see a reign which he has obtained in battle; in Solomon this is a reign which he exercises in peace and justice.

### Verses 13-25 | Solomon Deals With Adonijah

*13 Now Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, "Do you come peacefully?" And he said, "Peacefully." 14 Then he said, "I have something [to say] to you." And she said, "Speak." 15 So he said, "You know that the kingdom was mine and that all Israel expected me to be king; however, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother's, for it was his from the LORD. 16 Now I am making one request of you; do not refuse me." And she said to him, "Speak." 17 Then he said, "Please speak to Solomon the king, for he will not refuse you, that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as a wife." 18 Bathsheba said, "Very well; I will speak to the king for you." 19 So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king arose to meet her, bowed before her, and sat on his throne; then he had a throne set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. 20 Then she said, "I am making one small request of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Ask, my mother, for I will not refuse you." 21 So she said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as a wife." 22 King Solomon answered and said to his mother, "And why are you asking Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him also the kingdom—for he is my older brother—even for him, for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruah!" 23 Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "May God do so to me and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life. 24 Now therefore, as the LORD 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 today." 25 So King Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him so that he died.*

After Solomon came to power as king, not all opposition has been completely banned. There is still someone who wants to attract to himself the authority given by God to Solomon. We must always be vigilant to such a danger, both within ourselves and with others. Solomon's brother Adonijah wants to do another hold on power. He wants to do that by taking Abishag as his wife along a detour.

He cunningly frames his coup. He is pretending to have a small request, but one that is very far-reaching. He uses Bathsheba for this. She is suspicious and asks if he comes peacefully. However, he speaks very convincingly, even using the name of the LORD. The feelings of Bathsheba are reassured. She sees nothing special behind the request and tells him she will go to the king.

Solomon treats his mother with the necessary honor. He gives her the opportunity to make her "small request" and promised not to refuse her. Bathsheba makes her request. However, Solomon sees through what is behind it (cf. 2Sam 12:8; 3:7; 16:21). As is customary in the Orient, marrying the wife or concubine of a deceased king was at the same time a claim to the throne. He also knows that Abiathar and Joab are involved.

Solomon acts in justice in judgment with Adonijah because of his evil intent. He sends Benaiah to carry out the sentence. Benaiah is the man who first gained victories in secret for the benefit of God's people. Now he shares in the open government of Solomon and is an upholder of the law of God.

Benaiah is a special man. His name means "built up by the LORD" or "the LORD has insight, is wise". Several people bear that name; but the man so closely associated with David is found in 2 Samuel 8; 20; 23; 1 Kings 1; 2; 4. [See a more extended description of Benaiah in the explanation of 2 Samuel 23:20-23].

### **Verses 26-27 | Solomon Deals With Abiathar**

*26 Then to Abiathar the priest the king said, "Go to Anathoth to your own field, for you deserve to die; but I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and because you were afflicted in everything with which my father was afflicted." 27 So Solomon dis-*

*missed Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD, which He had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.*

Solomon doesn't forget the good things which Abiathar did. Therefore he does not kill him, but banishes him. He expels him from the priesthood. With this he fulfills the word of the LORD, which he spoke to Eli, the priest from the line of Ithamar, more than eighty years ago (1Sam 2:30-35; 3:12). Because of his unfaithfulness, the priesthood is taken away from him. In his place, Zadok is taken from the line of Eleazar (verse 35). That it all lasted so long shows the patience of God.

### **Verses 28-34 | Solomon Deals With Joab**

*28 Now the news came to Joab, for Joab had followed Adonijah, although he had not followed Absalom. And Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar. 29 It was told King Solomon that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD, and behold, he is beside the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, fall upon him." 30 So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and said to him, "Thus the king has said, 'Come out.'" But he said, "No, for I will die here." And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, "Thus spoke Joab, and thus he answered me." 31 The king said to him, "Do as he has spoken and fall upon him and bury him, that you may remove from me and from my father's house the blood which Joab shed without cause. 32 The LORD will return his blood on his own head, because he fell upon two men more righteous and better than he and killed them with the sword, while my father David did not know [it]: Abner the son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. 33 So shall their blood return on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever; but to David and his descendants and his house and his throne, may there be peace from the LORD forever." 34 Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and fell upon him and put him to death, and he was buried at his own house in the wilderness.*

Joab sees that he will be judged and flees to the tent of the LORD. There he takes refuge to the horns of the altar, as Adonijah did before (1Kgs 1:50; cf. Exo 21:13-14). Joab did not have the right to take hold of the horns, because he had not *accidentally* killed someone. Whether he was aware of this, given



the long time that has passed, is unclear. He may also have fled because he assisted Adonijah in his uprising and therefore feared punishment.

Solomon knows that the altar is not intended as a refuge for murderers. Therefore he has Joab killed by Benaiah. Thus the ungodly is discarded from the king and his throne is confirmed by righteousness (Pro 25:5). If a throne is confirmed by righteousness, there will be eternal peace. Solomon points this out in verse 33.

### Verse 35 | A New Commander and a New Priest

*35 The king appointed Benaiah the son of Jehoiada over the army in his place, and the king appointed Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar.*

Benaiah is now openly appointed as army commander instead of Joab who has behaved unworthy of this position. The priest Zadok replaces Abiathar (1Sam 2:35).

### Verses 36-46 | Solomon Deals With Shimei

*36 Now the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, "Build for yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there, and do not go out from there to any place. 37 For on the day you go out and cross over the brook Kidron, you will know for certain that you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head." 38 Shimei then said to the king, "The word is good. As my lord the king has said, so your servant will do." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days. 39 But it came about at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away to Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, "Behold, your servants are in Gath." 40 Then Shimei arose and saddled his donkey, and went to Gath to Achish to look for his servants. And Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath. 41 It was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and had returned. 42 So the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD and solemnly warn you, saying, 'You will know for certain that on the day you depart and go anywhere, you shall surely die'? And you said to me, 'The word which I have heard is good.' 43 Why then have you not kept the oath of the LORD, and the command which I have laid on you?" 44 The king also said to Shimei, "You know all the evil which you acknowledge in your heart, which you did to my father David;*

*therefore the LORD shall return your evil on your own head. 45 But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever." 46 So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he went out and fell upon him so that he died. Thus the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon.*

Shimei gets the chance to prove his obedience by coming to and living in Jerusalem, near Solomon. He is told where the limits of his freedom of expression lie. Jerusalem becomes his prison. He agrees with the terms and conditions. The language he uses is reminiscent of the consent of the people of Israel to the conditions for obtaining the blessing of God (Exo 19:8). It will be Shimei as Israel, because like Israel, he is not keeping his promise either.

Shimei calls for judgment upon himself by not keeping the promise made. Here we see the person who does not know himself. It can take a long time, but then what is in his heart becomes public. Shimei adheres to the conditions, until two slaves run away, resulting in a personal loss. He can't let that go. To do so, he crosses the limits that have been set for him and breaks the oath that he has taken. His runaway slaves are more important than his promise to Solomon to be obedient.

Solomon hears it and gets him brought to him. He reminds him of the appointment. He also reminds him of what he did to his father David and that he did so consciously. Solomon orders Benaiah to kill him. The judgment is carried out quickly, as is appropriate for a king who rules in justice.

In what Shimei does, we see the principle that a person can win the whole world, but can lose his soul (Mt 16:26). What use is it to Shimei that he has his servants back, while it costs him his life? People can admit that they are sinners without drawing the right conclusions. In contrast to this unfaithful conduct, David's throne stands forever.

Solomon is confirmed in the kingship when he has removed all stumbling blocks from his kingdom (cf. Mt 13:41-43). Thus, the Christian will know and enjoy the peace of God if he removes from his life everything that prevents his life from being ruled by the Lord Jesus as the Prince of Peace.

## 1 Kings 3

### **Verse 1 | Solomon and the Daughter of Pharaoh**

*1 Then Solomon formed a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem.*

Solomon marries the daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt. She is not his only wife (1Kgs 11:1). Some see in her, a woman from the nations, a picture of the church. Others say that she is not a picture of the church, but an unholy woman (2Chr 8:11), so that already at the beginning of Solomon's reign his weakness for women appears.

### **Verses 2-4 | Sacrificing on the High Places**

*2 The people were still sacrificing on the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days. 3 Now Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. 4 The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.*

Here too we see that the government of Solomon is not perfect. There is no direct talk of idolatry, but the heights do provide the opportunity for it, which is also seized by the people. Also there is the height in Gibeon, the main height. There is the tabernacle and there is the bronze altar of burnt offering (1Chr 16:37-39; 2Chr 1:3-5). Gibeon is located about eight kilometers north of Jerusalem in the area of Benjamin. Solomon goes there. He has not yet entered into the thoughts of his father David, who has searched for the ark.

David made the threshing floor of Ornan the place where the temple is to be built (1Chr 21:28-30; 22:1). The ark is in Jerusalem and there Solomon sacrifices after his dream (verse 15). The ark speaks of the Lord Jesus and the place where He is the center. Solomon could have made his sacrifices

there earlier, but God tolerates it from him and His people to sacrifice them on the heights. It is not wrong, but it is not the best either.

### **Verse 5 | The LORD Appears to Solomon**

*5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what [you wish] Me to give you."*

The LORD appears to Solomon in a dream. That is not a direct revelation, it is somewhat covered, but still clear. Possibly Solomon made that great sacrifice to ask the LORD a question.

God comes to him in a dream, when he sleeps. His senses are closed to the prickles of his surroundings, so that God's access to his spirit can be all the more free and immediate. In this way God usually spoke to the prophets (Num 12:6b) and also to others to reveal His will to them (Job 33:14-15). These Godly dreams undoubtedly differ from the usual dreams of people caused by busy activities (Ecc 5:3a).

The LORD takes the initiative and says in the dream to Solomon that he may ask what he wants and that He will give him that. This is a great challenge. If that question were put to us, what would we answer? This question is indeed put to us by the Lord Jesus. He says to us that He gives us when we ask Him (Mt 7:7-8; Jn 14:13; 16:23; 1Jn 5:15). Do we ask Him what we want?

### **Verses 6-9 | What Solomon Asks for**

*6 Then Solomon said, "You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You; and You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as [it is] this day. 7 Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. 9 So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"*

Solomon gratefully acknowledges all that God has given David and made him king as the son of David. He acknowledges his dependence and his inability to perform that great task. As to himself he feels helpless, young and inexperienced – he is less than twenty years old here – while he sees the people as a great crowd to govern. In the first place he does not think of himself, but of the people as God’s people. He says he stands “in the midst of” God’s people. The true leader is not above God’s people, but is part of them (cf. 1Pet 5:2a).

Solomon asks for wisdom (2Chr 1:10), because this is what is needed when there is a question to distinguish between good and evil. Wisdom is not having a good intellect. Wisdom is applying knowledge at the right time and in the right way. Solomon had a wise father who pointed out the importance of wisdom to him (Pro 4:3-9). It is more important to pass this on to our children than to give them a good education (cf. Isa 7:15).

In Job 28 it also is said what wisdom and understanding is: Fear the LORD on the one hand and turn away from evil on the other (Job 28:28). Wisdom is the part of the perfected (1Cor 2:6a), that is the spiritual mature (Heb 5:14). When a person has learned to avoid evil and to follow the good, he is mature.

### Verses 10-15 | What Solomon Gets

*10 It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 God said to him, “Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. 13 I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. 14 If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.” 15 Then Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and made peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.*

A prayer like Solomon's is good in the eyes of the LORD. Solomon did not think of himself in his prayer. He did not ask for things that are pleasing to himself, but for something that is important for the good of the people. He has prayed in accordance with the LORD, with what is really important to Him and these are the interests of His people. Therefore He also gives what Solomon did not ask for, the less important (cf. Mt 6:31-33).

The condition of obedience is set to have a long life (verse 14). Solomon did not comply with that. He counteracted the king's law by taking many women (Deu 17:17a) and therefore died at a relatively young age.

When Solomon is awakened from his dream, he offers offerings to the LORD out of gratitude for the answering of his prayer. The burnt offerings speak of the fact that all honor belongs to God. They speak of the perfect work of the Lord Jesus totally dedicated to God on the cross. Its application to us is that we also completely dedicate our lives to God. The peace offerings show that we know ourselves in fellowship with God's people to serve God together with them and to glorify Him. He has a special feast for all his servants.

### Verses 16-27 | Solomon's First Judgment

*16 Then two women who were harlots came to the king and stood before him. 17 The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth to a child while she [was] in the house. 18 It happened on the third day after I gave birth, that this woman also gave birth to a child, and we were together. There was no stranger with us in the house, only the two of us in the house. 19 This woman's son died in the night, because she lay on it. 20 So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead son in my bosom. 21 When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, behold, he was dead; but when I looked at him carefully in the morning, behold, he was not my son, whom I had borne." 22 Then the other woman said, "No! For the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son." But the first woman said, "No! For the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son." Thus they spoke before the king. 23 Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son who is living, and your son is the dead one'; and the other says, 'No! For your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.'" 24 The king said, "Get me a sword." So they*

*brought a sword before the king. 25 The king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." 26 Then the woman whose child [was] the living one spoke to the king, for she was deeply stirred over her son and said, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him." But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide [him]!" 27 Then the king said, "Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him. She is his mother."*

Solomon's wisdom is expressed in a special way in the judgment he pronounces in a dispute between two harlots who both claim the right to a living baby. He is also wise in other respects, such as in government and building, but the first wisdom is that in judgment. We also see this with the Lord Jesus, when He reigns as the true Solomon. First, then, the judgment seat is erected, from where He judges the world.

What does it mean to say that we are talking about two harlots? What does the change of babies say? Nor is there any mention of fathers. Everything takes place in the night: the death of the baby, the exchange out of jealousy by one person, the appearance of life, the sleep of the other by which the exchange could take place.

How can justice be done here properly? This is only possible if the truth is known. This happens in the light and through the Word, for in it and through it everything becomes public. It is not about carrying out the judgment, but about making public what is in the heart and acting in accordance with it.

What does this judgment show us about the women? A human judge can only judge about what he sees and hears. He contemplates all testimonies. However, there are no testimonies to be given here, because there are no witnesses. Then it comes to the heart. But no one knows that. Only God knows the hearts of men (Jer 17:9-10) and he to whom God gives wisdom for this purpose.

We see this with Solomon. Solomon reveals through his wisdom the heart of man. Here the truth can only come to the surface by revealing the state of the heart. Solomon knows the heart of man. That is not by psychology, but by God's wisdom. We see how Solomon through his judgment expresses the inner of the true mother (verse 26).

The testimony about David is even more beautiful. We see this in the book of Psalms where we notice that he knows the heart of God and the Lord Jesus. The wisdom of Solomon is limited to the heart of man.

The real mother starts talking about a case where no witnesses were present. The question is: how can it be determined who the real mother is? Is Solomon able to do so? He has insight in human nature, in this case in the natural feelings of a mother. Nowadays, DNA testing can (often) lead to a definite answer. The more science, the less wisdom is needed, the less dependency on God to make a matter public. Learning does not necessarily make wiser.

The real mother discovers in the morning, in the light, what happened in the night. In the light, reality is seen. The false mother confesses the right to the living child, but lies against the truth. She is attracted by life, claims it for herself, but is strange to it and has no right to it. The problem is that both women claim to speak the truth, while there are no witnesses who can agree with either of them. This means that only someone who can look deeper than the confession can bring the truth to light.

Solomon summarizes the problem, a problem that can only be solved by wisdom. Only wisdom brings the truth to light. Only Divine wisdom is able to test the authenticity of the confession and to reveal the true state of the heart. We can say that we love Christ, that we have life from God, but this will have to be evident from our reactions to the Word of God when it comes to us, for the sword that Solomon gets brought is a picture of that (Eph 6:17b; Heb 4:12).

What Solomon proposes as a solution to the insoluble is unprecedented in the judiciary. His solution brings about a spontaneous expression of maternal feelings. We see here that the sword is applied to the situation. As said, the sword is a picture of the Word of God. If there are problems in our lives or in the church, they can only be solved if they are seen in the light of God's Word. God's Word brings the truth to light. That also happens here.

The application of the sword expresses true love in its selflessness. True love wants to save life, even if it loses it herself. The false love gives away life if it is not for herself and also takes away life from others, does not grant it to others. Solomon assigns life to her who respect it, who loves it.



**Verse 28 | Fear for Solomon**

*28 When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.*

There is awe and respect for the king, but also fear. If you are dealing with such a king, he knows you completely, through and through. We have to deal with a Lord under Whose dominion we stand and Who judges between brother and brother and sister and sister because He knows the hearts. That awareness will be a comfort if there are false accusations, but it is a threat if we are not sincere. He knows the intentions of our hearts.

# 1 Kings 4

## Introduction

At the end of the previous chapter we have an example of the wisdom God gave to Solomon. In this chapter we read about his wealth and prosperity. He receives what God has promised to give him after he has asked for wisdom (1Kgs 3:13). We see his wisdom here in the way in which he has regulated and maintains internal order in his empire:

1. his princes (verses 1-6),
2. his governors who provide for his food (verses 7-19,27),
3. the number, prosperity and peace of its subjects (verses 20,25),
4. the vastness of his rule (verses 21,24),
5. the amount of food for his home (verses 22-23) and
6. the food for his horses (verse 26).

The chapter concludes with a detailed description of his wisdom and knowledge and the fame that comes from it (verses 29-34). But however great Solomon may be, the Lord Jesus is infinitely greater than he (Mt 12:42).

The situation under Solomon's government is very different from that under his father David's government. David has always had to deal with internal revolt and also with enemies from outside. Solomon, after having dealt with some remaining enemies, until his public abandoning of the LORD (1Kgs 11:1-8), has known only peace, security, joy and abundance.

He has an army and an army commander, but he has not waged any war with a hostile power. None of the nations who are subject to him has tried to cast off his yoke or make any effort. On the contrary, they were happy in their dependence on him. Herein, his kingdom is a type of the kingdom of the Messiah. For the Messiah is promised that He will have the nations for His inheritance (Psa 2:8) and that princes will bow down before Him (Isa 49:7).

## Verses 1-19 | The Rule of Solomon

1 Now King Solomon was king over all Israel. 2 These were his officials: Azariah the son of Zadok [was] the priest; 3 Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha [were] secretaries; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud [was] the recorder; 4 and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [was] over the army; and Zadok and Abiathar [were] priests; 5 and Azariah the son of Nathan [was] over the deputies; and Zabud the son of Nathan, a priest, [was] the king's friend; 6 and Ahishar was over the household; and Adoniram the son of Abda [was] over the men subject to forced labor. 7 Solomon had twelve deputies over all Israel, who provided for the king and his household; each man had to provide for a month in the year. 8 These are their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim; 9 Ben-deker in Makaz and Shaalbim and Beth-shemesh and Elonbeth-hanan; 10 Ben-hesed, in Arubboth (Socoh [was] his and all the land of Hopher); 11 Ben-abinadab, [in] all the height of Dor (Taphath the daughter of Solomon was his wife); 12 Baana the son of Ahilud, [in] Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean which is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah as far as the other side of Jokmeam; 13 Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead (the towns of Jair, the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead were his: the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars [were] his); 14 Ahinadab the son of Iddo, [in] Mahanaim; 15 Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he also married Basemath the daughter of Solomon); 16 Baana the son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; 17 Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar; 18 Shimei the son of Ela, in Benjamin; 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 deputy who [was] in the land.

Solomon rules over “all Israel” (verse 1), that is to say, over an – as yet – undivided empire. The whole empire is under his authority. In his government of the empire he has appointed several people as officials to perform different tasks. The first official who is mentioned is a priest (verse 2). The fact that Azariah is *the* priest probably means that he is the high priest. Here the priesthood is attached to the kingship. The Lord Jesus is the true King-Priest (cf. Zec 6:13).

To be a good official we must be a priest. This means that our relationship to God, our approach to Him, determines our kingship towards people. Peter speaks about this in relation to us in his letter. He first says that we

are “a holy priesthood” (1Pet 2:5) and that we offer up spiritual sacrifices. That is what happens towards God. Then he speaks of “a royal priesthood” (1Pet 2:9). That is what is happening towards the people.

The secretaries, or writers (verse 3a), have an important task. They prepare royal decrees or ordinances for trade treaties and military unions, of which they keep the official records. There is also a recorder – who had also served under David (2Sam 8:16; 20:24) – someone who is over the army, someone who is over the deputies, a priest who is a friend of the king, someone who is over the household and someone who is over the men subject to forced labor (verses 3b-6).

This division of tasks among the officials indicates that everyone has his own responsibility, each of whom must be faithful in order to fulfil the task assigned to him in accordance with the law. As long as all are aware of their direct responsibility to Solomon, everything goes well. It goes wrong when tasks are transferred from one another without having received an assignment from Solomon. This is exactly how it works in the church. If everyone listens to the Lord Jesus and does what He says, things go well.

In addition to the officials, Solomon also appointed “twelve deputies over all Israel” (verse 7) to serve him and his interests. Every deputy has a duty for a month to provide for the king and his household. Dividing his task over so many people and deploying them at different times is wise policy.

The distribution of the burden makes the task to be performed a task of which no one will succumb because too much and too long work would have to be done. It is like caring for the tabernacle and the temple which was also a care divided over a large number of priests and Levites. It also reduced the risk of abusing the position in order to enrich oneself or to obtain special benefits.

Two of the deputies are married to Solomon’s daughters, which means an extra honor in addition to the position they hold. One of them is Ben-abinadab which means son of Abinadab (verse 11), with whom the ark has been in the house for twenty years (1Sam 7:1-2). The other is Ahi-maaz (verse 15).

The deputies are divided over the country, each being given its own area of responsibility. This also has a lesson for the church. Not only are there

tasks to be performed, there is also an area in which each is working (2Cor 10:15-16). We must respect the field of work that the Lord has given someone. For example, we won't be spreading the gospel tracts in an area if we know others are already there bringing the gospel.

### Verses 20-28 | The Greatness of Solomon

*20 Judah and Israel [were] as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance; [they] were eating and drinking and rejoicing. 21 Now 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. 22 Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour and sixty kors of meal, 23 ten fat oxen, twenty pasture-fed oxen, a hundred sheep besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl. 24 For he had dominion over everything west of the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza, over all the kings west of the River; and he had peace on all sides around about him. 25 So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. 26 Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. 27 Those deputies provided for King Solomon and all who came to King Solomon's table, each in his month; they left nothing lacking. 28 They also brought barley and straw for the horses and swift steeds to the place where it should be, each according to his charge.*

Solomon rules over a people "as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance" (verse 20). "In a multitude of people is a king's glory" (Pro 14:28a). If that is true for Solomon, how much more so then for the Lord Jesus. Those people eat and drink and rejoice. How could it be otherwise with such a king in power, who punishes evil and rewards good.

Here we have a beautiful picture of the situation in the kingdom of peace under the reign of the Lord Jesus. It is a preliminary fulfillment of the promise to numerous descendants (Gen 22:16-17a) and the provision of food and drink (Lev 26:5). So it can be in our personal lives and among the people of God as a whole if the Lord Jesus, as the true Solomon, holds the rule in our lives and in the lives of each of His own.

They have joy in using their abundance of food and drink. Solomon not only enjoyed all the good things himself in abundance, but he also enabled

all his subjects to do the same. He taught them that God has given them this abundance to make use of it with gratitude and satisfaction. Man may eat his bread with joy and drink his wine with a happy heart: “Go [then], eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works” (Ecc 9:7). David has preceded the people in his psalms in the comforting pleasure of fellowship with God. Solomon leads them in the pleasant use of the good things of life.

As for the current situation under Solomon, the joy and peace are of limited duration. This is already apparent when we read about “Judah and Israel” at the beginning of verse 20, which reminds us that there will be a separation in the unity of the kingdom between Judah and Israel. It is as if the writer indicates that there is unfaithfulness below the surface which, as the history shows, will lead to the division of the empire in these two parts.

Another characteristic of the kingdom – after the officials and the food supply – is its size (verse 21), which is also a preliminary fulfillment of the promised extent (Gen 15:18-21). The border runs from the Euphrates in the northeast to the area of the Philistines in the west and Egypt in the southwest.

The quantity of food Solomon needs (verses 22-23) also shows his greatness. The quantity that is available for Nehemiah at a later date strikingly contrasts with that of Solomon (Neh 5:17-18). Ahasuerus once made a feast to show his royal glory to his servants. That feast lasts 180 days (Est 1:3-4). The glory of Solomon is that he has, so to speak, a table for the whole people and that throughout his life (verse 25). However, Christ transcends everything. He has a table – a table is a picture of fellowship – at which all His own may forever feed themselves with the inexhaustible glories of His Person.

By the way, the supply by the people of these large quantities of food and all other necessities for such a royal household means that the people are prosperous. The income of Solomon also comes from the surrounding countries. Thirty kors of fine flour are about 6,500 liters and sixty kors of meal are double that. Derived from these quantities, it has been calculated that Solomon’s royal household consisted of approximately 14,000 persons.

We see how the kingdom of peace takes shape, even if it is not in its final, definitive form (verses 24-25). Never has there been an empire that refers so beautifully to the empire of the Lord Jesus as this of Solomon. The people dwell at rest, "each one under his vine and his fig tree". This expression is used for the kingdom of peace under the reign of the Messiah by the prophets Micaiah and Zechariah (Mic 4:4; Zec 3:10). Peace and justice (Jer 23:5-6), represented in the fig tree, and joy, represented in the vine (Jdg 9:13a), are generally enjoyed in the realm of peace.

The people are at ease, they live safely. No one is jealous of what another has. There is no dissatisfaction. There is also no fear of danger from enemies, from outside or inside. Everyone is happy. Each one of them dwells under his vine and under his fig tree. Solomon does not claim anyone's possessions for himself, he does not take anyone's field or vineyard, as it is said that the king would do whom the people had desired (1Sam 8:14). Everyone who has a vine and a fig tree eats the fruits of it. The peace in the land is so great that everyone lives just as safely under the shadow of his vine and fig tree as within the walls of a city.

This pleasant state of Israel extends from Dan to Beersheba, which is the whole country from the extreme north to the extreme south (Jdg 20:1). In no part of the country is there any risk of external danger or internal unrest. Wherever someone is, he sees abundance, peace and contentment everywhere. This situation continues throughout the days of Solomon.

The characteristics of the realm apply to us in their spiritual sense. For us it is about peace, joy (vine) and righteousness (fig tree) (Rom 14:17). Every believer who places himself under the authority of the Lord Jesus experiences it realm of peace in its characteristics, in the midst of a world of misery and sorrow.

The many horses also contribute to Solomon's glory and greatness (verses 26-28). The numerous horses and chariots (2Chr 1:14) are stationed, except in Jerusalem, in various places, in the so-called 'chariot cities' (2Chr 9:25). The deputies provide Solomon and his family with food once a year for one month each, leaving nothing lacking (verse 27). Thus we should provide the members of God's people with food and leave nothing lacking, but "declaring ... the whole purpose of God" to them (Acts 20:27). Do we long to be a "faithful and sensible slave" (Mt 24:45)?

The deputies provide both the horses and swift steeds with food by bringing it to them. This contains the spiritual lesson that we may provide all the servants of the Lord with what they need, in whatever way they are doing. This can be through financial support, for example, or also through spiritual encouragement.

### **Verses 29-34 | The Wisdom of Solomon**

*29 Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. 30 Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was [known] in all the surrounding nations. 32 He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. 33 He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. 34 Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.*

All that Solomon possesses in wisdom, discernment and mind, he has received from God. He not only rules through them, but it also gives him 'name reputation' (verse 31), that is to say that one speaks about him with respect.

Wisdom, discernment and mind are different concepts that show how much he is a man of insight. "Wisdom" is more the practical wisdom of life, the ability to do and act and to choose the effective. "Discernment" is more the sharpness of the mind to judge difficult and complex problems correctly. Understanding or "mind" is the spiritual ability to contain the most diverse fields of science.

His wisdom, discernment and mind are described as "the sand that is on the sea shore". These words are also used to indicate the size of the people (Gen 22:17a). This means that his understanding is so great that he encompasses the whole people. He takes care of all their needs and makes all their occasions his own. The Lord Jesus will do this in the kingdom of peace for everyone, and He does this now for all His own.



His wisdom is compared to other wisdom. His “wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt”. Possibly the sons of the East are the Chaldeans or Babylonians. That area, and Egypt too, are areas known for their wisdom. The magi or wise men come from the east (Mt 2:1) and Moses is “Moses was educated in all the learning [or: wisdom, Darby Translation] of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22; Isa 19:11-12).

There is a worldly wisdom, but Solomon is wiser than all the wisdom of the world. The wisdom of the world has a certain value on earthly territory. However, this wisdom should not have any influence among believers regarding the knowledge of Christ, because it harms the wisdom that is only in Christ (Col 2:8). Christ is the “wisdom from God” (1Cor 1:30).

His wisdom is also greater than all the wise men of God’s people. Men are mentioned from Judah, among them are the singers Ethan and Heman chosen by David (1Chr 15:19; 25:5). From Ethan and Heman we have psalms in the Bible (Psa 89; 88). They are wise men who God has been able to use for psalms that express the greatest wisdom. Ethan speaks in his psalm (Psalm 89) of grace and Heman (Psalm 88) of someone who is deeply impressed by the consequences of disobedience to God.

His proverbs, his songs, and his knowledge reflect the excellent spirit with which Solomon is endowed by God. He did not keep his knowledge and wisdom for himself, but passed it on to others, so that they can take profit of it as well. For us too, some expressions have been preserved, for our benefit. Of his 3,000 proverbs we have about 600 in the Bible, in the book of Proverbs. From his 1,005 songs we have in the Bible the book of Song of Songs and some psalms (Psalms 72; 127). Of all that he has spoken and written, we have only that part in the Bible. That is the part that is of lasting value to God’s people throughout all times.

He spoke about the great and small things of creation, about the most impressive (“the cedar”) and unobtrusive (“the hyssop”) parts of it. The cedar and the hyssop are also spoken about in the cleansing of the leper, where we see that the large and small of man must all be judged (Lev 14:4-7). He also talks about the animals, which we also have in Genesis 1. He knows them as Adam knew them. Adam ruled them and Solomon rules them by his wisdom.

His knowledge gives him dominion. He knows the life of every living being and every plant. He knows their origin, their development, their relationship to each other and to the whole of creation. Today he would be called 'a walking encyclopedia'. Although his knowledge of creation is not perfect, it reminds us of the time when all the secrets of creation will be revealed by Him Who will deliver the now still sighing creation from the curse (Rom 8:21). Then everything will be restored in perfect harmony with each other.

The fame of his wisdom is all over the earth (verse 34). In the following chapters we have two examples of rulers coming from far to hear his wisdom. These are Hiram, the king of Tyre (1Kgs 5:1), and the queen of Sheba (1Kgs 10:1).

# 1 Kings 5

## Introduction

After the Holy Spirit has described the internal order of the kingdom of Solomon, we get in this chapter and the following chapters what characterizes in a special way the reign of Solomon: the temple of the LORD. The temple is closely linked to peace. God lives with a people who live in peace.

Now that Solomon has peace on all sides, he can begin his great mission for God: the building of the temple. This is also the case in the life of a man who has obtained peace with God. Such a person can then occupy himself with the dwelling place of God, that is now the church of God.

## **Verse 1 | Hiram Seeks Contact With Solomon**

*1 Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always been a friend of David.*

Hiram, king of Tyre, had been friends with David. Tyre was an important port city on the Mediterranean Sea north of Israel. When Hiram hears that the son of David, Solomon, has become king, he wants to stand in the same relationship with Solomon.

Tyre is a picture of the world, with all its wealth and treasures. This is also the case here, but here everything is well used, it is put at the disposal of Solomon to help him carry out his plans to build the house of the LORD. Tyre is not yet a picture of the evil world here, as it will later be (Ezekiel 27), but as it will contribute to the temple in the realm of peace (Zec 6:15a; Isa 60:10).

What is said here also has a meaning for now. The house of God is not limited to Israel; the nations also share in it. Those of us who once did not participate in it have now been brought near by the blood of Christ and we may now help in the building of God's house (Col 1:27).

## Verses 2-6 | Plan to Build the Temple

*2 Then Solomon sent [word] to Hiram, saying, 3 "You know that David my father was unable to build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. 4 But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune. 5 Behold, I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to David my father, saying, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he will build the house for My name.' 6 Now therefore, command that they cut for me cedars from Lebanon, and my servants will be with your servants; and I will give you wages for your servants according to all that you say, for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians."*

Solomon answered the rapprochement of Hiram with a request for help with the building of the temple. He precedes his request by reminding Hiram of David's plan to build a house for the LORD and why he was not allowed to do so (verses 2-3). Because of his wars and bloodshed, David was not allowed to build the temple (1Chr 22:8). David is a picture of the Lord Jesus who fought the battle of God. On earth He could not build the temple.

Solomon is a picture of the glorified Lord and as such he is the builder of the temple. The basis for the building is rest (verse 4). Rest is the rest of the glorified Lord. From Acts 2, after completing His work of redemption, in which every enemy is defeated and there is rest, the Lord Jesus builds the temple, the church.

In some respects, it is also true today that there can be no building of the house of God, that there can be no building of the church, if we have to fight to preserve the truths that are entrusted to us (Jude 1:3). Also the building of the church will come to nothing if the believers are at odds with each other because of all kinds of quarrels and insignificant differences of opinion.

Because of many abuses in the church in Corinth and errors that had found their way into the churches in Galatia, Paul could not share much there to build up the church. He first had to correct there in order to clear the way for further building. If there is peace, building up can take place. "So the

church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up" (Acts 9:31a).

Then Solomon tells that he plans to build that house for the LORD (verse 5). He does not do this on his own initiative, but because it is according to the will of God, which he has made known to his father David.

Solomon invites Hiram and declares to him the mystery of God concerning the temple and that is, that also gentiles are involved in its building (verse 6). They may help, in recognition of the gifts they have. For the building of the temple, David, Solomon's father, gathered gold and silver in abundance (1Chr 29:2).

However, wood is also needed. Solomon asks Hiram. In return, Solomon promises wages. He does not negotiate about it, but will give Hiram whatever he may ask. That is how important the building of God's house is to Solomon. Hiram promises to give him everything he needs.

Solomon knows the special abilities of the Sidonians and appealed to them for building the temple. Despite the fact that he far surpasses Hiram in wealth and stature, he still appeals to him. This means that we must never look down on those who may not be as richly blessed socially or spiritually as we are. Spiritual riches should never be something on which we boast. We must always be aware: "What do you have that you did not receive" (1Cor 4:7)?

### Verses 7-11 | Material and Food

*7 When Hiram heard the words of Solomon, he rejoiced greatly and said, "Blessed be the LORD today, who has given to David a wise son over this great people." 8 So Hiram sent [word] to Solomon, saying, "I have heard [the message] which you have sent me; I will do what you desire concerning the cedar and cypress timber. 9 My servants will bring [them] down from Lebanon to the sea; and I will make them into rafts [to go] by sea to the place where you direct me, and I will have them broken up there, and you shall carry [them] away. Then you shall accomplish my desire by giving food to my household." 10 So Hiram gave Solomon as much as he desired of the cedar and cypress timber. 11 Solomon then gave Hiram 20,000 kors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty kors of beaten oil; thus Solomon would give Hiram year by year.*

Hiram's reaction to Solomon's request is that he praises the LORD. God gives great reason to praise Him in our conversion, but even more so when He introduces us into His thoughts about His house. Hiram had already heard of God through David. We also praise God that He has given His Son as Ruler over His people.

Hiram promises that he will give everything Solomon asks for. He also promises him that he will take care of the transport and asks for his wages. Solomon promises him the food (cf. Eze 27:17) needed to perform the service. Solomon gives according to the wealth of his possession. Wheat and oil speak of the blessings of the land. Whoever builds, receives rich blessing.

Thus the Lord Jesus gives food to be busy with His house. To be able to work, there must be food. In order to work on the building of the church, we must feed ourselves with the good food of the Word, which is with the Lord Jesus. It is only through Him that we gain the strength to do our work as transporters or burden bearers (verse 15, Darby Translation).

### Verses 12-18 | The Workers

*12 The LORD gave wisdom to Solomon, just as He promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a covenant. 13 Now King Solomon levied forced laborers from all Israel; and the forced laborers numbered 30,000 men. 14 He sent them to Lebanon, 10,000 a month in relays; they were in Lebanon a month [and] two months at home. And Adoniram [was] over the forced laborers. 15 Now Solomon had 70,000 transporters, and 80,000 hewers [of stone] in the mountains, 16 besides Solomon's 3,300 chief deputies who [were] over the project [and] who ruled over the people who were doing the work. 17 Then the king commanded, and they quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house with cut stones. 18 So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the Gebalites cut them, and prepared the timbers and the stones to build the house.*

Verse 12 is a transitional verse that refers to both the previous section and the next one. In this verse it is clearly stated once more that the LORD has given Solomon wisdom. Everything comes from Him. Solomon's wisdom is evident from his covenant with Hiram, to obtain from him good mate-

rials and suitable workers for the building of God's house. His wisdom is also reflected in the way he uses the labor forces.

Solomon also supplies workers from his own country and sends them to the Lebanon north of Israel. A lot of men are needed to help felling the trees. This is done in rotation, so that everyone can still do their work at home.

There are workers for various types of work. There are woodcutters, stone cutters, burden carriers [transporters] and deputies. These different tasks have their spiritual counterparts in the church. Take for example burden carriers. That is something to which we are all called (Gal 6:2). There is also a great number of workers, which means that the tasks can be well divided and not everything falls on the shoulders of just a few. Unfortunately, that is often different today.

Besides wood, stones are also needed, large precious stones as the foundation for the house. That is where it has to start. It is prepared on the instructions of Solomon himself. The foundation, although not seen when the house is finished, is the most important part of the building.

So God also worked for His spiritual home. Christ, in the splendor of His glory, is the foundation of the church (1Cor 3:10-11; cf. Rev 21:19). He is the cornerstone. The foundation consists of all truths relating to Christ and His work, as revealed to us by His apostles and prophets in His Word (Eph 2:20). The stones used to build the house are a picture of the believers, who are called "living stones" (1Pet 2:5). When the house is built on the foundation in this way, we see that "the whole building [which is the church], being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:21).

# 1 Kings 6

## Introduction

This chapter is about the building and furnishing of the temple. A global outline:

1. Introduction, verse 1.
2. Exterior of the building, verses 2-10.
3. Responsibility, verses 11-13.
4. Interior of the building, verses 14-35.
5. Completion, verses 37-38.

With a more refined outline we see the following aspects of the building:

1. Beginning of the building, verse 1.
2. The dimensions, verses 2-3.
3. The windows, verse 4.
4. The stories, verses 5-6.
5. The noiselessness of the building, verse 7.
6. Again the stories, verses 8-10.
7. A word for Solomon, verses 11-13.
8. The covering of the walls and the floor, verses 14-18.
9. The inner sanctuary, covered with pure gold, verses 19-20.
10. The gold covering of the whole, including the altar, verses 21-22.
11. The two great cherubs, verses 23-28.
12. Cherubs, palms and open flower buds on the walls, verse 29.
13. The gold covered floor, verse 30.
14. The doors, verses 31-35.
15. The inner court, verse 36.
16. The duration of the building, verses 37-38.



## Verse 1 | Beginning of the Building of the Temple

*1 Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.*

For the historian, the start of the building of the temple is a striking point in the history of Israel. He mentions the year in which the start is made and connects that date with Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt. The start of the building of the temple takes place in 966 BC. The exodus took place in 1446 BC. Although there is a lot of time in between, the exodus and building of the temple are closely connected. At the exodus, on the banks of the Red Sea, the people sang about the dwelling place of the LORD (Exo 15:17). The purpose of the redemption from Egypt was that God would dwell with His people, a redeemed people. The temple is here called "the house of the LORD".

Also the month of the beginning of the building is mentioned, "the month of Ziv which is the second month". This month corresponds to our month of May. "Ziv" means "shine" or "splendor", probably because of the budding floral splendor in that month. From a spiritual point of view, this indicates a new era in which everything is fresh and beautiful. Israel stands on the threshold of the glorious summer time of blessing and prosperity. The temple shines with gold. The place of the building is not mentioned, but we know from 2 Chronicles that it is on Mount Moriah (2Chr 3:1).

In spiritual terms, salvation from the power of sin and the house of God, that is the church (1Tim 3:15), also belong together. Our redemption by the Lord Jesus is the starting point, and whoever has accepted Him as Savior in faith is sealed with the Holy Spirit and therefore belongs to the church.

Solomon starts "in the fourth year" of his government with the building of the temple. The first three years he was busy arranging the affairs of his empire. The time we use to prepare for the work of God and to free ourselves from anything that might distract us from it is not lost time.

In building the temple, Solomon is also a picture of the Lord Jesus. It is said of the Messiah that He will build the temple (Zec 6:12). The temple is the

pledge of the durable possession of the inheritance by the people. God's presence definitively determines the possessions.

### Verses 2-10 | The Exterior of the Building

2 As for the house which King Solomon built for the LORD, its length [was] sixty cubits and its width twenty [cubits] and its height thirty cubits. 3 The porch in front of the nave of the house [was] twenty cubits in length, corresponding to the width of the house, [and] its depth along the front of the house [was] ten cubits. 4 Also for the house he made windows with [artistic] frames. 5 Against the wall of the house he built stories encompassing the walls of the house around both the nave and the inner sanctuary; thus he made side chambers all around. 6 The lowest story [was] five cubits wide, and the middle [was] six cubits wide, and the third [was] seven cubits wide; for on the outside he made offsets [in the wall] of the house all around in order that [the beams] would not be inserted in the walls of the house. 7 The house, while it was being built, was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built. 8 The doorway for the lowest side chamber [was] on the right side of the house; and they would go up by winding stairs to the middle [story], and from the middle to the third. 9 So he built the house and finished it; and he covered the house with beams and planks of cedar. 10 He also built the stories against the whole house, each five cubits high; and they were fastened to the house with timbers of cedar.

The sizes of the house (verse 2) are double the sizes of the tabernacle. So the temple is an enlarged tabernacle. The dimensions of the temple, converted to our dimensions, are twenty-seven meters long, nine meters wide and fourteen meters high. The porch in front is extra, as are the windows (verses 3-4). They were not in the tabernacle.

The temple, like the tabernacle, is a picture of:

1. the revelation of the glory of God in Christ,
2. the dwelling place of God; and
3. a place where man can approach God to serve Him as a priest.

There are two descriptions of the temple. They are in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. In 2 Chronicles the emphasis is on *the altar* – and thus the service in connection with the altar – and *approaching God*. Here in 1 Kings the altar is

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not mentioned, nor the veil. Here *dwelling* is emphasized, because here we also have chambers all around the temple, where the priests live. Around the temple, i.e. on both long sides and the back, not the front, chambers are built in three floors (verses 5-6).

There is an even greater joy than to go to the temple and that is to dwell there. This leads to the priesthood that is expressed in a special way in the praise of the LORD (1Chr 9:33).

Where God has His dwelling place, He surrounds Himself with dwelling places. Therefore we can also see the temple as a picture of the Father's house, of which the Lord Jesus says there are "many dwelling places" (Jn 14:2). The Lord Jesus also calls the temple "My Father's house" (Jn 2:16).

The temple is not only a greater repetition of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was meant to be carried through the desert. The temple contrariwise is fixed, there is rest for God. The people have come to rest and live in rest in the promised land, and God dwells among His people. After the wilderness journey, the meaning of the tabernacle is ended. In the letter to the Hebrews, the tabernacle is always mentioned, but that is because of the point of view from which the writer views God's people view.

The temple is in the land. It presupposes a people in possession of the land, which for us is a picture of the heavenly places. The temple is on a higher level. Three times a year, the Israelite goes to the three harvest feasts, when he has gathered the blessings of the land. Are we familiar with the blessings of the promised land, for us the heavenly places? Only then will we understand and appreciate the meaning of the temple.

To explain verse 6, a remark is made in the middle of the description of the priestly dwellings in verse 7 about the ready-prepared stones for the temple. The stones have already been worked in the quarry, so that no sound is heard during building.

In the spiritual sense we see that man is naturally dust, but when he becomes a believer, he becomes a stone (1Pet 2:5). Christ is the rock from Whom we are hewn and as such have been added to the house of God. The work of God's Spirit is done in silence, without the outward display and the great noise that is present in many Christian communities.

In verses 8-10 there are three stories. This also shows a certain growth, because the rooms are getting bigger and bigger higher up. It contains the encouragement for each priest not to stay on the lower story, but to go higher. What the chambers are, we read in the third description of the temple, in Ezekiel 42, the temple of the kingdom of peace (Eze 42:1-14). These are the places where the priests abide. It is not a question of approaching, but of abiding constantly (cf. Psa 23:6b; 27:4).

### Verses 11-13 | A Word for Solomon

*11 Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon saying, 12 “[Concerning] this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. 13 I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.”*

In these verses we are again reminded of the responsibility (2Sam 7:13-14). This also applies to the church. The fact that the Lord Jesus is among those who come together as a church has everything to do with the will of God, with obedience. We have God’s will in the Bible. If we want to listen to Him, He will fulfill His Word and dwell among the assembled believers and not leave them. It is remarkable that Solomon is addressed personally. If we want to experience God’s presence together, we will all have to listen to His Word personally. Then He dwells with His people and will not leave them.

### Verses 14-22 | The Covering of Wood and Gold

*14 So Solomon built the house and finished it. 15 Then he built the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the ceiling he overlaid [the walls] on the inside with wood, and he overlaid the floor of the house with boards of cypress. 16 He built twenty cubits on the rear part of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the ceiling; he built [them] for it on the inside as an inner sanctuary, [even] as the most holy place. 17 The house, that is, the nave in front of [the inner sanctuary], was forty cubits [long]. 18 There was cedar on the house within, carved [in the shape] of gourds and open flowers; all was cedar, there was no stone seen. 19 Then he prepared an inner sanctuary within the house in order to place there the ark of the covenant of the*

*LORD. 20 The inner sanctuary [was] twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar. 21 So Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold. And he drew chains of gold across the front of the inner sanctuary, and he overlaid it with gold. 22 He overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar which was by the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.*

The stones are covered with cedar wood. The cedar represents the greatness of man which is humiliated by the LORD (Isa 2:12-13). When a person repents, another greatness returns for it. Christ is compared to a cedar in Song of Songs and God unites us with Christ in His greatness (Song 5:15b; Psa 92:12). Thus we are useful to God for the building of His house. The great thing that the believer is, he only is through Christ. Therefore the wood is covered with gold again. Everything speaks in God's temple of His glory (Psa 29:9b).

The inner sanctuary or rear space – a large, glorious space – is the place where the ark is placed. The altar (verse 20) and the veil (verse 21) are also mentioned. The altar is also mentioned in verse 22. It is seen here as belonging to the most holy place, although it will stand before the veil, but directly close to it (cf. Num 18:7; Heb 9:4).

### **Verses 23-28 | The Cherubim**

*23 Also in the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. 24 Five cubits [was] the one wing of the cherub and five cubits the other wing of the cherub; from the end of one wing to the end of the other wing [were] ten cubits. 25 The other cherub [was] ten cubits; both the cherubim were of the same measure and the same form. 26 The height of the one cherub [was] ten cubits, and so [was] the other cherub. 27 He placed the cherubim in the midst of the inner house, and the wings of the cherubim were spread out, so that the wing of the one was touching the [one] wall, and the wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall. So their wings were touching each other in the center of the house. 28 He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.*

The cherubs are made of olive wood, which is wood from the wild olive tree, of which also the doors of the holy and the posts of the entrance of the

temple are made. They have large dimensions, larger than the cherubs on the ark. They fill the most holy place.

Cherubs are special angels who are connected with God as Judge (Gen 3:24). God rides on them (Psa 18:10a) and they are God's throne (Eze 1:4-28; 10:8-17). They represent God in His judicial glory. In the books of Moses they occur only in connection with paradise and the tabernacle.

### Verses 29-35 | The Walls, Floor and Doors

*29 Then he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, inner and outer [sanctuaries]. 30 He overlaid the floor of the house with gold, inner and outer [sanctuaries]. 31 For the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood, the lintel [and] five-sided doorposts. 32 So [he made] two doors of olive wood, and he carved on them carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold; and he spread the gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees. 33 So also he made for the entrance of the nave four-sided doorposts of olive wood 34 and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door turned on pivots, and the two leaves of the other door turned on pivots. 35 He carved [on it] cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; and he overlaid [them] with gold evenly applied on the engraved work.*

On the walls of the house “cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers” are carved. The cherubim remind us of paradise (Gen 3:24). They watch over a service in the sanctuary, not to stop it, but to let it take place in accordance with God. In the temple paradise is as it were open to man again. This is possible because the Lord Jesus gained the victory, of which the palms trees speak, over sin and death on the cross. As a result, new life is possible, which is represented by the open flowers.

The floor is made of gold. There is walking on the basis of God's glory which has become visible in Christ and which is the part of everyone who believes. This golden floor is reminiscent of the street of gold in the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:21b).

The doors are a picture of Christ through Whom we can only approach God (Jn 10:7). “For through Him we ... have our access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph 2:18). This is the great privilege for us who are saved

by grace. On the doors is the same carved artwork as on the walls of the house. This reminds us that we will be like Christ when we are with Him and the work of grace is perfect (1Jn 3:3).

### **Verse 36 | The Inner Court**

*36 He built the inner court with three rows of cut stone and a row of cedar beams.*

In the inner court, where the bronze altar is, where the priests serve, a low wall is made. This wall is the separation between the people and the priests. It consists of three rows of cut stones with a row of cedar beams on top. It is a low wall, so that the people can look over it and see everything the priests do and hear everything the priests say to them.

### **Verses 37-38 | Duration of the Building of the Temple**

*37 In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv. 38 In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished throughout all its parts and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it.*

The duration of the building of the temple is seven years, a complete time. God is building a wonderful house in this time, His church. That building will also take a complete time.

The last verse contains an important indication that Solomon built the house “according to all its plans”. Solomon did not follow his own imagination during the building. He also didn’t think about making a small adjustment here and there. He built the temple exactly as God had indicated to David by the Spirit, not only orally, but for greater certainty and accuracy, in writing (1Chr 28:11-12a,19). It is just as He had given Moses a sketch of the tabernacle on the mountain (Exo 25:40).

This is an important indication for our time, in which ‘being a church’ is increasingly being attuned to the needs of people. The services should be enlivened with music and dance, the speeches should be delivered by men (or women!) of name. Man must feel at home there, while there is less and less reckoning with whether God can still feel at home in His own house.

# 1 Kings 7

## Introduction

The previous chapter describes the temple as a building. In this chapter we hear about the bronze and golden objects of the temple, preceded by a description of the buildings of Solomon for himself.

## **Verses 1-12 | The Buildings for Solomon Himself**

*1 Now Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house. 2 He built the house of the forest of Lebanon; its length was 100 cubits and its width 50 cubits and its height 30 cubits, on four rows of cedar pillars with cedar beams on the pillars. 3 It was paneled with cedar above the side chambers which were on the 45 pillars, 15 in each row. 4 [There were artistic window] frames in three rows, and window was opposite window in three ranks. 5 All the doorways and doorposts [had] squared [artistic] frames, and window was opposite window in three ranks. 6 Then he made the hall of pillars; its length was 50 cubits and its width 30 cubits, and a porch [was] in front of them and pillars and a threshold in front of them. 7 He made the hall of the throne where he was to judge, the hall of judgment, and it was paneled with cedar from floor to floor. 8 His house where he was to live, the other court inward from the hall, was of the same workmanship. He also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom Solomon had married. 9 All these were of costly stones, of stone cut according to measure, sawed with saws, inside and outside; even from the foundation to the coping, and so on the outside to the great court. 10 The foundation was of costly stones, [even] large stones, stones of ten cubits and stones of eight cubits. 11 And above were costly stones, stone cut according to measure, and cedar. 12 So the great court all around [had] three rows of cut stone and a row of cedar beams even as the inner court of the house of the LORD, and the porch of the house.*

We have a break in the description of the temple, because first the house of Solomon is described. That is because there is a close connection between the temple and the house of Solomon. Both houses speak of the church. The temple is the picture of the church as the dwelling place of the Holy



Spirit. God dwells in the church as His temple (1Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21-22). In the house of Solomon we see a picture of the church as the dwelling place of the Lord Jesus, whom He calls “My church” (Mt 16:18). Solomon lives there with his family. The Lord Jesus is “Son over His house” (Heb 3:6) and as Son, He is connected with sons. God said of Solomon that he would be a son to Him (2Sam 7:12-14; 1Chr 17:13). In the church the Lord Jesus lives as Son together with those whom He has made sons of God.

Solomon’s house was probably a palace complex with several independent, but complementary buildings. There are public rooms and there is a private room. The house consists of cedar pillars, making it look like a forest. There is a hall of pillars and a hall of the throne. The hall of pillars can be seen as a kind of waiting room where people can wait until they can get to the king. Solomon is sitting in the hall of the throne. More in the middle of the complex is his house. There is also a separate house for his Egyptian wife.

The Lord Jesus will reign over the kingdom of peace from His house. The church is involved in His government. The Lord Jesus reigns also now in His realm over those who acknowledge His authority. All Christianity today is His realm, but He has a real relationship only with those who are connected with Him through faith as the Son. They are the house in the narrow sense in which He lives (verse 8), the dwelling behind the hall of the throne, the dwelling place of the royal family.

The materials with which the house is built (verses 9-12) are the materials with which the temple is built. It is from stones taken from the rock, as the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 16 (Mt 16:18). Every believer is a precious stone in the eyes of the Lord Jesus (1Pet 2:5), because for every stone of which the church is composed, He has given His life. The foundation of verse 10 does not apply to Him as the foundation; for He is the cornerstone. Here is spoken of several large stones. That points to the apostles as the fundament, the foundation (Eph 2:20).

### **Verses 13-22 | The Two Pillars**

*13 Now King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. 14 He was a widow’s son from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in*

bronze; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill for doing any work in bronze. So he came to King Solomon and performed all his work. 15 He fashioned the two pillars of bronze; eighteen cubits was the height of one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits measured the circumference of both. 16 He also made two capitals of molten bronze 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. 17 [There were] nets of network and twisted threads of chainwork for the capitals which were on the top of the pillars; seven for the one capital and seven for the other capital. 18 So he made the pillars, and two rows around on the one network to cover the capitals which were on the top of the pomegranates; and so he did for the other capital. 19 The capitals which [were] on the top of the pillars in the porch were of lily design, four cubits. 20 [There were] capitals on the two pillars, even above [and] close to the rounded projection which was beside the network; and the pomegranates [numbered] two hundred in rows around both capitals. 21 Thus he set up the pillars at the porch of the nave; and he set up the right pillar and named it Jachin, and he set up the left pillar and named it Boaz. 22 On the top of the pillars was lily design. So the work of the pillars was finished.

Here the description of the temple continues. Solomon called a stranger, "Hiram from Tyre", to help build the temple. Hiram comes from a mixed marriage. Foreigners from the Gentiles have a special understanding of what the church is, we see in the New Testament. They are introduced into the mysteries of God. Are we such strangers who understand the things of the church? The majority of Christianity does not have this kind of understanding. What is known in general about a glorified Christ with Whom the church is made one?

Hiram has a special knowledge to work with bronze. Gold speaks of the glory of God. Bronze speaks of God's glory in righteousness toward the sinner, not to judge him, but to save him and to have him in His presence. In 1 Chronicles 18 we read where the bronze comes from. It is material captured from the enemy (1Chr 18:8).

Hiram is the son of a relation forbidden by God. But God's grace can use him. He is a man "filled with wisdom and understanding and skill for doing any work in bronze" (verse 14). Wisdom and understanding and skill or knowledge also occur in the New Testament, in letters about the

church (Eph 1:8,17; Col 1:9). We need the spirit of wisdom, knowledge and understanding to get to know God's thoughts about His church and to behave accordingly.

New in the temple compared to the tabernacle are the two pillars, each of eight meters high and a circumference of five and a half meters. With their capitals they are more than ten meters high. The pillars are separate from the temple. They are not used to support the temple. They stand before the temple, as a testimony of the security and power of God that will be revealed to the people for their benefit if they obey Him. When God sends His people into exile through the Babylonians because of their disobedience and this enemy robs the temple treasures, much attention is given to these two pillars (2Kgs 25:13,17; Jer 52:17,20-23).

The names show what they represent. "Jachin" means "He will confirm" and "Boaz" means "in Him is strength". Their position in front of the temple reminds all who wish to worship at or in the temple that they should rely solely on God for confirmation and strength in their worship and not on anything within themselves.

Believers who have a special place in the church are called pillars (Gal 2:9). It is possible for every believer to be a pillar, if the power that is in God is reflected in him (Rev 3:12a).

The lilies on top of the pillars are connected with pomegranates. Lilies represent the glory of the kingdom (Mt 6:28-29) and pomegranates are a symbol of fruit. The glory and the fruit of the kingdom are both thanks to Him of Whom the kingdom is, Who confirms and supports it.

### Verses 23-26 | The Casted Sea

*23 Now he made the sea of cast [metal] ten cubits from brim to brim, circular in form, and its height was five cubits, and thirty cubits in circumference. 24 Under its brim gourds went around encircling it ten to a cubit, completely surrounding the sea; the gourds were in two rows, cast with the rest. 25 It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; and the sea [was set] on top of them, and all their rear parts [turned] inward. 26 It was a handbreadth thick, and its brim was made like the brim of a cup, [as] a lily blossom; it could hold two thousand baths.*

The cast bronze sea is for the priests to wash themselves in before they can serve. They have to do this every time they go to the altar or enter the holy place. The application for us is that going through the world makes us unclean and that cleansing is necessary. This cleansing is done by reading God's Word which is compared with water (Jn 15:3a; Eph 5:26).

The sea stands on twelve oxen. Oxen are a picture of persevering service. The enduring service of the intercession of the Lord Jesus is the ground of our association. When we are in heaven, the sea is "a glass sea" (Rev 15:2). The water there is no longer liquid, because the water is no longer needed for cleansing.

### Verses 27-37 | The Bronze Stands

*27 Then he made the ten stands of bronze; the length of each stand was four cubits and its width four cubits and its height three cubits. 28 This was the design of the stands: they had borders, even borders between the frames, 29 and on the borders which were between the frames [were] lions, oxen and cherubim; and on the frames there [was] a pedestal above, and beneath the lions and oxen [were] wreaths of hanging work. 30 Now each stand had four bronze wheels with bronze axles, and its four feet had supports; beneath the basin [were] cast supports with wreaths at each side. 31 Its opening inside the crown at the top [was] a cubit, and its opening [was] round like the design of a pedestal, a cubit and a half; and also on its opening [there were] engravings, and their borders were square, not round. 32 The four wheels [were] underneath the borders, and the axles of the wheels [were] on the stand. And the height of a wheel [was] a cubit and a half. 33 The workmanship of the wheels [was] like the workmanship of a chariot wheel. Their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs [were] all cast. 34 Now [there were] four supports at the four corners of each stand; its supports [were] part of the stand itself. 35 On the top of the stand [there was] a circular form half a cubit high, and on the top of the stand its stays and its borders [were] part of it. 36 He engraved on the plates of its stays and on its borders, cherubim, lions and palm trees, according to the clear space on each, with wreaths [all] around. 37 He made the ten stands like this: all of them had one casting, one measure and one form.*

To the sea ten stands are connected. The tabernacle had no stands. The number ten is striking. It is the number of responsibility. It is about whether we can go from the level of the tabernacle to the level of the temple.

There are also lions, oxen and cherubim connected to it. We see them back in or they remind us of Revelation 4, where there is talk of the four living creatures (Rev 4:6-7). The picture in Revelation may be derived from the description here. They are the symbols of God's judgment. The cherub then has the shape of a human being and its wings we see in the eagle.

### Verses 38-47 | The Bronze Objects

*38 He made ten basins of bronze, one basin held forty baths; each basin [was] four cubits, [and] on each of the ten stands [was] one basin. 39 Then he set the stands, five on the right side of the house and five on the left side of the house; and he set the sea [of cast metal] on the right side of the house eastward toward the south. 40 Now Hiram made the basins and the shovels and the bowls. So Hiram finished doing all the work which he performed for King Solomon [in] the house of the LORD: 41 the two pillars and the [two] bowls of the capitals which [were] on the top of the two pillars, and the two networks to cover the two bowls of the capitals which [were] on the top of the pillars; 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 which [were] on the tops of the pillars; 43 and the ten stands with the ten basins on the stands; 44 and the one sea and the twelve oxen under the sea; 45 and the pails and the shovels and the bowls; even all these utensils which Hiram made for King Solomon [in] the house of the LORD [were] of polished bronze. 46 In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan. 47 Solomon left all the utensils [unweighed], because [they were] too many; the weight of the bronze could not be ascertained.*

On the ten stands, ten basins are made. In it, the entrails and legs of the burnt offering are washed (Lev 1:9). The burnt offering speaks of the Lord Jesus in His complete and total surrender to God on the cross. The washing of the sacrifice, in the spiritual sense of the word, is not done to purify the burnt offering, but to prove that the water remains pure after the washing, because the sacrifice is perfectly pure. The pails and the shovels and the bowls, which are also made of bronze, are also mentioned. These are objects more closely related to the altar and the sacrifices (Exo 38:3).

From verse 40b on there is a repetition of everything Hiram has made. This is not a useless repetition, but a sign of the value these things have for God.

They are all made of polished bronze. The best material is used. Hiram makes everything, but he has no other material to use than the material that Solomon has made available to him.

This material was shaped in the clay ground by Solomon in the plain of the Jordan. The Jordan River is the river of death. Everything that is made of bronze objects for the temple, which in the spiritual application speaks of the righteousness of God, is made by what speaks of what the Lord Jesus did on the cross. On the cross He was “in clay ground”. Out of hard work, out of depths, the righteousness of God has come up and been brought to light.

### Verses 48-50 | The Objects of Gold

*48 Solomon made all the furniture which [was in] the house of the LORD: the golden altar and the golden table on which [was] the bread of the Presence; 49 and the lampstands, five on the right side and five on the left, in front of the inner sanctuary, of pure gold; and the flowers and the lamps and the tongs, of gold; 50 and the cups and the snuffers and the bowls and the spoons and the firepans, 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, [that is], of the nave, of gold.*

The making of the objects of gold is attributed to Solomon personally. The altar, the table with the bread of the Presence and the ten lampstands come in the temple. Gold speaks of God’s glory. There is also talk of “the hinges ... for the doors” that give access to the holy place and the most holy place. It is a brief description, because the main idea is government and not approaching to God. Yet it is mentioned here, because approaching to God belongs to it and it must be done in the awareness of God’s glory.

### Verse 51 | The Sanctified Gifts of David

*51 Thus all the work that King Solomon performed [in] the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things dedicated by his father David, the silver and the gold and the utensils, [and] he put them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.*

When the house is finished, Solomon brings all the objects into the temple. There are also “the things dedicated by his father David” that have not

been used. These may be for future repairs, for example. David gathered together gold, silver, and brass in abundance for the building of the temple (1Chr 22:14,16; 29:2). He captured them on defeated enemies (2Sam 8:7,11-12). In addition, there are the gifts from his private property (1Chr 29:3-4) and the voluntary gifts of the superiors (1Chr 29:7-9).

David is a picture of the Lord Jesus in His suffering. After all that has been used, there remains a fullness of glory. Everything that is in the temple is worked through Christ and His work on the cross. But there is even more glory connected with the work of Christ. That is all material for “the treasures of the house of the LORD”.

## 1 Kings 8

### Verses 1-11 | The Ark to the Temple

*1 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' [households] of the sons of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the city of David, which is Zion. 2 All the men of Israel assembled themselves to King Solomon at the feast, in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. 3 Then all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4 They brought up the ark of the LORD and the tent of meeting and all the holy utensils, which were in the tent, and the priests and the Levites brought them up. 5 And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who were assembled to him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen they could not be counted or numbered. 6 Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim. 7 For the cherubim spread [their] wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim made a covering over the ark and its poles from above. 8 But the poles were so long that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place before the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen outside; they are there to this day. 9 There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. 10 It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.*

The dedication of the temple takes place at “the feast, in the month Ethanim”, that is the Feast of Booths. This feast is the great closing of all harvest feasts in “the seventh month” (Lev 23:34). This feast points to the kingdom of peace, where the people are in possession of all the blessings of God, at the end of all the ways of God. We, New Testament believers, already possess “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ” (Eph 1:3) and therefore have so much more reason to praise God.



The ark is placed in the midst of the people and then in the temple. The ark has not been in the tabernacle since Eli's days. David brought the ark to Zion and placed it in the tent he had made before (2Sam 6:17), while the tabernacle was in Gibeon (2Chr 1:3-5). Solomon brings the ark from that tent to the temple.

The bringing up of the ark to the temple and the associated sacrifices are a picture of Christ in the midst of His people, the church, where the people bring Him sacrifices of praise and thanks. In 1 Chronicles 28 we see the Spirit of Christ among His people through Whom David says what was in his heart, the wish he had (1Chr 28:2)

The ark, which has travelled around for so long, has come to the end of its wanderings and comes into the tranquility of the temple. This is about priests and Levites giving it that place. In spiritual application this means that only if the spiritual conditions are present in us the Lord Jesus can be in the midst of us as His own and we can raise our voice to God in praise.

The ark is in itself also a resting place, the footstool for God's feet. God finds His rest in the Lord Jesus and the Lord Jesus finds His rest in the midst of his church.

Here Solomon leads everything. The Lord Jesus wants to lead everything through His Spirit. By the leading of Solomon the ark is given its place in the temple of God. The ark is brought to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the great wings of the cherubs. The poles are not pulled out according to the prescription (Exo 25:15). They remain in the rings and are seen. This is to remind us that the journey is over and rest has been reached. The wilderness journey is over. The Lord Jesus went into the rest after accomplishing His way and work on earth, but we will always be reminded of His life on earth.

How it is possible that the poles are seen from the outside, while the ark finds itself in a fully enclosed sanctuary, is not clear. In the spiritual application it is clear. It shows that the believer has confidence to enter the holy place and sees Christ there (Heb 10:19).

From the letter to the Hebrews we can conclude that there was a time when there were three objects in the ark (Heb 9:4). Here we only speak about the two tables of the covenant, i.e. the law. The other two objects are directly

related to the wilderness journey – the manna, and rod which budded as the activity of the high priest – but the journey is over here. The law continues to keep its meaning, even in the realm of peace. The perfect will of God remains forever. Also the Lord Jesus remains the dependent Man, in Him the will of God remains completely present.

In verses 10-11 we are reminded of two events that are similar. It concerns the dedication of the tabernacle (Lev 9:23-24) and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2). Now the temple gets its meaning. God takes His residence in the temple as His dwelling place. Thus the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in the believer individually, but also to form the church, to form the members as a whole “into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:22).

### Verses 12-21 | Solomon Blesses the People

12 Then Solomon said,

*“The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud.*

13 *“I have surely built You a lofty house,*

*A place for Your dwelling forever.”*

14 Then the king faced about and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing. 15 He said, *“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David and has fulfilled [it] with His hand, saying, 16 ‘Since the day that I brought My people Israel from Egypt, I did not choose a city out of all the tribes of Israel [in which] to build a house that My name might be there, but I chose David to be over My people Israel.’ 17 Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. 18 But the LORD said to my father David, ‘Because it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. 19 Nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who will be born to you, he will build the house for My name.’ 20 Now the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke; for I have risen in place of my father David and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. 21 There I have set a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD, which He made with our fathers when He brought them from the land of Egypt.”*

Solomon begins by saying something that is characteristic for the Old Testament and what is opposed to the New Testament. For Solomon the LORD dwells in darkness, while God is light. But God is also love, and for that very reason He lives in darkness, for if He showed His light, it would mean the end of the people and of man. Hence the veil is there, behind which He has withdrawn himself. This is no longer the case in the church. There He dwells in Christ, in Whom He comes to man.

Solomon blesses the people (verse 14). He is here the king-priest, for blessing is what the priest does. We see that with Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-19). The Lord Jesus is the perfect King-Priest (Zec 6:13; Heb 7:1-3).

Solomon begins by praising God as the God who speaks and does (verse 15). Whatever His mouth speaks, His hand executes. He spoke to David about his election. He has not chosen a city, but David. So it seems as if David is a city, but city, temple and king are so connected that David and the city are one. The king and his city belong together. The Lord Jesus is the Son of David and is forever connected with Jerusalem.

Solomon often speaks of the Name of the LORD. The name expresses what someone is or should be. His Name expresses His whole glory. The *throne of the LORD* shows Who erected the throne. The *throne of David* shows who sits on the throne. The *throne of Israel* shows what is ruled.

The covenant lies in the ark, recorded and represented in the two tables (verse 21).

### Verses 22-30 | The Prayer of Solomon

*22 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. 23 He said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and [showing] lovingkindness to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart, 24 who have kept with Your servant, my father David, that which You have promised him; indeed, You have spoken with Your mouth and have fulfilled it with Your hand as it is this day. 25 Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep with Your servant David my father that which You have promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way to walk before Me as you have walked.' 26 Now therefore, O God of Israel, let Your word, I pray, be*

*confirmed which You have spoken to Your servant, my father David. 27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built! 28 Yet have regard to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You today; 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. 30 Listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear in heaven Your dwelling place; hear and forgive.*

The prayer of Solomon is the highlight of the dedication of the temple. The place of intercession is at the altar (verse 22). There is no intercession separate from the altar, which means to us, separate from the Lord Jesus and His work on the cross. The foundation is the sacrifice of Christ. The king-priest intercedes (cf. 1Sam 2:35, where the priest is in the service of the anointed). He does it for the church of Israel and also in the presence of the people; the people are listening. He speaks frankly about all the dangers to which the people can be exposed.

Solomon addresses God in His incomparability (verse 23). It is also good for us to think about what a God we have to do with. There is no comparison with Him, no gods or demonic powers. They are all subject to Him. It is also true that there is no one else but God (verse 60).

Then Solomon pronounces to God what he had previously pronounced for the people (verse 24; cf. verse 15). What he has spoken for the people, he offers here to God as a peace offering.

He reminds God of His promise to always put a son of David on the throne and prays that God will do the same (verse 25). This will become a reality when the eternal Son sits on the throne as Man.

However, the fulfilment of the promise is made dependent on the responsibility of man. Both Solomon himself and his sons have failed and therefore there has been no son of David on the throne for a long time. According to God's sovereignty, He will give *the* Son in grace. For this Solomon appeals to the grace of God when he asks that God still lives up to His Word (verse 26).

God is so great that no part of creation can comprehend Him, not even the largest, most extensive parts (verse 27). He spans everything Himself (Deu 10:14). It is also a delusion to think that God lives in handmade temples. This delusion is held by an apostate people, for which the prophets sharply condemn them (Jer 7:4; Mic 3:11).

Faith acknowledges that God cannot be closed up in a human building. However, at the same time faith sees that God's presence is connected with the temple, because He has said that His Name dwells there. On this basis we may, despite His greatness, so far elevated above His dwelling, ask Him to listen to the prayer that comes from His dwelling on earth to Him in heaven (verse 28).

Each time the word 'hear' comes back. With this in mind, Solomon prays. Thus we may pray to God. He hears from His dwelling in heaven. But Solomon also speaks of "forgiveness" (verse 30). He is a practical king and knows that most prayers are prayers for forgiveness. Should not our prayers also often be accompanied by confession of sins? Solomon asks if the LORD wants to hear "the supplication of ... Your people Israel". He assumes that God's people will be a praying people.

### Verses 31-32 | First Prayer

*31 "If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath, and he comes [and] takes an oath before Your altar in this house, 32 then hear in heaven and act and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.*

The prayer seems long, but it can be prayed in about six minutes. It is a prayer rich in content. It's not about the length, but about the content.

The prayer contains seven prayers. The first four reflect on the inner condition of the people, the last three on the danger from outside. Many of the prayers are about sins and forgiveness. It is a prayer from and for the people of God. It presents God's people, now the church, in her responsibility.

We see this in Matthew 18 where the church has problems, sins, to deal with locally (Mt 18:15-20). It is a people who need prayer and an Interces-

sor in Christ, like here in Solomon. We must also be intercessors. God is astonished that He has not found anyone who, through prayer, closes the gaps through which the enemy can come among God's people (Isa 59:16a; Eze 22:30).

The first prayer is about someone sinning against his brother. The judge takes an oath in the presence of God ("altar") with a self-cursing to find out the truth. The matter must be resolved. Only God can reveal the truth. Solomon asks for that. He asks that the oath be fulfilled if the accused is guilty, or, if there is no guilt, the oath will not be fulfilled.

The counterpart of this can be found in Matthew 18, where the Lord Jesus says: "If your brother sins" (Mt 18:15). The Lord also gives instructions there on how we should personally and as a local church deal with this (Mt 18:15-20). It is about restoring the brother who sinned to fellowship with the Lord and the church. The way this work is to be done is depicted by the Lord in the verses preceding this section (Mt 18:1-14) and the verses following it (Mt 18:21-35). It comes down to an attitude of humbleness, care and forgiveness.

### **Verses 33-34 | Second Prayer**

*33 "When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy, because they have sinned against You, if they turn to You again and confess Your name and pray and make supplication to You in this house, 34 then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to their fathers.*

This prayer concerns the sin of all people (Lev 26:17; Deu 28:25). The whole people have sinned, for example when sin is tolerated. God then sends enemies as judgment, so that the people will confess and call to God with remorse for their sins. He will then give restoration.

In an application to the church we can think of allowing a carnal, worldly mind, or not condemning liberal or sectarian habits. We can also think of intruding public sins or false teachings without disciplining them. We then will be defeated by the enemy. The only thing that can free us from the enemy is confession of our unfaithfulness. Then the Lord forgives and gives again the enjoyment of our spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.

### Verses 35-36 | Third Prayer

*35 "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin when You afflict them, 36 then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Your land, which You have given Your people for an inheritance.*

The third prayer concerns the situation that God must withhold His blessing from His people if they deviate from Him (Lev 26:19; Deu 11:17; 28:23). This judgment was asked of God by Elijah, that the people might return to Him (1Kgs 17:1; Jam 5:17). That is what has happened. Without rain there is no harvest and no harvest feast.

If the people of God humble themselves, the LORD can show them the right way again. Every humiliation leads to new insight to go the right way.

In a local church death can be in the pot. If spiritual blessing is no longer enjoyed, it is the result of a deviation from the Word of God. As Elimelech we can head for places where we think we can find food (Rth 1:1). However, God's intention is that we humble ourselves before Him and confess our deviation. Then the Lord can show us the right way again. If we go then, the result is that blessing comes again.

### Verses 37-40 | Fourth Prayer

*37 "If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight [or] mildew, locust [or] grasshopper, if their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities, whatever plague, whatever sickness [there is], 38 whatever prayer or supplication is made by any man [or] by all Your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart, and spreading his hands toward this house; 39 then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart You know, for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men, 40 that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You have given to our fathers.*

Here disease and hunger strike the land (Lev 26:19,25; Deu 28:22-23,38). Sin is not mentioned directly. Hunger is the result of plagues and enemies

that come upon the people because of the plagues of the hearts of each of the members of God's people. They pray to God to ask why He makes these plagues come. The plagues are instruments that God uses to discipline His people. They become the reason for the self-examination of every member and it will lead to the discovery that life is not as God wishes. That has nothing to do with whether there are concrete sins, but that there is slowness in serving God.

We cannot deceive ourselves when we are in God's presence. God will forgive if everyone recognizes the condition of his heart, for only He knows the heart. We often judge our brother as if we know exactly his heart. When self-examination is done – and that is God's intention with hunger – what is in our hearts comes to light. It is about each one searching his own heart and not seeking the solution in all that another has done or could have done. If everyone says that in sincerity, there will be blessing again.

This is a case of personal unfaithfulness. If we see that, the reason for this is often the incorrect setting of our priorities. We then run for our own houses, abandoning the house of God (Hag 1:9b). We must confess this and give God's house again the first place. God will then give blessing again.

### **Verses 41-43 | Fifth Prayer**

*41 "Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Your name's sake 42 (for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house, 43 hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, in order 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.*

The second series of prayers begins with the fifth prayer. In this first prayer of the second series, the house of God, the church, also appears to be a refuge for foreigners (cf. Num 15:14).

The house of God in the New Testament, the church (1Tim 3:15), is first and foremost a house of prayer, where intercession is done for all people (1Tim 2:1-2a). God wants us as His house to have an eye for all who do not



yet belong to it and pray for them. There is no exception for God. No one is excluded from the opportunity to enter His home.

### Verses 44-45 | Sixth Prayer

*44 “When Your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way You shall send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city which You have chosen and the house which I have built for Your name, 45 then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.*

Here the people go out against the enemy, contrary to verse 33, and pray to God for it (cf. 2Chr 20:4-12). Praying toward the chosen city and temple means believing in the true presence of the God of the covenant in the temple. Fighting on God’s command does not exclude prayer, but makes it all the more necessary.

We can apply this in connection with the previous prayer to the battle for the gospel (Phil 4:3). It is a battle against the evil powers of darkness to proclaim the good news on their territory. We all have that command (2Tim 4:5b).

### Verses 46-51 | Seventh Prayer

*46 “When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near; 47 if they take thought in the land where they have been taken captive, and repent and make supplication to You in the land of those who have taken them captive, saying, ‘We have sinned and have committed iniquity, we have acted wickedly’; 48 if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who have taken them captive, and pray to You toward their land which You have given to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name; 49 then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven Your dwelling place, and maintain their cause, 50 and forgive Your people who have sinned against You and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You, and make them [objects of] compassion before those who have taken them captive, that they may have compassion on them 51 (for they are Your people and Your inheritance which You have brought forth from Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace),*

Solomon knows the heart of man. There is no man who does not sin. Therefore, it is necessary that God's discipline must come. This happened in the exile to Babel (cf. Lev 26:33,44). A return is also possible. In that case, conversion must take place. Then they can supplicate toward "the house". Daniel did that (Dan 6:11). He has confessed guilt (Dan 9:5). God answered the prayer of Daniel by giving Cyrus in his heart to give his people the freedom (Psa 106:46).

It is one of the "things revealed" (Deu 29:29b) that God puts us aside when we become unfaithful. The "secret things" (Deu 29:29a) means that He will act according to His counsels by first having us call to Him with repentance and then free us. With regard to Israel He will do this by working repentance in a remnant and fulfilling His promises to them.

### **Verses 52-53 | Basis of Prayer**

*52 that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant and to the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them whenever they call to You. 53 For You have separated them from all the peoples of the earth as Your inheritance, as You spoke through Moses Your servant, when You brought our fathers forth from Egypt, O Lord GOD."*

Solomon reminds God that His people are His inheritance and that He lived up to what He spoke through Moses when He led the people out of Egypt. What God does is always connected with what He has spoken and what was from the beginning.

### **Verses 54-61 | The Faithfulness of the LORD**

*54 When Solomon had finished praying this entire prayer and supplication to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread toward heaven. 55 And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying: 56 "Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant. 57 May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us, 58 that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and*

*His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers. 59 And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day requires, 60 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no one else. 61 Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.”*

In 2 Chronicles 7 after the prayer fire comes from heaven to consume the sacrifice and the glory of the LORD fills the temple for the second time (2Chr 7:1). This is lacking here because the emphasis here is on responsibility. We see this after arising from the prayer. Solomon speaks to the people and presents to them their responsibility. Each prayer at the same time gives a responsibility. First he praises the LORD that he has given His people rest. The rest of His people is the result of the rest He Himself found, depicted in the resting place of the ark in the temple.

Further Solomon points to the unchangeable faithfulness of the LORD, His absolute faithfulness which is demonstrated by the fact that He has fulfilled every word He has spoken. He also expresses the wish that He will be with them and guide them. The past is also a guarantee for the future, because as the LORD was with the fathers, He can also be with them (Heb 13:8).

In verse 58 comes the responsibility. In order to meet this, man also needs the help of God, that He inclines his heart to obedience. Day after day, “each day” (verse 59), we depend on God’s help. The effect of this will be “that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God” and that “there is no one else” (verse 60). Therefore Solomon points out that the heart must be perfect, undivided, with the LORD. There is nothing to share with the LORD that is not His. At the moment Solomon can still say that this is the case with the people. Unfortunately it will not stay that way and with us it is often not undivided.

### **Verses 62-64 | Solomon Offers Sacrifice**

*62 Now the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifice before the LORD.  
63 Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the*

*LORD, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the sons of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. 64 On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that [was] before the house of the LORD, because there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings; for the bronze altar that [was] before the LORD [was] too small to hold the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings.*

The great dedication of the temple ends with the offering of sacrifices. The temple is also discussed later, because everything in Solomon's life revolves around the temple. Here the sacrifice is connected to the temple. The other aspect is the temple as a dwelling place. This is about approaching God and that is not possible with empty hands. The size of the sacrifice indicates the greatness of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

This multitude of sacrifices cannot, of course, be fully brought on the altar. Therefore Solomon sanctifies another part of the temple. The whole middle piece becomes a large altar. This initiative has God's approval. It shows us that there is room for spiritual initiatives that arise from a desire to honor God.

### **Verses 65-66 | Feast**

*65 So Solomon observed the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, for seven days and seven [more] days, [even] fourteen days. 66 On the eighth day he sent the people away and they blessed the king. Then they went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shown to David His servant and to Israel His people.*

The size of the land is described to show that the whole people share in the feast. The feast lasts seven days and seven days, i.e. the Dedication Feast and the Feast of Booths (2Chr 7:9).

The eighth day is the great day of the Feast of Booths (Jn 7:37). When the people leave, they wish the king the blessing of God. It's the climax: the people are in the blessing of the land.

## 1 Kings 9

### Verses 1-9 | Answer From the LORD

*1 Now it came about when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all that Solomon desired to do, 2 that the LORD appeared to Solomon a second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. 3 The LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. 4 As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you [and] will keep My statutes and My ordinances, 5 then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' 6 "But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 8 And this house will become a heap of ruins; everyone who passes by will be astonished and hiss and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' 9 And they will say, 'Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore the LORD has brought all this adversity on them.'"*

When Solomon has finished building (verse 1), the LORD appears to him again (verse 2). It will be the twenty-fourth year of his government. He has been building for twenty years (verse 10). He has built the temple in seven years, which he began in the fourth year of his reign, and then he has built his house in thirteen years. He is here in the second part of his government and the decline of his government has already begun. The freshness of the beginning is no longer there. Things have come into Solomon's life that will lead him to a fall.

The LORD appears for the second time to Solomon. He previously appeared to him in Gibeon, now He appears to him, as it seems, in Jerusalem. At His first appearance He told Solomon to ask what he wanted. Now, after so many years of prosperity, He lets him know what his responsibility is.

The LORD returns to his prayer from the eleventh year of his reign, the prayer at the dedication of the temple. Now, thirteen years later, the answer comes. The LORD first says to him that he has heard his prayer and supplication. It is a great encouragement for everyone who prays and supplicates to know that God hears prayer. The LORD reminds Solomon that He sanctified the temple by establishing His Name there forever (cf. Deu 12:11a). Solomon also asked if the eyes of the LORD will always be focused on it (1Kgs 8:29). The answer of the LORD goes further. He says that His eyes and His heart will always be there.

Then He reminds Solomon of his responsibility. The throne of Solomon will be established when he stays in the ways of the LORD. There is an “if” in verse 4 and verse 6, both for Solomon and for the whole people. That is the side of responsibility. God warns that they will keep His commandments and will not follow any other gods. If they do not listen, He must cut them off from the land, and He will cast out His temple so that it becomes a mockery (Deu 28:37,45,63).

All who will see the destroyed temple will ask why (Deu 29:23-26). The answer is: because the people have left the LORD. How about the promises, then, is God’s business and not the business of an unfaithful people.

The words that Solomon prayed for the people in view of their deviation now come to him personally. What one proclaims oneself, returns to one’s own head. That should not change the preaching, but keep the preacher. It comes down to the fact that someone must be what he preaches. All the kings after him have experienced that. It also applies to us, because the kingdom is also entrusted to us.

### **Verses 10-14 | Cities for Hiram**

*10 It came about at the end of twenty years in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king’s house 11 (Hiram king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress timber and gold according to all his desire), then King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. 12*

*So Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, and they did not please him. 13 He said, "What are these cities which you have given me, my brother?" So they were called the land of Cabul to this day. 14 And Hiram sent to the king 120 talents of gold.*

After Solomon has finished the two houses he has built, he gives twenty cities to Hiram, King of Tyre. Possibly Solomon borrowed gold and gave twenty cities as security. With this he made God's inheritance smaller. They are cities in the promised land and Hiram cannot appreciate them. It seems that Hiram returned the cities, probably because Solomon paid his debt (2Chr 8:2).

Hiram did help with the building of the temple, but he has no interest in it, nor in the cities that Solomon gave him. He even despises the cities, which is evident from the name he gives to them. "Kabul" literally means "as good as nothing". Someone can be at work for the people of God, the church, by working on a certain work, but still have no interest for it. There is then a participation, but there is no relation, there is no taste of the heavenly land.

### **Verses 15-24 | The Buildings of Solomon**

*15 Now this is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon levied to build the house of the LORD, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. 16 [For] Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it [as] a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife. 17 So Solomon rebuilt Gezer and the lower Beth-horon 18 and Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land [of Judah], 19 and all the storage cities which Solomon had, even the cities for his chariots and the cities for his horsemen, and all that it pleased Solomon to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land under his rule. 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 sons of Israel, 21 their descendants who were left after them in the land whom the sons of Israel were unable to destroy utterly, from them Solomon levied forced laborers, even to this day. 22 But Solomon did not make slaves of the sons of Israel; for they were men of war, his servants, his princes, his captains, his chariot commanders, and his horsemen. 23 These [were] the chief officers who [were]*

*over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, who ruled over the people doing the work. 24 As soon as Pharaoh's daughter came up from the city of David to her house which [Solomon] had built for her, then he built the Millo.*

Solomon has built a lot. He strengthens cities and builds new ones. Everything he desires to build (verses 1,19), that he builds. This building spirit goes further than just building the temple and his palace. These are buildings that are according to God's will. The desire to build other buildings does not have to be wrong at first. It seems, however, that he has gone too far in his building-lust and that in the end it does not give him any peace (Ecc 2:4-11). It may be that we already have a warning here that his heart is no longer completely focused on the LORD. Thus we too can begin in the Spirit, but end in the flesh (Gal 3:3).

His lust to build also means an enormous burden for the people who have to contribute to this in the form of taxes, under which they sigh (1Kgs 12:4). This will not happen when the Lord Jesus reigns in Zion, for He says: "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Mt 11:30).

What the Pharaoh does (verse 16), the Israelites should have done. Wherever Solomon builds, he encounters remaining Canaanites. The time of extermination is over, that should have happened under Joshua. It can also be the same in the church. The time for action may be over and the only thing that sometimes remains is to bear the consequences.

But Solomon does make the enemies slaves of the Israelites. This does not apply to the children of God's people. They are warriors to fight for the LORD, and servants to serve the LORD. The number and function of the supervisors is given.

Verse 24 points back to a previous event (1Kgs 3:1) and rectifies what happened there. With the departure of Pharaoh's daughter from the city of David, there is room for the building of the Millo, which is done by Solomon. The Millo is a fortress near Jerusalem.

### **Verse 25 | The Offerings of Solomon**

*25 Now three times in a year Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he built to the LORD, burning incense with them [on the altar] which [was] before the LORD. So he finished the house.*



This verse also points back to 1 Kings 3 and rectifies what happened there, though under the LORD's tolerance, not in the right way (1Kgs 3:2-4). As prescribed Solomon offers three times a year: "the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths" (2Chr 8:13). He offers not on the golden altar, but on the bronze altar, not *in* the temple, but *before* the temple.

The last part of the verse – "so he finished the house" – means that by bringing the sacrifices before the LORD he does full justice to the house. The house is finished with a view to bring sacrifices. That may appeal to us. The church is a spiritual house to bring spiritual sacrifices (1Pet 2:5). If we do that, together with others, we do full justice to the house .

### Verses 26-28 | The Fleet of Solomon

*26 King Solomon also built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. 27 And Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, sailors who knew the sea, along with the servants of Solomon. 28 They went to Ophir and took four hundred and twenty talents of gold from there, and brought [it] to King Solomon.*

Hiram also helped Solomon with the building of ships and delivered crew familiar with the sea. The ships are only mentioned here as means of transport for gold, which is taken from Ofir.

There are still two places in Scripture of which the names are linked to gold: Havilah (Gen 2:11) and Sheba (Psa 72:15; 1Kgs 10:10; Isa 60:6; Eze 27:22). Havilah reminds us of paradise and Sheba determines us at the time of the empire of peace. Through the gold that Solomon gets from Ophir, the idea arises that the early days of Solomon can be compared to the glory of paradise and that of the empire of peace.

## 1 Kings 10

### Verses 1-3 | Visit of the Queen of Sheba

*1 Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with difficult questions. 2 So she came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart. 3 Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her.*

The purpose of this chapter is to emphasize the incredible wealth of Solomon. He possesses everything in quantities that exceed our comprehension. The queen of Sheba, a really rich woman, is overwhelmed by it. She is set by the Lord Jesus as an example to the scribes and Pharisees. The Lord tells them that this queen came from far away – most likely from Yemen, 1950 km south of Jerusalem – to hear the wisdom of Solomon, while they would not listen to Him Who is more than Solomon (Mt 12:42).

The coming of the queen of Sheba to Solomon is an example of the nations coming to Solomon and the God of Solomon (1Kgs 4:34; 8:41-43). She doesn't just come to pay a courtesy visit or to see a rich and wise king, but to see a king who has a great God. She is not only curious about Solomon, but wants to know more about the LORD. She has heard the call concerning Solomon "concerning the name of the LORD". She may have heard this call through the shipmen of Solomon's fleet, which will also have visited her country.

In this history we have a clear proof that we see here a picture of the kingdom of peace (Psa 72:8,10; Isa 60:5-6). For us there is also an application. We are under the authority of Him of Whom Solomon is a picture. The queen of Sheba introduces someone who wants to learn the mysteries of God and to hear the solution from the mouth of the true Solomon. These mysteries concern, in pictures, Christ and His church. In Christ are "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:2-3). We may come to Him with all our questions, including questions about our practice.

She comes up with questions that occupied her in her heart, the big questions of life and no intellectual questions. Solomon answers all her questions. We don't always get the answer we want, nor always in the form we immediately understand. Yet we never leave Him without an answer, even though we sometimes have to wait for what we have asked. The heart that is in His presence will experience that He is completely trustworthy.

### Verses 4-5 | What the Queen Sees

*4 When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, 5 the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.*

The Queen of Sheba sees seven things. The question is whether we also have seen this, but in the spiritual application, or at least want to see it.

1. She doesn't *hear* the wisdom of Solomon so much, but *perceives* it in everything he has made. This can be seen by us in creation and in the church. Christ is the "wisdom of God" (1Cor 1:30).
2. She sees the house he has built. She walks on to his throne room and also to his house. She sees what many Israelites have never seen. Solomon likes to show it to her. In this way the Lord Jesus also likes to show us what He has built: the church.
3. She sees the food of his table. Solomon will have offered her a meal. Have we seen what the Lord Jesus gives us to eat: His flesh and His blood (Jn 6:51-58)? As members of the church, the food He has for us is necessary to maintain and enjoy fellowship with Him and the Father.
4. She sees the dignity and happiness of those who surround Solomon. There are servants who are sitting, possibly his Council of Ministers. They sit with the king at his table and take part in the meal. The high place of the believer is in Christ in the heavenly places, a place he has been given by the good pleasure of the Father. This must be seen in the believer.
5. She sees servants standing: the attendance of his waiters. They are ready to serve Solomon and his people. In addition to a high place

in the heavenly places the believer also has a task for the Lord to perform. This task requires appropriate behavior, which is reflected in the attire. That attire is Christ (Eph 1:6; Rom 13:14). He should be seen in our service.

6. She sees his cupbearers, who provide him and his company with wine, that is to say everything that makes them merry. The Lord Jesus wants us to share in His joy (Jn 15:11). This joy comes from engaging with Him as He is presented to us in God's Word (1Jn 1:1-4).
7. She sees his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, or: his burnt offering which he offered, as it also can be translated. His burnt offerings represent everything with which he glorifies God. After leaving the meal, they may have gone to the temple to bring burnt offerings. She has seen how Solomon has glorified God and she has been amazed. She is introduced into the worship of God. Everything that we see of the Lord Jesus and everything that others see of Him in us should not be for our glorification, but should lead us to worship the Father (Jn 4:23-24).

### Verses 6-9 | Testimony of the Queen

*6 Then she said to the king, "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. 7 Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed [in] wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard. 8 How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually [and] hear your wisdom. 9 Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness."*

Only when we have seen the riches and wisdom of the Lord Jesus we can speak about it. She had heard it, but now she has seen it and she is overwhelmed by it. It is much more glorious than she had imagined in response to everything she had heard. That's how we also can experience it. We can hear and read about the glory of the Lord Jesus from others, for example by Bible readings or by Bible commentaries, but only when we delve into it ourselves will we be overwhelmed by it.

From the praise of the queen we cannot deduce whether she has accepted the true God as her God. Perhaps we can conclude this from what the Lord Jesus says about her, that she “will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it” (Mt 12:42a). It is important for us whether we know the happiness she speaks about. Then people will praise us for what we are allowed to see. They will see that God loved His people with an eternal love, because of the Lord Jesus, although they have no awareness of its content.

### Verses 10-13 | Exchange of Gifts

*10 She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a very great [amount] of spices and precious stones. Never again did such abundance of spices come in as that which the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon. 11 Also the ships of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir a very great [number of] almug trees and precious stones. 12 The king made of the almug trees supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, also lyres and harps for the singers; such almug trees have not come in [again] nor have they been seen to this day. 13 King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire which she requested, besides what he gave her according to his royal bounty. Then she turned and went to her own land together with her servants.*

The queen of Sheba gives Solomon a huge gift of gold, spices and precious stones. She did not know the spiritual meaning of this. In a literal sense she brings the most glorious of God's creation. We see spiritual glory in this gift. Gold represents Divine glory. Spices represent the glories that are in Christ, God revealed in the flesh, come out from His innermost being. Precious stones also represents His glories, but then as they can be seen in their external and versatile radiation. All these glories we see in the Lord Jesus.

The verses 11-12 are an interjection. It's as if the writer, through the gifts of the queen of Sheba, suddenly thinks of other gold and wood. He wants to involve his readers in this.

Then we read in verse 13 that Solomon gives the queen of Sheba everything she desires and asks for. That comes on top of everything he has already given her. The total will be much more than what she has given

him. He gives “according to his royal bounty”. He gives according to His full wealth.

Full of all kinds of glories of King Solomon she goes back home. Whether her heart is full of Him for Whom she came to Solomon (verse 1), does not become clear. As indicated above, we may conclude from the words of the Lord Jesus that she did get to know the God of Israel and did accept Him.

### **Verses 14-15 | The Income**

*14 Now the weight of gold which came in to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, 15 besides [that] from the traders and the wares of the merchants and all the kings of the Arabs and the governors of the country.*

The income of Solomon is huge. Without being able to give an immediate explanation, the mentioned number “666” is remarkable (Rev 13:18; Ezra 2:13).

### **Verses 16-17 | The Shields**

*16 King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold, using 600 [shekels of] gold on each large shield. 17 [He made] 300 shields of beaten gold, using three minas of gold on each shield, and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.*

Because of the large number of shields, his house, his palace, becomes, as it were, a giant fortress. The shield speaks of the LORD. He is the shield of His people. Solomon made these shields to defend his house.

### **Verses 18-20 | The Throne**

*18 Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with refined gold. 19 [There were] six steps to the throne and a round top to the throne at its rear, and arms on each side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the arms. 20 Twelve lions were standing there on the six steps on the one side and on the other; nothing like [it] was made for any other kingdom.*

The throne belongs to the wonderful government of Solomon and is actually a high point. It is a throne that has never been made in any kingdom.

It can only be applied to the throne of the Lord Jesus, of whom Solomon is still such a beautiful picture here.

It is not very obvious that there is talk about ivory covered with gold. It may be a throne of wood covered partly with ivory and partly with gold. Ivory can only be obtained by death. It is different with gold; there the thought of death does not come to the fore. Ivory as the fruit of death and gold as the picture of Divine glory are the basis of the throne of the Lord Jesus. He rules because He is God Himself and at the same time He is the One Who died as Man, but also rose up and lives forever.

Six steps lead up to that glorious throne. On each of these six steps are two lions, that is twelve lions altogether, one for each tribe. Beside the throne are two more, that brings the total to fourteen, that is two times seven. The throne itself is on the seventh step. The lion is also a symbol of Christ Himself.

To take place on the throne, seven steps have to be climbed. We see these steps in the life of the Lord Jesus, Who will finally take place on the throne. If the Lord had knelt before Satan (Mt 4:8-9), He would not have had such a throne. It would be, so to speak, a throne without steps. The Lord wanted to go every step of the six, while the seventh makes Him sit directly on the throne itself.

The throne described here is not the throne comparable to the place He occupies on the right side of God. He has already reached it. This is the throne of David on earth, who has been prepared from the foundation of the world. In the six steps we can see the way He has gone to take his place on that throne. Maybe there are other applications to make, but a possible interpretation for each step is the following:

1. The first step is His willingness to do the will of God: "Behold, I have come ... To do Your will, O God" (Heb 10:7).
2. The second is that He became Man. For Him that was a humiliation. He Who sits on the throne of David is the Son of man. To this end He partook of blood and flesh: "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same" (Heb 2:14a).

3. He partook of blood and flesh to give His life: "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). His death was the necessary third step.
4. It could not stop there. He is raised and resurrected: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1Cor 15:20). This is the fourth, middle step.
5. The fifth is that He went to heaven, glorified at God's right hand: He "has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2b). He now sits with His Father on the throne of His Father, not on His own throne (Rev 3:21).
6. The sixth step is that He rises from it and comes to earth on the clouds from heaven: "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS" (Mt 16:27).
7. Then He will climb the seventh step by taking place on His throne: "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne." (Mt 25:31).

If we compare in the description of the throne what is written in verse 19 with what is written in 2 Chronicles 9 (2Chr 9:18), the following question arises: Is the shape of the head of the throne round or is it a description of a footstool attached to the throne? It is a difficult word to translate. It seems that on the throne, on its head, is a sheep. This is how the Septuagint translates these words. This gives a nice explanation in connection with Revelation 5, where there is a lion *and* a lamb (Rev 5:5-6). He Who sits on the throne is also the Lamb. Such a throne, such a government has never been seen.

### Verses 21-25 | Various Glories

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 was of silver; it was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon. 22 For the king had at sea the ships of Tarshish with the ships of Hiram; once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks. 23 So King Solo-



*mon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. 24 All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart. 25 They brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.*

The glory of Solomon is so great, that even the silver is not considered as valuable. They come to him from every corner of the earth, with many gifts. This is what will happen when the Lord Jesus reigns.

However, there is also something that is a warning to us with regard to merchandise. Solomon's ships also bring apes and peacocks (verse 22). Apes stand for folly and peacocks for vanity. In the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon describes his research into the value of the things of life under the sun. He always comes to the conclusion that it is folly and vanity or futility. In that book he describes the time when he lived more or less separately from God, even though there was a certain feeling of His presence.

That is how we can live. We know Who God is, yet we choose to live in the world. A wisdom greater than Solomon's is within reach, but we often do not desire it. We can "be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col 1:9), but do we also pray for it? Or do we surrender to the foolish and vain things of the life of the world?

### **Verses 26-29 | The Horses**

*26 Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. 27 The king made silver [as common] as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland. 28 Also Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, [and] the king's merchants procured [them] from Kue for a price. 29 A chariot was imported from Egypt for 600 [shekels] of silver, and a horse for 150; and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans.*

This is still about the glory of Solomon, as shown in verse 27 (cf. Isa 55:13; 60:17). Yet there are also signs of decay. We see this in the horses that Solomon imports from Egypt, a way of doing things that is contrary to the law of the king. Also the strange women and the strange gods that Solomon

brings into his house – we see this in the next chapter – are in conflict with this and will lead to his fall (Deu 17:16-17).

Solomon has never known days of persecution and sorrow as his father David. He did not know the school of God's discipline. That may be a reason for his fall. We cannot do without the necessary trial of our faith to keep us on the right path.

Whatever blessings we are surrounded with, we can never ignore God's law unpunished, nor become sloppy in our walk He has presented to us in His Word. God has given Solomon an abundance of riches and honor, although Solomon only asked for wisdom. But He has also prescribed that the king should read the law (Deu 17:18-20), so that he would be restrained to use these means to obtain even more wealth. We see here that Solomon does what the law forbids. It proves that there has come distance between his heart and God.

In the days of David we read more about donkeys than about horses. Donkeys are subservient animals. They seem to have no place in the kingdom of Solomon, except the time he rides on David's mule to be anointed in Gihon (1Kgs 1:33-38). Horses are used for war, but David writes even before Solomon begins to rule: "A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength" (Psa 33:17; cf. Psa 147:10).

Solomon seems to have had a great horse trade, including chariots, with the surrounding nations. That trade brought him much profit, but it was not a trade that the LORD liked. This trade gave the surrounding pagan nations the impression that it was better to rely on horses than on the LORD. When they entered the land of Canaan He had also said that His people should hamstring the horses and burn the chariots (Jos 11:6). It is a lesson that He does not want to use the methods of the nations in His work and His battle. He alone must be the trust of His people, then and now.

# 1 Kings 11

## Verses 1-8 | The Unfaithfulness of Solomon

*1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, [for] they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. 4 For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father [had been]. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father [had done]. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. 8 Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.*

In this chapter we see the failure of Solomon. The development described here and the related events lack in 2 Chronicles.

Solomon violates the royal law (Deu 17:14-20) in a multiple manner. Here it is mainly about the influence of women on Solomon. When the female element dominates the male, we see what happens here. Nehemiah seriously accuses the returned remnant because of their unholy connections and refers to the great disobedience of the great king Solomon, who thereby caused Israel to sin (Neh 13:26). He took a thousand wives, but he has not found a good one among them (Ecc 7:28; cf. Song 6:8-9).

His father David did not give him a good example (1Sam 25:42-44; 2Sam 11:26-27) and Solomon goes much further in this deviation from the LORD. At least David had wives from the people of God, but Solomon takes them from the surrounding pagan nations. He does this against God's express

commandment that His people should not engage with these women (Deu 7:3-4; Exo 34:16). With all his wisdom he is not able to control his lusts. If this happened to Solomon, it must make us small and it will be our wisdom to take the warning to heart: "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands, look out that he does not fall" (1Cor 10:12).

With his many wives, Solomon also takes their gods into his house. David never did that either. David has always, with all his failures, remained faithful to the LORD. The idolaters all have their own gods, but Solomon takes them all into his house. Someone who knows God's Word and deviated from it often makes it worse than someone who has never been in touch with God. The corruption of the best is the worst corruption.

This all happens "when Solomon was old". The flesh in the believer does not get better with the climbing of the years. It will even assert itself when we have grown old and we may think that the dangers of life no longer threaten us and we are no longer vigilant. Then it will still do its devastating work with us.

The man who so humbly prayed to the LORD at the dedication of the temple becomes an admirer of the Ashtoreth, Milcom, and other pagan abominations. He who built a temple for the LORD sinks so low, that he "built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, ... and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon" and for the detestable idols of all his strange wives. The one for Chemosh he builds "on the mountain that lies before Jerusalem" (verse 7), as it were before the face of Zion, beloved by the LORD.

In our time one would call Solomon a big-hearted man. He leaves everyone in his value and participates in all religions. He is no longer a man for whom there is only one God, he is not a 'fundamentalist'. All gods have become equal to him. He even attaches himself "in love" to them (verse 2). Then you are king of all people, aren't you? But you are no longer one after God's heart! He does "what was evil in the sight of the LORD" (verse 6). It's not about how people judge the things we do, but how God judges them.

In the history of the kings of Israel we have a picture of the history of Christianity. In the middle of the history of Israel we find Ahab and Je-

zebel. Jezebel is also found in the prophetic description of church history in Revelation 2-3. In the middle of that description we see the church in Thyatira. The Lord Jesus sees something in that church about which He must exhort that church and that is that they tolerate *the woman Jezebel* (Rev 2:19-24). After Ahab and Jezebel comes Jehu, whom we see in the picture in the church in Sardis (Rev 3:1-3). Before Ahab and Jezebel we first have Jeroboam. He is a picture of the church in Pergamum (Rev 2:13-16).

However, the deviations begin with the church in Ephesus, with leaving the first love (Rev 2:4). We have a picture of this in Solomon, because his heart deviates by his wives to the idols of those women. His heart is no longer undivided for the LORD. That is why the lampstand will over time be removed.

After the giving up of the first love by the church in Ephesus, a tribulation comes in the church in Smyrna as punishment of the Lord (Rev 2:9-10). We see this in the picture in the opponents the LORD has begotten against Solomon later in this chapter.

### Verses 9-13 | The LORD Is Angry With Solomon

*9 Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded. 11 So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, 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. 12 Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, [but] I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, [but] I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."*

The LORD appeared to him twice, first in Gibeon, at the beginning of his reign (1Kgs 3:5) and later again, in Jerusalem, on the occasion of the dedication of the temple (1Kgs 9:2). God already saw the deviations in his heart and has warned him of them. We do not read of a concrete warning against idolatry, but God may have told him so when He appeared to

him. But we read several times that the LORD warns him to walk in his commandments and statutes (1Kgs 3:14; 6:12; 9:4). This also means that there can be no place for idolatry.

God also reminds us of the times when He came to us and spoke clearly to us, and that we did nothing with what He said to us then. Now that Solomon makes clear that he does not listen to what God has said to him, God becomes angry with him (Psa 18:26-27) and tells him the judgment. Only for the sake of his father David he does not execute it during his life (cf. 2Kgs 20:19). In the same way God also deals with us in grace for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

The LORD also leaves a remnant for the house of David. So today there is also a remnant that the Lord keeps for Himself in faithfulness to Him.

### **Verses 14-22 | The Adversary Hadad**

*14 Then the LORD raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal line in Edom. 15 For it came about, when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to bury the slain, and had struck down every male in Edom 16 (for Joab and all Israel stayed there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom), 17 that Hadad fled to Egypt, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, while Hadad [was] a young boy. 18 They arose from Midian and came to Paran; and they took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house and assigned him food and gave him land. 19 Now Hadad found great favor before Pharaoh, so that he gave him in marriage the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. 20 The sister of Tahpenes bore his son Genubath, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house; and Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the sons of Pharaoh. 21 But when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Send me away, that I may go to my own country." 22 Then Pharaoh said to him, "But what have you lacked with me, that behold, you are seeking to go to your own country?" And he answered, "Nothing; nevertheless you must surely let me go."*

As long as Solomon remains close to the LORD and to his duty, "there is neither adversary nor misfortune" (1Kgs 5:4). But as a result of his devia-

tion from the LORD and his turning to the idols, it is over with the peace of his kingdom. Three adversaries are coming forward, two from abroad and one from Israel, from within. Adversaries are a rod of discipline in God's hand to make His people return to Him again, so that they do not perish (1Cor 11:32; Isa 10:5-7; Heb 12:11-13).

The first foreigner is Hadad, an important man in whom the evil characteristics of the Edomites and the Egyptians unite. This man would never have had any chance to stand up against Solomon if the LORD had not strengthened him. The hatred in the heart of this man is great (verse 25b).

As a young boy he escaped the judgment David brought upon Edom (2Sam 8:13-14). He fled to Egypt, to Pharaoh, who gave him a house, bread, a piece of land and a wife. When he has grown up, he sees his chance, after David's death, to give room to his hatred. He doesn't like it anymore in Egypt and returns to Israel, which he calls "my country" (verse 21). Hadad has lived for the day that he could take revenge.

The spiritual lesson is obvious. A small sin that is not judged grows up and becomes stronger. Sin asserts itself in hatred of all that is of God and is not content with the pleasure of the world. Sin seeks the harm of the people of God. Therefore we must nip every sin in the bud by judging the smallest deviation from God's will.

### Verses 23-25 | The Adversary Rezon

*23 God also raised up [another] adversary to him, Rezon the son of Elijahda, who had fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah. 24 He gathered men to himself and became leader of a marauding band, after David slew them of [Zobah]; and they went to Damascus and stayed there, and reigned in Damascus. 25 So he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, along with the evil that Hadad [did]; and he abhorred Israel and reigned over Aram.*

The second foreign adversary is Rezon, a servant of Hadadezer, the king of Zobah, who has been completely defeated by David (2Sam 8:3-8). He is a powerful enemy who is only powerful because Solomon became weak because of his sins, so God can no longer be with him.

Both foreign enemies are hostile to Solomon because of what David did to them.

## Verses 26-40 | The Adversary Jeroboam

26 Then Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king. 27 Now this was the reason why he rebelled against the king: Solomon built the Millo, [and] closed up the breach of the city of his father David. 28 Now the man Jeroboam was a valiant warrior, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph. 29 It came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field. 30 Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and tore it into twelve pieces. 31 He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes 32 (but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel), 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 sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and [observing] My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David [did]. 34 Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes; 35 but I will take the kingdom from his son's hand and give it to you, [even] ten tribes. 36 But to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name. 37 I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel. 38 Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. 39 Thus I will afflict the descendants of David for this, but not always.'" 40 Solomon sought therefore to put Jeroboam to death; but Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt to Shishak king of Egypt, and he was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.



First Solomon appreciates Jeroboam and rewards him for his work. Jeroboam is making a career. This is the man God has appointed for the ten tribes. Unlike both opponents from outside the country, Jeroboam does not act out of hatred. Solomon or David have done him nothing that could give rise to hatred. He is a servant of Solomon and rebels against him. Why this is the case is subsequently stated. It comes down to the fact that he revolted against Solomon with a prophecy.

Jeroboam is appointed by God through the prophet Ahijah as the new king over the torn off part of Israel. This is done by means of a symbolic act with a "new cloak". A few times it is mentioned that it is a new cloak. The new cloak represents the new, undivided realm. This comes to an end, which is symbolically represented in the tearing of the new cloak. The symbolic action makes the prophecy an event that has already taken place. Just as the cloak is torn and lies on the ground before Jeroboam's eyes, so in God's counsel the division of the kingdom is already a fact.

Ahijah shows through the tearing of the robe that God takes away ten tribes from Solomon and leaves only one tribe to David's house. The ten tribes are often called 'Ephraim', after the descent of the first king from this largest tribe.

Jeroboam is told that he will be king and also why. Ahijah explains in detail what went wrong with Solomon. It must be a clear warning for Jeroboam not to fall into the same evil, because the consequences will be no different for him. He does not get the kingship over the ten tribes because he would be better than Solomon (cf. Deu 9:4).

When Ahijah tells him that he will rule over everything he desires, it may be an allusion to the hidden desire of his heart, known by God, to become king (verse 37; cf. 1Sam 9:20). However, there is one condition and that is that he has to wait until Solomon has died. Waiting for the time of God is of the utmost importance, also for us. He is promised that God will be with him if he listens to God and obeys Him, as David did.

When Jeroboam sins, he consciously goes against God's warnings. He can't wait. He sees the power before him and wants to seize it prematurely (verse 26) because he himself is seized by the power. What he has done, we

don't read, but from the reaction of Solomon, who wants to kill him, we see that Jeroboam has tried to ascend the throne during the life of Solomon.

Among all the kings of the ten tribes that succeeded Jeroboam, we have no king who has remained faithful to God. It starts with Jeroboam, after which the servant follows the servant. In a few cases, a king is succeeded by his son, but otherwise, each succession takes place by seizing power and killing the reigning king. In this Jeroboam did not succeed.

From Solomon's reaction we also see that he does not bow under the discipline of God, but turns against God's rod of discipline. He wants to smash away God's hand, as it were. With his own hands he tries to eliminate the means God has used. This doesn't justify Jeroboam's wrong behavior, but it also reveals the mind of Solomon's heart. Solomon did not succeed in killing the God-appointed successor, just as Saul did not succeed in killing his successor David.

Yet there is hope that Solomon humbled himself before God and repented and converted. Solomon fell, but was not rejected. There are some indications for this. One of these clues we have in his book of Ecclesiastes. In covered terms, he talks about the bitter experiences he had. Among all the wives he had, not one gave him the happiness he was looking for. It is the designation of a broken heart for sin, of a heart that has turned away from sin, just as we found it in David's penitential psalms, although these are of a different nature. God's grace works in different ways in the hearts of those who belong to His people.

Another indication we see in what God has said about him to David: "I will correct him with the rod of men ..., but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took [it] away from Saul, whom I removed from before you" (2Sam 7:14-15). God can allow those He loves to fall into sin, but He will not allow them to remain in it. Another indication is that his reign, together with David's, is set as an example of good reign (2Chr 11:17).

Although the reasons mentioned are reason to suppose that he has repented and converted, the Holy Spirit thought it right not to mention this explicitly. We are left in the dark about it. That means the warning that we should not think we can sin, bearing in mind that it will be all right again. Whoever deceives himself in this way will reap the bitter fruits.

**Verses 41-43 | The Death of Solomon**

41 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon and whatever he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? 42 Thus the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. 43 And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David, and his son Rehoboam reigned in his place.

Finally, Solomon dies. The man who started so beautifully, died so sadly. Yet here we are reminded of his wisdom. He ruled for forty years, from 971-931 BC. He is not old when he dies, not yet sixty. He did not have a long life because of his unfaithfulness. What a contrast with for example the life and the end of Jacob. It is about the end. Blessed is he, who runs well and does so until the end. Paul can say that (2Tim 4:7).

The man who was most able to lead a successful life has lost that. Success in life does not originate, according to God's judgment, through the *possession* of wisdom, but through its *application* in life. Spiritual success depends not only on wisdom, but also on certain decisions and choices a person makes.

The death of Solomon is described in a single word, while the death of his father David is described in detail. From David's deathbed resounds literally and spiritually a blessing (2Sam 23:1-7). From Solomon's deathbed doesn't resound a last word, but a serious warning. It is possible that something is written about it in other writings (2Chr 9:29), but in God's Word at least there is no room for it.

His son Rehoboam becomes king in his place. With him begins another history, that of responsibility.

# 1 Kings 12

## Introduction

In this chapter we have come to an important point in the history of Israel: the sad separation of the kingdom into two kingdoms. This tear has two causes. The first is the sin of Solomon. The previous chapter tells about this. The second is the folly of Solomon's son, Rehoboam. We will read about this in this chapter.

The history of the two kingdoms that were created by the tear, runs roughly in three periods:

1. In the first period, which for Israel is the time from Jeroboam to Omri and for Judah from Rehoboam to Asa (1 Kings 12-16), the two kingdoms are hostile to each other.
2. This enmity ends in the second period, for Israel it is under Ahab and his sons Ahaziah and Jehoram and for Judah under Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah. In that period, both royal families connect with each other by establishing marital bonds. They also connect with each other in a common fight against foreign enemies. This union ends when Jehu kills both kings of the kingdoms, Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah, at the same time (1 Kings 17-2 Kings 10:27).
3. This time of unification is followed by a third period that begins for Israel with Jehu and for Judah with Joash, in which alienation and conflict between the two kingdoms again occurs, until finally the kingdom of Israel is taken away by the Assyrians.

After the division of the kingdom, the northern realm remains, called 'Israel'. The history of that kingdom, that of the ten tribes, is a picture of the history of Christianity, or the kingdom of heaven. In that history we see the history of the people of God in the New Testament era from the point of view of man's responsibility.

The history of Israel shows what has become of that kingdom, just as we also know how Christianity will be. The history of Christianity can be found in Revelation 2-3. There is a clear parallel between that history and that of the ten tribes realm of Israel (see the explanation of 1 Kings 11:1-8).

The great mass, both of the ten tribes realm and of Christianity, apostates further and further from God. Opposite to Israel is the two-tribal of Judah, where kings of the David family reign. Opposite the apostate mass in Christianity is a remnant that remains faithful to the Lord. Both Judah and the faithful remnant in Christianity is weak, but God connects Himself with them. In the midst of them He makes His Name dwell.

### Verse 1 | Rehoboam Goes to Shechem

*1 Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.*

Solomon, the wisest man on earth, has died. He leaves all his wealth to a foolish son. Rehoboam is a man without a conviction of his own. He lets himself be guided by others. This is evident right from the start. Rehoboam goes to Shechem to be made king there. Shechem is a kind of compromise place, a place – indeed in Ephraim, but also between the kingdoms. It is the place of the old public assembly (Jos 24:1), where Abimelech, the son of Gideon, made himself king in the time of the judges (Jdg 9:1).

Rehoboam goes there because the people have gone there. He is guided by the will of the people instead of by the will of God, who has designated Jerusalem as the place of His throne. By going there he wants to preserve the unity of the people.

### Verses 2-5 | The Demand to Lighten the Heavy Yoke

*2 Now when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard [of it], he was living in Egypt (for he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon). 3 Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, 4 "Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you." 5 Then he said to them, "Depart for three days, then return to me." So the people departed.*

The people, led by Jeroboam, are not doing well either. When they earlier wanted a king, God already warned them what their king would do with them (1Sam 8:11-18). Now they want to shed this yoke. Jeroboam is called. Under his leadership, the people go to Shechem and proposes to

Rehoboam to relieve them of the heavy yoke imposed on them by Solomon.

We already see here that the people are grumbling. They set their conditions: if Rehoboam does what they propose, they will serve him. Such an attitude does not suit the people. Solomon undoubtedly asked a lot of the people for his court and many buildings. However, he has also given the people the blessing of peace throughout his reign and made them prosperous. They have eaten and drunk and have been happy and have all lived in safety (1Kgs 4:20,25). They have no reason to complain.

If a person forgets the benefits and blessings God gives him and thinks only of his duties, he becomes dissatisfied. Then it seems as if a heavy burden is being imposed on him. So it is in our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Whoever sets conditions for Him because He is considered too hard, does not know Him and has no eye for the many blessings He gives.

### **Verses 6-7 | The Counsel of the Elders**

*6 King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you counsel [me] to answer this people?" 7 Then they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."*

Even more clearly than in verse 1 it appears that Rehoboam has no opinion of his own and joins the counsel of others when the people come to him with a request. The request is to lighten the heavy service that Solomon has imposed on the people. In order to know how to respond to this request, he asks for a reflection period. He wants to seek first. Seeking advice is not wrong in itself, but later it turns out that he listens to the counsel of his peers. With them he grew up, with them he will also have to do all his life. Those old people will soon not be there anymore.

The ancients give good advice. The behavior they recommend to Rehoboam is the best. They tell him that if he is the servant of this people, the people will serve him. By serving and serving as a master, you are only a good master. That is the mind of the Lord Jesus. He has served His own as the Lord and Master (Jn 13:14-15). So He was in their midst. With this He

has left an example. As He has done, His own must also behave toward others (Lk 22:26-27).

### Verses 8-11 | The Counsel of the Young Men

*8 But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him. 9 So he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'" 10 The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!' But you shall speak to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins! 11 Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'"*

Rehoboam doesn't want to submit to the elders' counsel and act as a servant. He rejects their counsel. Instead of consulting the LORD, he turns to his contemporaries and consults with them. These young men are in his service. Like him, they do not seek the good of the people. They only think about their own position, while they realize that Rehoboam is only interested in that too. The young men give him the counsel to be hard. He must make his power well felt, so that everyone knows who is in charge.

They advise him to add to the yoke that Solomon has laid on the people and about which they complain. By the saying "my little finger is thicker than my father's loins", the young men mean that Rehoboam must tell the people that his power is much greater than that of his father.

Their counsel is typically that of youth. They give him the counsel to act even harder than Solomon. That's part of youth. They want to prove themselves. It does not fit to the Christian; he must learn to lose himself and is called to flee the lusts of youth (2Tim 2:22).

### Verses 12-14 | The Hard Answer

*12 Then Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day." 13 The king answered the people harshly, for he forsook the advice of the elders which they had given him, 14 and he 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 disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."*

Rehoboam listens to the advice of the young men and informs the people. He justifies the people in their false assertion that his father had imposed a heavy yoke on them. He does not honor his father. Nor is he concerned about what his father said in his wisdom and behaves like a fool (Pro 15:1; 16:18). Solomon spoke about the possibility that he might have to leave the results of all his toil to a foolish son (Ecc 2:18-19). That is what is happening here.

Rehoboam does not show any respect for his father. What his father did, he portrays as insignificant. In contrast, he sets his own greatness. His whole attitude also shows how much he despises the people.

### **Verse 15 | The Turn Is From the LORD**

*15 So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn [of events] from the LORD, that He might establish His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.*

That he gives the hard answer, "was ... from the LORD". Couldn't Rehoboam therefore have been different? He could. This is the mystery that is so often found in Scripture. Look for example at Pharaoh, or at Judas, or at Israel. Take Israel. Had this people to hand over the Lord Jesus? No! Yet they did it because they didn't want Him. Yet it also says that the people have delivered Him over "by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

Doesn't God incite sin? No, He never does, He is never the instigator of sin. What then? He knows perfectly who man is. He knows how to fit the actions of man, for which he himself is fully responsible, into His plans. Thus, in his own way of acting, man becomes a collaborator in the execution of God's plans. Here we see the interweaving of God's counsel and the responsibility of man, an interweaving that we cannot understand. We also see it in the conversion of man and the election of God.

Rehoboam, for example, is guilty of a foolish reaction here, resulting in the uprising of the people. On the other hand, this turn from the LORD happens, because He said this because of the behavior of Solomon.



**Verses 16-20 | The Tear Is a Fact**

*16 When all Israel [saw] that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying,*

*“What portion do we have in David?*

*[We have] no inheritance in the son of Jesse;*

*To your tents, O Israel!*

*Now look after your own house, David!”*

*So Israel departed to their tents. 17 But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18 Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. 20 It came about when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.*

The muscular language of Rehoboam has a devastating effect. The harsh answer gives the dissatisfied the excuse they were looking for to evade Rehoboam’s authority. In verse 16 the split is pronounced out loud and executed. It is then the year 931 BC. All Israel turns against the house of David, to which no one remains faithful except the tribe of Judah (verse 20).

Mentioning the name of “David” shows that hatred is deeper than just against the government of Solomon. It is the expression of deep-rooted jealousy for the tribe Ephraim of Judah, the tribe of David. Ephraim has always felt the most important, but has not been given that place by God. The tribe does not resign themselves to that and now seizes its chance to become the most important one. Jeroboam will become king of all Israel, with the exception of the small part that belongs to the tribe of Judah. Yet Jeroboam also exercises his kingship there, because he is also king of the Israelites who live in Judah.

Rehoboam seems to be blind to the situation. As if nothing had happened, he sent the tax collector Adoram to Israel to collect money for him. That is oil on the fire. This Adoram reminds like no other of the heavy yoke of Solomon and they have just recently thrown it from themselves with strength.

Adoram is being stoned to death by all Israel. By fleeing desperately, Rehoboam himself narrowly escapes death.

### **Verses 21-24 | The LORD Confirms the Tear**

*21 Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. 22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 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, 24 'Thus says the LORD, "You must not go up and fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me.'"* So they listened to the word of the LORD, and returned and went [their way] according to the word of the LORD.

Rehoboam does not accept the situation. When he realizes his mistake, he wants to repair the damage. He wants to suppress the uprising and to that end he sets up a strong army. With this he wants to go to war against his brothers to subdue them to himself. He must and shall be their king. A terrible plan.

But there still is a faithful witness. That is Shemaiah. He is emphatically called "the man of God". God can come to him with His word. God can use him to make his thoughts known in a situation of confusion due to own will. Rehoboam is led to return.

The message of God through Shemaiah is: "This thing has come from Me." The tearing of the realm is not a matter that has gone beyond God's control. It did not get out of hand. The failure of Rehoboam is the fulfillment of what God has said to Jeroboam. For Rehoboam, this saying is reason to abandon his intention. The consequences of sins cannot always be undone. He would do well to accept the situation that has arisen. Whether the word of the man of God has brought him to real repentance remains a question.

It is also important to see that as the kingship decays, the ministry of prophets comes to the fore. We have already met Ahijah with a message for Jeroboam in the time of the great unfaithfulness of Solomon (1Kgs 11:29). In that time, we also hear about the prophets Nathan and Iddo

(2Chr 9:29). Now we hear about Shemaiah. By means of prophets God continues to speak in His grace to His people in times of decay. They are, as it were, the link between Him and His people, a link that was first formed by the priests. For us, especially in times of decay, the Word of God remains the connection between the soul and God. By doing so, He tells us His thoughts about the way we should go in the midst of decay.

It is a great encouragement that we should know of every case that the Lord says: "This thing has come from Me." This means that nothing in our lives gets out of His control. All our words, deeds and deliberations He knows. Nothing is hidden from Him (Psa 139:1-6). He also knows the consequences of everything we do. He knows how to fit everything into His plan with our lives, without diminishing our own responsibility. Events from our lives to which we remember with shame (cf. Rom 6:21), he manages to use for His purpose. It will be for our good if we submit to His plans with our lives and adapt our lives accordingly.

### Verses 25-33 | A Self-Devised Religion

*25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel. 26 Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. 27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, [even] to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." 28 So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt." 29 He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went [to worship] before the one as far as Dan. 31 And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi. 32 Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 Then 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 in*

*his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.*

Jeroboam also has his responsibility. God has told him how to secure his blessing (1Kgs 11:38). However, he does not take God into account. He settles in Shechem. Rehoboam was made king there and that seems like a good residence to him. To protect himself against enemies from the north-east and east he strengthens Shechem and Penuel.

He also wants to secure his power. For this he consults himself (“in his heart”) and does not consult God. He assesses everything according to his own insight. There is no thought whatsoever of God asking Him what he should do. It seems that he knows the power of religion. The strongest bond that keeps people together is religion. In Daniel 3 we have a clear example of this. The devil doesn’t care what religion it is. As long as it is not the real service to God.

Jeroboam knows that it will soon be over with his kingship if he doesn’t act quickly on this terrain. Therefore he decides to introduce a new form of religion, to protect his kingdom against inner weakening and even the loss of his rule over it. He argues: if Jerusalem remains the religious center of the kingdom over which he has become king, the people will return “to their lord, [even] to Rehoboam king of Judah” and he will be killed.

In his consultation, Jeroboam decides to designate a few special places for the ten tribes realm to serve God. He designates one in the south of his kingdom, Bethel, and one in the north of his kingdom, Dan. Bethel means ‘house of God’. This name was given to it by Jacob after the LORD appeared to him there (Gen 35:7). Could not the LORD, as Jeroboam may have thought, and explained to others, reveal Himself in this holy place as well to the descendants of Jacob as he did to their ancestor?

The place is also cleverly chosen. There is already an image service there. Remember that the people who live nearby will not have to make that long journey to Jerusalem again and again. The convenience serves man. After all, it is possible to serve God much closer to home. It is a cleverly devised plan to prevent the people from going to Jerusalem for the annual celebrations with the danger that they will stay there.

To make the whole even more attractive, he, contrary to what God has said (Exo 20:4), makes two golden calves after the Egyptian model, one for each place. It is much easier to serve a god you can see. Of these gods he says that these are the gods by which Israel was redeemed from Egypt (cf. Exo 32:4). These are the new objects of worship (cf. Hos 8:5-6; 13:2-3). He also makes new temples and new priests, who do not come from the Levites. To complete his own invented religion, he also introduces a new feast at a different time and in a different place than God has prescribed (Lev 23:34,39,41; Deu 12:5).

Everything he makes is an imitation of what God has prescribed to His people how He wants to be served. Jeroboam copies everything, so it seems that it has God's approval. However, it is pernicious, because it is a self-willed religion. Any replacement of what God has said by human interpretation is an insult to God. Man knows better. The fact that the people simply accept this surrogate divine service is proof of how far away the hearts of the people have been from God.

That is how it went in Christianity and that is how it still goes. With ever new reasoning, more and more of what defies God has crept into Christianity. We see this especially in roman-catholicism. A religion has been made that is easy to lie on and tangible. Pagan idols are covered with a Christian sauce. Even meaner is the bringing in of the Old-Testament rituals, in which it is claimed that this is instituted by God Himself.

Religion must be easy and even enjoyable to do. For this you do not need to consult God's Word. Nor should you be too laborious about priestly service. Anyone who is honest can be a priest and bring sacrifices. This is certainly not necessary in the place God has chosen. You can do that in a place where you feel good. The way in which you bring those sacrifices is not so important. Let yourself be guided by your feelings, that's what God has given you. Finally, you don't have to worry about when you do it. The self-conceived Christian holidays are an ideal opportunity to express your religious emotions and to caress your religious feelings.

As soon as we leave the service of the true God, we fall into idolatry, whatever form it may take. God makes clear how and where He wants to be served. Any deviation from this to make the service more pleasant comes

from the realm of darkness and is idolatry. Such a service carries away from God. This can be applied today to church systems where the service to God is performed in a self-willed manner. These systems will finally result in the roman-catholic church, which in the end will be a refuge of demons (Rev 18:2).

It can also be applied to churches where charismatic influences and mystical experience have been introduced, however orthodox some churches may present themselves. Modern forms of religious practice include the Jesus prayer, soaking and contemplative prayer. These are techniques that come directly from pagan religions and are very similar to meditation, with the aim of meeting God.

When the people worship a golden calf soon after the exodus from Egypt, God's judgment comes upon it. Now that Jeroboam introduces two golden calves into the people of God, no judgment comes, but God will let evil develop to its fullest extent, so that at the end the judgment may be carried out. That is also how it went with the church. In the beginning evil is punished with death (Acts 5:3-10), but now God allows the many forms of evil that are introduced into the church to develop to their fullest extent, so that at the end the judgment about it can be carried out.

In his boldness Jeroboam climbs the altar. He does so on the occasion of the imitation of the Feast of Booths on the day he himself has determined for it. He leads his people in idolatry and at the same time wants to show them how to do it. After his surrogate temples and his surrogate priests and his surrogate feast he himself climbs the altar, which is also a surrogate altar, as a surrogate priest-king. In the course of time more altars have been added (Hos 8:11). It is a through and through human religion, which has risen in the heart and mind of Jeroboam. However, it is a religion which did not come into the mind of God (Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35) and is utterly reprehensible to Him.

## 1 Kings 13

### **Verse 1-3 | The Word to the Altar**

*1 Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. 2 He cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'" 3 Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, 'Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.'"*

God sends out of Judah a man of God. He comes "by the word of the LORD" from Judah to Bethel. "The word of the LORD" is the power that comes upon the man of God and by which he is driven to speak his message. He becomes a killjoy. The name of the man of God is not known, the name does not matter. It is about his message and on behalf of Whom he comes.

Are there not prophets in Bethel? Yes, there is an old prophet, but God cannot use him. How could that be possible? He may be disturbed, but he is not taking any action. He stays with that horrible imitation religion, and we hear no protesting from him. Possibly he is a man like Eli. He sees the evil, but has no strength to act against it. The fact that he is not in the right relationship with God is shown by the fact that he lies to the man of God from Judah to let him return with him (verse 18).

Fearlessly, the man of God from Judah moves into the celebrating crowd. He is qualified to testify, he can be God's mouth, for he is connected with the true service of God and not with the idolatry of Jeroboam (cf. Jer 15:19). He directs the word, which is the word of God, to ... the altar. Why to the altar and not to the calf or to Jeroboam? Because the altar symbolizes the whole service and because Jeroboam stands on the altar (verse 4); it is his service, he is the boss of the altar. Jeroboam moderates to be able to bring a sacrifice. Later king Uzziah will perform the same presumptuous act that will bring him the plague of leprosy (2Chr 26:19).

God has clearly indicated in His Word where and how He wants to be worshipped and served. Every believer may desire to be a man of God – man or woman – a witness of God’s rights in the midst of a Christianity that serves Him at will. To be a man of God, God has given us His Word (2Tim 3:16-17). Someone is a man of God when he or she reflects daily on the Word of God. At the same time, such a person will open himself up to the mighty working of God’s Spirit. Then formation is possible into the image of the Lord Jesus, the true Man of God.

The man of God prophesies the judgment over the altar. It is remarkable and rare that the prophecy mentions the name of the man by whom God allows the judgment to be carried out: king Josiah from the house of David. The genus of David, despised and forsaken by Jeroboam and his kingdom, will again have so much power that it will destroy this altar which he believes he is installing. It will take about three hundred years before this prophecy is fulfilled, but already we are told what will happen and by whom (2Kgs 23:15-18). For God, the future is present.

Another exception where God mentions the name of someone He uses for future events is in the case of Cyrus. God mentions His name as the deliverer of His people from the Babylonian exile, long before Cyrus is born (Isa 44:28; 45:1-6). He knows the future from afar.

The prophet gives a sign: the altar will split apart and the ashes shall be poured out. According to the prescription, the ashes should be taken up (Lev 6:10-11). It is proof that God desecrates this altar.

### **Verses 4-6 | Jeroboams Hand**

*4 Now when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Seize him.” But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself. 5 The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. 6 The king said to the man of God, “Please entreat the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.” So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored to him, and it became as it was before.*



Jeroboam doesn't get scared of the word of God. He believes that he can silence this intruder and disrupter of his plans. He stretches out his hand and orders the arrest of the man of God. His outstretched hand is a sign of his authority. However, his hand dries up, making it completely powerless, indicating that God's authority is greater. God's authority also shows meanwhile, that what happens, is what the man of God has said. The altar splits apart and the ash is poured out. Then Jeroboam tempers his tone and asks for intercession. He speaks to the man of God about "your God" and not about "my God". He Himself has no relationship with God as His God. He does not ask to pray for him that his sin will be forgiven, which would indicate that his heart had changed. He only asks that his hand be healed again while he hardens his heart. So Pharaoh wanted Moses to pray that God "would only remove this death from me", but not his sin (Exo 10:16-18). The prophet, as a real man of God, has rewarded evil with good. He speaks to God directly for him. He acts in the spirit of what Christ has said to His disciples, that they will pray for their persecutors (Mt 5:10,44).

### Verses 7-10 | The Invitation Rejected

*7 Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." 8 But the man of God said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place. 9 For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came.'" 10 So he went another way and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel.*

When Jeroboam's hand is healed, he changes his attitude towards the man of God. He tries to catch up with him and gain his favor. He invites him to come along for a refreshment and a reward. Therein lies a great temptation, but the man of God refuses. He doesn't imagine that he will get another chance to talk to Jeroboam and take him off his bad road.

He keeps the word of the LORD, Who gave him clear commands. He knew what to say, what not to do and the way to take, both to and from. The fact that he was not allowed to return by the way he had come, but had to return by another way, indicates that God doesn't come back on His word.

The LORD had told him that he could not eat bread nor drink water there. This means that he must not have fellowship with evil. This also applies to us (2Cor 6:14-18; 2Tim 2:19-22; 2Jn 1:9-11). This concerns certainly someone like Jeroboam, who leads the people in evil and encourages them to do so. It also concerns all those who live there, such as the old prophet.

The man of God refuses any form of fellowship with Jeroboam, as Abraham refused to accept anything from the king of Sodom (Gen 14:22-23). Everything that gives the impression that it is not so bad to connect with evil is an insult to God. In addition, it supports the other in his false position.

### Verses 11-19 | The Lie of the Old Prophet

*11 Now an old prophet was living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the deeds which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, these also they related to their father. 12 Their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" Now his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone. 13 Then he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it. 14 So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak; and he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." 15 Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." 16 He said, "I cannot return with you, nor go with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. 17 For a command [came] to me by the word of the LORD, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water there; do not return by going the way which you came.'" 18 He said to him, "I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" [But] he lied to him. 19 So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house and drank water.*

The old prophet hears from his sons what has happened. They were present at the feast of Jeroboam. Would he have sent them? In any case, he could not keep them away from being there. Apparently he did not go himself. In this context, a practical remark: Do we allow our children to go to places where we do not want to go ourselves? We may ask the Lord to help us make the right decisions.

The sons inform their father of what they have seen and heard, including the words with which the man of God rejected the offer of Jeroboam. The old prophet is so misted in his thinking because of his long stay in this wicked environment that he devises a plan to get the man of God in his house. It is a false plan. His plan is to “make the Nazarite drink wine” (Amos 2:12), that is to say, to get a believer devoted to God to the point where he becomes unfaithful to his calling.

He does so to justify himself in his false position and to soothe the voice of his conscience. If he can get the man of God to come to his house to eat with him – to eat together is a picture of fellowship – then he is not so bad. The old prophet possesses the same spirit as Jeroboam. He is led by the same selfish motives as Jeroboam and comes to the same blatant disobedience as Jeroboam.

The old prophet finds the man of God sitting under an oak. The man of God sought some rest, but that is the beginning of the deviation. He has brought his message by God’s command to a place that cannot be a place of rest. It may be that his service has demanded so much of him that he has become tired. It is understandable that he had to rest for a while. Here we see that a weakness that is admitted becomes a reason for sin.

When the man of God tells what the LORD has said to him, the old prophet tells who he is in his reverence. He is also a prophet. That is not a lie. But then he lies about a word he says he received from God through an angel.

He is an example of all those people who say that you can read the Word of God differently than the way it came to you. If they also have an honorable age, there is a great danger of accepting what they say. They distort the truth and appeal to their own relationship with God. How misleading it is when people call on it to gain access to others.

The old prophet is so preoccupied with himself that he does not think about what the consequences for the man of God will be if he believes in his lie. A person who is in a false position and is looking for a justification for it is blind to the evil he does to others he wants to use for that justification.

The man of God should have known that if God had come back on His word, He would have told him so Himself, just like the first command.

To go with him on the basis of a lie is a gross disobedience that he has to pay for with his death. He is much more responsible than the old prophet, because he knows better.

### **Verses 20-22 | The Announcement of Judgment**

*20 Now it came about, as they were sitting down at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back; 21 and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have disobeyed the command of the LORD, and have not observed the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, 22 but have returned and 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 grave of your fathers.'"*

God is holy. The old prophet suddenly receives a word from the LORD, something that must not have happened to him for many years. If God can let the false prophet Balaam and the false priest Caiaphas say things He wants them to say (Num 23:5,16; Jn 11:50-52), He can also let this old prophet say a word He wants. This intervention by God gives the meal a dramatic turn. The old prophet must make himself known as a liar and the man of God is confronted with God's judgment. The heavy punishment is exacerbated by the fact that he will not be buried in the grave of his fathers.

This time it is a word from God. If it had not been God's word, he would certainly have apologized. There is no personal word of the man in what he says to the man of God. God does not come back on His word. The sin of the man of God is so great that God can no longer use him as His man. There is nothing of any reaction of the man of God to the announcement of the judgment, nor do we hear of any reaction of the old prophet.

### **Verses 23-32 | The Death of the Man of God**

*23 It came about after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back. 24 Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body. 25 And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown on the road,*

*and the lion standing beside the body; so they came and told [it] in the city where the old prophet lived. 26 Now when the prophet who brought him back from the way heard [it], he said, "It is the man of God, who disobeyed the command of the LORD; therefore the LORD has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him." 27 Then he spoke to his sons, saying, "Saddle the donkey for me." And they saddled [it]. 28 He went and found his body thrown on the road with the donkey and the lion standing beside the body; the lion had not eaten the body nor torn the donkey. 29 So the prophet took up the body of the man of God and laid it on the donkey and brought it back, and he came to the city of the old prophet to mourn and to bury him. 30 He laid his body in his own grave, and they mourned over him, [saying], "Alas, my brother!" 31 After he had buried him, he spoke to his sons, saying, "When I die, bury me in the grave in which the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. 32 For the thing shall surely come to pass which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria."*

When the man of God leaves, he knows that he is going to die. It happens as it is predicted. The way it happens is clearly from God. The lion is a tool in His hand. The lion acts according to his nature when he kills the man of God, but he acts against his nature when he does nothing else. He stands by the corpse and also leaves the donkey alone. The donkey also stays there. The lion remains there as a witness, without doing anything more than what he is told to do.

When the prophet hears of it, he speaks of the man of God as one who has been rebellious against the LORD's command. That is true. Then the old prophet acts according to his responsibility. He is also guilty and takes care of the dead body of the man of God. He takes him up and lays him in his own grave.

He instructs his sons to bury him, when he himself is buried, beside the man of God. He does not speak of "my" grave – it was "his own grave", verse 30 – but of "the grave in which the man of God is buried". This identification prevents his bones from being burned when Josiah acts according to what the man of God has announced (2Kgs 23:17-18).

### **Verses 33-34 | The Sin of Jeroboam**

*33 After this event Jeroboam did not return from his evil way, but again he made priests of the high places from among all the people; any who would, he ordained, to be priests of the high places. 34 This event became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to blot [it] out and destroy [it] from off the face of the earth.*

Jeroboam can't be stopped by anything. He has not learned anything from the events and does not care about what God has shown and said. He perseveres in his sin. Then God speaks to him even more clearly. This is shown in the next chapter.

## 1 Kings 14

### Verses 1-3 | The Son of Jeroboam Becomes Sick

*1 At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick. 2 Jeroboam said to his wife, "Arise now, and disguise yourself so that they will not know that you are the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh; behold, Ahijah the prophet is there, who spoke concerning me [that I would be] king over this people. 3 Take ten loaves with you, [some] cakes and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what will happen to the boy."*

Jeroboam persists in his sin. In the previous chapter we read that the main sin has to do with the service to God (1Kgs 13:33). He appoints whoever wants to be a priest. He completely disregards the law of God; He puts God aside.

God cannot tolerate this. He disciplines Jeroboam by making his son sick. He will be his favorite son, because Jeroboam is very concerned about the outcome of the sickness. It may be the heir to the throne. God knows how to address people once again (Job 33:29-30). "For He does not afflict willingly Or grieve the sons of men" (Lam 3:33), but "You have seen [it], for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand" (Psa 10:14).

Jeroboam, however, does not put it in God's hand, but expects it from a man, Ahijah. He does, however, resort to a true prophet of the LORD and not to one of his idols. He knows that they can't help him. However, he does not address the prophet in faith, but in superstition. This prophet had such a great message for him by telling him that he would become king. Wouldn't the prophet have a good message for him now?

Jeroboam sends his wife not to ask the prophet for intercession, but to consult him as a medium, to know what will happen to the boy. But she has to disguise herself. This also shows that Jeroboam does not really seek and know God. Who thinks he can fool God by disguise, by pretending differently than he really is? As if God does not look further than the outside. God's concern is the inside! Not that the outside, the appearance, is unimportant. God wants the appearance to be an honest representation of

the inner being and not a farce. It is worth checking the Bible to see what dress-up parties or disguises are there and what they mean.

Jeroboam's wife takes a gift with her (cf. 1Sam 9:7-8). It is the gift that a simple citizen woman could bring. It seems that with this Jeroboam wants to elicit a favorable prophecy from the prophet. She goes to Shiloh, which also lies in the ten tribes realm. So Ahijah also lives in that kingdom, but not as the old prophet in Bethel, but far away from it. Shiloh is also the place where the LORD used to live, where the tabernacle stood. God wants and can use this prophet again.

### Verses 4-6 | Jeroboam's Wife Meets Ahijah

*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 dim because of his age. 5 Now the LORD had said to Ahijah, "Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son, for he is sick. You shall say thus and thus to her, for it will be when she arrives that she will pretend to be another woman." 6 When Ahijah heard the sound of her feet coming in the doorway, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam, why do you pretend to be another woman? For I am sent to you [with] a harsh [message]."*

The prophet Ahijah is blind. Humanly there is a double disadvantage: a blind prophet and a disguised woman. But the blind prophet is in communication with the God of Whom is true: "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:13). He receives from God the words he must speak. He immediately addresses the woman with her true name. That must have been a shock to her. She has been discovered!

### Verses 7-16 | The Word From the LORD

*7 Go, say to Jeroboam, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, "Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over My people Israel, 8 and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you—yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight; 9 you also have done more evil than all who were before you, and have gone and*



*made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back — 10 therefore behold, I am bringing calamity on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male person, both bond and free in Israel, and I will make a clean sweep of the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is all gone. 11 Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs will eat. And he who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat; for the LORD has spoken [it].” 12 Now you, arise, go to your house. When your feet enter the city the child will die. 13 All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he alone of Jeroboam’s [family] will come to the grave, because in him something good was found toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. 14 Moreover, the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who will cut off the house of Jeroboam this day and from now on. 15 “For the LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the [Euphrates] River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. 16 He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam, which he committed and with which he made Israel to sin.”*

Then comes the harsh word from God. She must go back to Jeroboam and announce to him God’s judgment on his sins. A very heavy message for your own husband! Jeroboam receives this answer because he made other gods and rejected God (Eze 14:3; 23:35). The testimony that God gives of David concerns the overall picture of his life.

God does not say a word about the mistakes in his life. He knows that David’s heart was on Him. This is evident from his repentance and confession. On this basis God has forgiven his sins, covered them, and doesn’t impute them (Psa 32:1-5). On the other hand, there is the behavior of Jeroboam who serves God in his own way, with homemade gods. He is an idolater, and has introduced Israel into idolatry and led away from God.

The woman also hears what she has actually come for, how her son will end up: when she enters the city, he will die. She soon must travel a very difficult way back, a way where every step brings her closer to the death of her son. She is a mother with care for her child. Perhaps she was also a woman who told her son about the LORD, by which “in him something good was found toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam”.

Perhaps she also gave him his name, Abiah. Abiah means ‘my father is the LORD’.

It is therefore impressive how God still has an encouragement in the midst of the judgment He must pronounce. The son of Jeroboam has something that no one else in the family has: he has “something good ... toward the LORD God of Israel”. What it is, is not mentioned, but we may assume that it is a boy who wants to listen to the LORD and believes in Him. God wants him to be with Himself and not to leave him on the stage over which His judgment will come (Isa 57:1-2).

First, Ahijah points to the judgment that will be executed by Baasha. “From now on” means that the king who will cut off the house of Jeroboam has already been begotten by God and that more will follow. Ahijah then prophesies about that. He foretells the exile of Israel. This is the first time that this has been prophesied. Already so early in history this is mentioned to underline the seriousness of the deviation of Jeroboam, a deviation from the LORD by having made their Asherim.

The striking by the LORD will often happen, because one power-hungry man eliminates and follows another. It is a situation of complete steerlessness and instability. It is like a reed in the water that is driven back and forth by a storm without any grip to protect itself from the storm. This will continue until God finally allows the people to be scattered beyond the Euphrates. This judgment comes because of their idolatry. Being moved back and forth like a reed shaken in the water is always the result when the Word of God is not the basis of action. Only holding on to the truth in love preserves for that (Eph 4:14-15).

### **Verses 17-18 | The Son of Jeroboam Dies**

*17 Then Jeroboam's wife arose and departed and came to Tirzah. As she was entering the threshold of the house, the child died. 18 All Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet.*

Jeroboam's wife returns home after these harsh words. When she crosses the threshold of the house, the boy dies. When he died, it turns out that he was loved by all the people. He must have been noticed by his behavior. We can compare him to a Jonathan at the court of Saul.

## Verses 19-20 | Death of Jeroboam

*19 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. 20 The time that Jeroboam reigned [was] twenty-two years; and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place.*

The rest of Jeroboam's history is written "in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel". This does not mean the book of the Chronicles that we have in the Bible, but the chronicles that are kept in the national archives of Israel. What is described in these chronicles is related to his warfare and his government. First warfare is called and then government. Maybe this means that he was more concerned with warfare than reigning. A man who lives without God is often more concerned with defending and maintaining his own position than with the welfare of others.

## Verses 21-31 | Rehoboam King Over Judah

*21 Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there. And his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. 22 Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed. 23 For they also built for themselves high places and [sacred] pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree. 24 There were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel. 25 Now it happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak the king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. 26 He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and he took everything, even taking all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. 27 So King Rehoboam made shields of bronze in their place, and committed them to the care of the commanders of the guard who guarded the doorway of the king's house. 28 Then it happened as often as the king entered the house of the LORD, that the guards would carry them and would bring them back into the guards' room. 29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 30 There was war between Rehoboam and*

*Jeroboam continually. 31 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. And Abijam his son became king in his place.*

Although in this book we mainly have the history of the ten tribes, here and there we also find something about the two tribes. Rehoboam reigns in Jerusalem, the city of God. He is forty-one years old when he becomes king. Solomon has ruled for forty years and has become less than sixty years old. Rehoboam must have been one year old at the accession of Solomon to the throne.

In the two tribes realm of Judah things are not much better under Rehoboam than in the ten tribes realm of Israel. Judah does what is evil in the eyes of the LORD. Then there is no power to keep the enemy at a distance. The name of his mother is mentioned. She is an Ammonitess. Her influence as a queen-mother on him as a king will have been great. Twice it is mentioned that his mother is an Ammonitess (verses 21,31). Isn't that significant?

Shishak the king of Egypt comes and takes away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the king's house. It is the first attack of a foreign power on Judah after the days of Saul. Rehoboam is not driven out to God by it. He imitates what he has lost. That is also a form of disguise. It is not real. Externally he continues to go faithfully to the temple, but his heart has not changed.

The rest of Rehoboam's history is written "in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (verse 29). These are chronicles kept in the national archives of Judah (cf. verse 19).

The ordained chronicler also mentions that Rehoboam was at war with Jeroboam during his entire reign (verse 30). This will not mean that there is a constant warfare to subdue the other, for Rehoboam was forbidden to go to war against Israel, which he did not do (1Kgs 12:24). It may mean that there are regular border conflicts. In any case, they have always taken a hostile attitude towards each other.

It is clear that neither king has accepted the tearing as a judgment of God about their unfaithfulness. Both of them wanted to maintain their position and saw the other as a threat to it. It reflects the sad development of

the relationships in God's people. This also happens now in God's people when the Lord Jesus is no longer central, and the Word of God no longer has authority.

Then the death of Rehoboam and the place of his burial are mentioned (cf. 1Kgs 11:43). His successor is his son Abijam who becomes king in his place.

## 1 Kings 15

### Verses 1-8 | Abijam King Over Judah

*1 Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah. 2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom. 3 He walked in all the sins of his father which he had committed before him; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David. 4 But for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to raise up his son after him and to establish Jerusalem; 5 because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite. 6 There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. 7 Now the rest of the acts of Abijam and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. 8 And Abijam slept with his fathers and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son became king in his place.*

Rehoboam is succeeded by his son Abijam. The name of the mother of Abijam is mentioned. She is a daughter of Abishalom. The mention of the mother's name is more common in the books 1 Kings and 2 Kings. It is not so much the fathers, but especially the mothers who have a great influence on the development of the child in the upbringing. It is about the orientation of life, on which it focuses, which is given as a goal for life.

Abijam is a boy who follows the example of his father. Where the mother tries to teach the child the values of life – which can happen both positively and negatively – the father often provides an example in the way life is filled in. “Like father, like son” is the saying. Abijam walks in the sins his father committed before him.

However, any wrong upbringing methods and wrong examples do not change our own responsibility. Abijam walks in sin because his heart is not completely devoted to the LORD. For us as parents it is important that we raise well and set a good example. However, the child must learn to

finally do the Lord's will and cannot hide behind a defective upbringing or a bad example.

For David's sake the LORD will not put an end to his house. In Jerusalem he holds a lamp for David. This means that the light does not go out. The LORD is holding a testimony for Himself, according to the word that the prophet Ahijah has spoken (1Kgs 11:36). Fortunately, God also has someone in our days for the sake of Whom He does not definitively settle with the church. He maintains a 'Philadelphia', a remnant that remains faithful to Him and His Word and that does not deny His Name (Rev 3:8).

Like Rehoboam, Abijam is someone who has not completely rejected the LORD. That is clear from what is written about him in 2 Chronicles 13 (2Chr 13:4-19). But he does not follow Him completely either. He has reserved only a small part of his heart for the LORD, and the rest is for himself and his sins. It is not just about whether our heart is for the Lord, but whether our *whole* heart is *undivided* for Him.

The battle that there was between his father Rehoboam and Jeroboam (verse 6), continues between Abijam and Jeroboam, until Abijam dies. Abijam is succeeded by his son Asa.

### Verses 9-15 | Asa King Over Judah

*9 So in the twentieth year of Jeroboam the king of Israel, Asa began to reign as king of Judah. 10 He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom. 11 Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father. 12 He also put away the male cult prostitutes from the land and removed all the idols which his fathers had made. 13 He also removed Maacah his mother from [being] queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah; and Asa cut down her horrid image and burned [it] at the brook Kidron. 14 But the high places were not taken away; nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly devoted to the LORD all his days. 15 He brought into the house of the LORD the dedicated things of his father and his own dedicated things: silver and gold and utensils.*

Asa becomes king of Judah in the twentieth year of Jeroboam. He reigns for a long time. In 2 Chronicles three chapters are devoted to his history (2 Chronicles 14-16). The name of his mother is also mentioned. It is the same

name as that of the mother of his father Abijam. It will be so that Maacah is his grandmother by whom he is raised (verse 13).

Then we see here a happy exception, as we see more in the books 1 Kings and 2 Kings. Asa escapes from the influence of his educator and has his own relationship with God. He does what is right in the sight of the LORD, as did his father David. He does not follow the bad example of his father Abijam, but the good example of David. So it can be.

He puts away people who focus on prostitution. That's something else than the tolerance and even legalization of all kinds of fornication by today's rulers. He even removes his grandmother. She is someone with greater influence than just on her family, but Asa loves God more than his closest family. He dedicates his possessions to the LORD.

### Verses 16-22 | War Between Asa and Baasha

*16 Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. 17 Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent [anyone] from going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah. 18 Then Asa took all the silver and the gold which were left in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the treasuries of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Aram, who lived in Damascus, saying, 19 "[Let there be] a treaty between you and me, [as] between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent you a present of silver and gold; go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so that he will withdraw from me." 20 So Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah and all Chinneroth, besides all the land of Naphtali. 21 When Baasha heard [of it], he ceased fortifying Ramah and remained in Tirzah. 22 Then King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah—none was exempt—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.*

There is war between Asa and Baasha. This leads Baasha to turn Ramah into a fortress that must form a blockade between the two empires, so that his subjects cannot go to Judah. He does so in Ramah, on the border between Judah and Israel, about six and a half kilometers north of Jerusalem.



What is the building of Rama all about? To take away the freedom to worship in Jerusalem. This freedom is also at stake in Christianity today. The question is how we react when Christians, fellow believers, want to prevent us from worshipping in the way God has shown in His Word. These hindrances may lie in the insistence on an unbiblical expansion – the admission of methods or persons who are excluded from worship by God’s Word – or the insistence on unbiblical restriction – the hindrances of methods and persons who according to God’s Word should participate in worship.

Then comes the trial. Baasha, the king of Israel, threatens him. Asa’s reaction is unfortunately not a sign of faith. He seeks support from the king of Syria and buys that support with the remaining treasures of the temple. He also appeals to a treaty made between their ancestors. Ben-hadad is bribed. However, he not only breaks his treaty with Baasha, but also deprives him of a number of cities. The consequence of the bribery of Asa is loss of God’s land.

Asa succeeds in his aim. Baasha gives up his plan and withdraws. What Asa continues to do does not seem right either. He takes the things Baasha has used and with them he will strengthen some cities of his own realm. In the application we can ask ourselves whether God would want us to take means by which the enemy strengthens himself and attacks us, and use them to strengthen ourselves through them. When Jericho was conquered, the people were not allowed to take anything of it, but had to ban everything (Jos 6:16-18). It is possible to use things we have conquered from the world for the Lord. But then it must first be dedicated to Him.

### **Verses 23-24 | The Death of Asa**

*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, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? But in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet. 24 And Asa slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.*

The only thing left of Asa seems to confirm the idea that he did not handle Baasha’s material in the right way. He is diseased in his feet. That means, as applied, that his walk with God becomes flawed. With Asa we see what

we see with many kings: they start well, but at the end they become unfaithful.

Here stops in 1 Kings for a longer time the description of the history of the kings of Judah. From now on, it is mainly about the kings of Israel.

### Verses 25-32 | Nadab King Over Israel

*25 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. 26 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin. 27 Then Baasha the son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar conspired against him, and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon. 28 So Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa king of Judah and reigned in his place. 29 It came about as soon as he was king, he struck down all the household of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam any persons alive, until he had destroyed them, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, 30 [and] because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, because of his provocation with which he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger. 31 Now the rest of the acts of Nadab and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 32 There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.*

For the continuation of the histories of the kings of Israel, the historian goes back to the second year of Asa's reign over Judah. Asa has successively experienced six kings over Israel: Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri and Ahab, kings about whom we read in the following chapters. In the second year of Asa Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, comes to power in Israel. He reigns briefly, only two years. However, it is long enough to characterize him as a king who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD. He walks in the way of his father Jeroboam.

Baasha has probably been commander of the army, which gives him the opportunity to forge a conspiracy against Nadab. Baasha kills Nadab in Gibbethon, a city of the Levites (Jos 21:23). He does so, while Nadab is busy regaining possession of this city, which apparently ended up in Phi-

listine hands. Possibly the city has become an easy prey for the Philistines because the Levites had left it when Jeroboam himself appointed priests (1Kgs 12:31; 2Chr 11:13-15).

Baasha then fulfills the prophecy Ahijah spoke (1Kgs 14:14). Not that Baasha does it because of that. He acts purely in his own interest. Yet as an instrument of God, he carried out God's judgment on the house of Jeroboam. By the way, Baasha does more than is predicted over Jeroboam's house. God has judged everything male, but Baasha destroys any persons alive. This is also one of the reasons why he himself receives God's judgment over himself (1Kgs 16:7).

The fraternal twist between the two realms is also continued by Baasha and Asa.

### **Verses 33-34 | Baasha King Over Israel**

*33 In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel at Tirzah, [and reigned] twenty-four years. 34 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin.*

Baasha chooses Tirzah as his residence. He murdered Jeroboam and his house, but not the spirit of idolatry that characterized Jeroboam. He upholds the idolatry of Jeroboam and thereby does what is evil in the sight of the LORD.

## 1 Kings 16

### Verses 1-7 | Prophecy About and End of Baasha

*1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, 2 "Inasmuch as I exalted you from the dust and made you leader over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made My people Israel sin, provoking Me to anger with their sins, 3 behold, I will consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 4 Anyone of Baasha who dies in the city the dogs will eat, and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat." 5 Now the rest of the acts of Baasha and what he did and his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 6 And Baasha slept with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah, and Elah his son became king in his place. 7 Moreover, the word of the LORD through the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani also came against Baasha and his household, both because of all the evil which he did in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck it.*

The history of the ten tribes realm is tragic. One king after the other is murdered, "bloodshed follows bloodshed" (Hos 4:2). The murderer becomes the new king. All sin and make Israel sin, but it is getting worse and worse. Baasha hears the prophet Jehu express God's judgment on him. If kings become unfaithful, God sends prophets. If kings become unfaithful, the people also become unfaithful. The *prophet* Jehu – so not to be confused with the king who bears this name – is the son of the prophet Hanani (2Chr 16:7).

Jehu reminds Baasha that he owes his kingship not to himself, but to God, and that God has raised him up from deep meanness. Here again we see God's sovereignty on the one hand and man's responsibility on the other. We cannot combine these two sides, but God knows how to bring them together, doing perfect justice to both sides. Baasha is a servant who has become king. The earth quakes under such a person (Pro 30:21-22a). True kings are not only appointed by God, but also formed by Him.

He provoked the LORD to anger, as Jeroboam did. He is also judged for the murder of Jeroboam (verse 7). God had determined that Jeroboam's house had to be eradicated. He even raised Baasha from the dust to be leader (verse 2). But the motives Baasha used were not right. He did it for himself and not because the LORD had said it. He also did more than the LORD had said. The judgment was announced on all that was male (1Kgs 14:10), but Baasha killed the whole house of Jeroboam.

We see more often that an instrument in the hand of God, by whom He executes the judgment over others, is himself punished by God. Jehu brings God's judgment over the house of Ahab, but is also judged himself for the anger with which he does so. Also the Assyrians who are used by God to discipline His people are in turn judged by God, because of their wicked conduct (Isa 10:7,12-16).

### Verses 8-14 | Elah King Over Israel

*8 In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel at Tirzah, [and reigned] two years. 9 His servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him. Now he [was] at Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who [was] over the household at Tirzah. 10 Then Zimri went in and struck him and put him to death in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and became king in his place. 11 It came about when he became king, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he killed all the household of Baasha; he did not leave a single male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends. 12 Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet, 13 for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols. 14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?*

Baasha dies a natural death. It seems like an exception that he is not killed. Elah, his son, becomes king. The only thing that is mentioned of him is that he is at home, and not with the army, and that he is drinking there. He's a rake that uses his power to celebrate.

Zimri, a commander, sees his chance to come to power. He uses his military power to exterminate Baasha's house. In this way he executes the verdict pronounced by God, but he acts with the same motives as Baasha did.

### Verses 15-20 | Zimri King Over Israel

*15 In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days at Tirzah. Now the people were camped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. 16 The people who were camped heard it said, "Zimri has conspired and has also struck down the king." Therefore all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp. 17 Then Omri and all Israel with him went up from Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah. 18 When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire, and died, 19 because of his sins which he sinned, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, making Israel sin. 20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri and his conspiracy which he carried out, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?*

Zimri is not king for a long time. Only seven days he tasted the power. Then also his end is there. The army now seizes power and makes Omri king. The siege against the Philistines is ended to take Zimri's power away. A civil war arises instead of a common approach against the enemy. Zimri is so trapped that he commits suicide. He burns himself. After Saul, he is the second king to commit suicide.

### Verses 21-28 | Omri King Over Israel

*21 Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; the [other] half followed Omri. 22 But the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath. And Tibni died and Omri became king. 23 In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel [and reigned] twelve years; he reigned six years at Tirzah. 24 He bought the hill Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and named the city which he built Samaria, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill. 25 Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who [were] before him. 26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in*

*his sins which he made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel with their idols. 27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did and his might which he showed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 28 So Omri slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son became king in his place.*

Omri is not immediately ruler over all of Israel. There is a part of Israel that is following Tibni, possibly a peaceful man. Omri is the strongest, i.e. literally has the longest breath. Tibni probably died a natural death. If he is dead, the people who follow Tibni are without a leader and have to submit to Omri and the people who chose him. Omri becomes king. He builds the city of Samaria and settles there.

With Omri a period begins that leads to an even worse low point. It says of him that he makes it worse than all who have been before him (verse 25). He has not only maintained idolatry, but has commanded it. He has connected statutes to it for the whole people and thereby made idolatry obligatory for the whole people (Mic 6:16a). It is exactly what we find in the letter to the church in Thyatira (Rev 2:20), which prophetically refers to the roman-catholic church, which also imposes her statutes on the people.

### **Verses 29-33 | Ahab Becomes King Over Israel**

*29 Now Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. 30 Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. 31 It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. 32 So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. 33 Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.*

After Omri's death, his son Ahab becomes king. The period that started with Omri is developing rapidly in an even worse direction. Ahab is even worse than his father. He leads the people to an absolute low point in their history. The sin of Jeroboam fades with what this man performs by what

he introduces in the midst of the people of God. He marries the full-blown idolatress Jezebel. That woman guarantees that from that moment on Baal will become the official god of Israel. Ahab builds a house and an altar for Baal. What an abominable insult to the God of Israel. This is worse than anything that has happened before.

### Verse 34 | Jericho Rebuilt

*34 In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations 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 the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.*

The government of Ahab over Israel, or perhaps better the government of Jezebel over Israel, is possible because king and people have put God's Word aside. The last verse of this chapter makes that clear. Someone from Bethel (= house of God), Hiel (= God lives), is so audacious to defy the word spoken by God five centuries before and to rebuild Jericho as a fortress city (Jos 6:26). The city itself has been inhabited for some time.

Although man may have forgotten what God said, God does not forget what He said. He does what He has said. When the man has laid the foundations of Jericho, his eldest son dies. However, there does not ring a bell. Tirelessly he continues to work on the execution of the curse. When he has raised the gates, his youngest son also dies. Still there is no memory of what God once said. For anyone who wants to be faithful to God's Word, there is a warning and encouragement in what is happening here: God makes His Word come true, both in judgment and in blessing.

The five kings of this chapter show a descending line. The cause is forgetting God, not taking into account what He has said.



# 1 Kings 17

## Introduction

Now that we have reached the absolute low point of the history of God's people, the Holy Spirit places the prophet Elijah before our attention. The person and service of Elijah are exceptional. He is one of the greatest personalities in the Old Testament. He is the first man to raise a dead person, he is the only one to go to heaven with fiery chariots and horses. He is "a man with a nature like ours" (Jam 5:17a), but with a tremendous faith. He is also a man of prayer.

He lives in a time of the greatest apostacy, a time in which the Word of God was totally rejected by people of God. In that time he stands as a true man of God for the rights of God and bears witness of Him as the living God. He is a man with whom anyone who cares about the welfare of God's people would like to identify. After all, we too live in a time in which the Word of God has largely been rejected. Not so much in the world, but in Christianity.

Elijah is a prophet. Prophets are sent by God when His people have deviated from Him. God wants to speak through them to the hearts and conscience of the people. Prophets represent God's power and bring God's people into the light of God. They put their finger on the deviation, the sin (Jn 4:16-19). Elijah does not do this gently, for he announces drought. He does so because the whole people serve the Baal. He comes from Gilead. We could say that in view of the deviation of the people he is a "balm from Gilead" (Jer 8:22). He denounces their sick condition and offers them a medicine. That medicine is repentance and return to the LORD.

Of Elijah – and also of Elisha – we have no Bible book in God's Word. This we have of many prophets who prophesied to the two tribes, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and so on. We have the prophetic service of the prophets in the two tribes' realm in written form in God's Word because their service also relates to what is still future today. In the two tribes' realm there is still a certain interest in God's Word, and the prophets can refer to that Word in their exhortations. They speak for edification and ex-

hortation and consolation, as still happens today in the church (1Cor 14:3). This is only possible if there are hearts to absorb the Word.

Nor do the prophets of the two tribes' realm do signs and wonders: for they are for the unbelievers. Therefore Elijah and Elisha do miracles, for they have a message for an unbelieving people.

The word Elijah and Elisha speak as prophets does not refer to the near or distant future, as is the case with the writing prophets. Their word is addressed to the heart and conscience of the people in the present circumstances, here and now. It is a word supported by miraculous signs.

Elijah's signs are extremely powerful. They are connected to heaven. He has closed heaven once, and opened heaven four times. He closes and opens heaven in relation to rain (Jam 5:17-18). He also opens heaven to let fire descend from it, once over the offering (1Kgs 18:36-38) and twice over his enemies (2Kgs 1:8-14). As has already been said, he raised up a dead person (1Kgs 17:21-22).

He alone has as a prophet a direct successor in Elisha (2Kgs 2:1,11-14) and he has a successor in his spirit in John the baptist (Lk 1:17). The Old Testament closes with its name (Mal 4:5-6). He is there, together with Moses, when the Lord Jesus appears on the mountain of glorification (Mt 17:3). Finally, we recognize him in one of the two witnesses in the end time (Rev 11:6).

Elijah is called "man of God" (1Kgs 17:18,24). In the New Testament we meet a 'man of God' in letters to persons. There that person is called "man of God" (1Tim 6:11; 2Tim 3:17). It can be a man, it can also be a woman. The first letter to Timothy refers to the "later times" (1Tim 4:1). Its characteristics are "forbid to marry" and the "abstaining from foods" (1Tim 4:3). Under the influence of deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, these characteristics have arisen. Medieval Christianity, as it began and continues in roman-catholicism, is its breeding ground.

In the second letter to Timothy, the decay has gone even further. There it is about the "last days" (2Tim 3:1). The characteristic of this is that in Christianity there are people who appear to be God-fearing, but who lie, for they deny the power thereof (2Tim 3:5).

Prophetically, these characteristics are described in the book of Revelation, in the letter to the church in Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29). This letter is part of seven letters in which church history is reflected through the centuries. In that letter reference is made to “the woman Jezebel”, so that the parallel with the time of Elijah is beyond doubt. In this way we can say that the history of Elijah teaches us lessons in connection with the history of the church in the dark Middle Ages, a history that remains relevant because it continues until the coming of the Lord Jesus.

During that time, testimonies of faith are appreciated in a special way, as we hear from the mouth of the Lord Jesus regarding a faithful remnant in Thyatira (Rev 2:19). In such times, where truths are so covered, each testimony about Him is of great significance to Him. For Him it is not about great knowledge of the truth, but to live faithfully according to what is known of the truth. We see this in Elijah, in Obadiah, and the one hundred prophets that Obadiah has hidden, and the seven thousand that are only seen by God.

Yet not every believer in such times is a ‘man of God’. This can only be said of Elijah at that time, and it can only be said now of someone who openly defends God’s rights, while the mass of the confessing Christianity does not take them into account and many who do so in secret without openly admitting it. Not every believing Israelite is a man of God. Obadiah is not that, nor are the seven thousand. It is the same today, that not every believer is a man of God.

People who dare to raise their voices in public are few. It is the people who, for example, hold on to the literal, literal inspiration of the Scriptures against everything. This characterizes the man of God in the last days. In the “last days” (2Tim 3:1-5) we see an increase of the evil that characterizes the “later times” (1Tim 4:1-5).

“Last days” require complete dedication to the Word as a hallmark of a man of God (2Tim 3:16-17). Holding on to the inspiration of God’s Word is above all important in such dark times. Then it comes down to holding on to the word of the Lord Jesus’ perseverance (Rev 3:10-11), which is only possible if one lives in an intimate personal relationship with God. Such people get to hear that the Lord Jesus will write “the name of My God” on them (Rev 3:12).

The period when the Lord Jesus was on earth is also called “these last days” (Heb 1:2). This underlines the connection that exists between Elijah and John the baptist, the predecessor of the Lord Jesus. This connection is also evident from their actions. Thus, Elijah testifies in the palace of Ahab and John in the palace of Herod. Both have experienced the hatred of the wives of these rulers. Both had a breakdown at the end of their service. Therefore it is also said that Elijah and John spiritually spoken are the same person (Lk 1:17a; Mt 11:13-14).

In addition, Elijah is a picture of the Lord Jesus, the Great One sent of God. Christ is the great Witness of God. He has raised up dead ones on earth. He has blessings for poor Gentiles, just like Elijah, as we see later, when Elijah is in Sidon. He, like Elijah, has brought a sacrifice on a mountain, whereby He Himself is the sacrifice.

We see the picture of the Lord Jesus when Elijah stands on Mount Carmel, alone against the power of the enemy, only with his sacrifice. The sacrifice has shown God’s faithfulness to His people. The sacrifice is consumed by the fire of God’s judgment. By this the people are spared and blessings for the people come again. This performance of Elijah, the culmination of his service, is a striking picture of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, where He has born the judgment of the sins of those who are His people.

We also see that the Lord Jesus, just like Elijah, spent forty days in the desert. He also called His followers, as Elijah called Elisha. He went to heaven, which also happened to Elijah.

If I were allowed to have a favorite in the Old Testament, it would be Elijah. I have great admiration for this man. He is in Himself no different from other people (Jam 5:17a). It is even so, that of him as the only Old Testament believer something negative is said in the New Testament. Of all the believers in the Old Testament who are mentioned in the New Testament, only what they have done in faith is mentioned. However, there is also something about Elijah that is not good. He has once accused the people to God. Paul refers to this to show that God will always have a remnant according to God’s gracious choice (Rom 11:2-5).

What makes him special is that he is a man of prayer and a man of God. He is the one who stands up for God’s rights and asserts them in an environment

where they are denied and trampled underfoot. This character and these features make him the appropriate instrument for God to be His prophet. We may learn from him what God is capable of if we are intercessors who recognize him in the full right of his Word.

### Verse 1 | Elijah Appears Before Ahab

*1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."*

Suddenly he appears on stage, Elijah, the man from Tishbe. It is described without the usual "and the word of the LORD came to ...". We know nothing of his origin, his family, his education. Only the place of origin is given. He will not have appeared here headstrong, but by a command from God. It is clear that he lives in fellowship with God.

For we know that, before he goes to Ahab, he prayed that God would intervene supernaturally in His people. He did not pray only once, but fervently and persistently, until he is convinced that God will give him what he prayed for. With this he reveals God's holiness and righteousness. With this conviction he appears before Ahab.

He enters the palace of Ahab and courageously speaks his message there. His message is short. His first words are a testimony to God as "the LORD, the God of Israel". The God of Israel is the LORD, *Yahweh*, and not Baal. The LORD is also the God who lives. This testimony is necessary in an environment where the living God is excluded. Elijah also says: "Before whom I stand." This is a beautiful expression. We also hear something similar from the mouths of Abraham, Elisha and Gabriel (Gen 24:40; 2Kgs 3:14; Lk 1:19).

Elijah is aware that he is in the presence of God, that he is with God. Whoever is there can speak His Word fearlessly to a mighty man like Ahab, for this great king shrivels in God's presence to a tiny creature. There is no embarrassment or hesitation in Elijah's actions or words. He is convinced of the One on behalf of Whom he stands for Ahab here and on behalf of Whom he speaks to Ahab.

Elijah then states that God will reveal Himself as the Living by withholding rain from the people. He does not say “thus saith the LORD”, but he speaks with the authority of God Himself when he says that there will be no rain but only on his word, that is the word of Elijah. This is not moderation, but faith confidence. Nothing more and nothing less than that power, that conviction of standing in God’s will and passing on His words, is demanded in times of worst decay.

God works through this man for the benefit of His people. Is it therefore a grace to make such an announcement of drought and thereby of famine? Yes. Elijah knows God’s Word and so he knows God’s thoughts. He has read in God’s Word that there will be drought when the people are unfaithful (Lev 26:18-19; Deu 11:16-17; 28:23-24). In his prayer he asked God to live up to this word. He has acted both to withheld rain and to give it (Jam 5:17b-18).

He prayed for it because he is so concerned about the people and so upset about the dishonor done to God. God has made it clear to him to pray on the basis of this word, and he trusts God in His word. For him God is the living God Who only has authority over the rain (Jer 14:22) and not Baal to whom this authority is attributed by unbelief. He speaks this word so that the people may repent and return to God and His Word.

### **Verses 2-6 | Elijah by the Brook Cherith**

*2 The word of the LORD came to him, saying, 3 “Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 4 It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.” 5 So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.*

Elijah disappears from the stage as suddenly as he appeared on it. After the bringing of his message the word of the LORD comes to him. He must hide in a place where God will take care of him. It doesn’t seem that he hides from Ahab right away. It is conceivable that Ahab will not look for him until later, when the effect of his prayer becomes clear. Elijah obeys and goes to the place God has told him. In the retreat God forms His servant.

Public performance exposes the servant to the danger of self-elevation. With God in secret he has none but God. Here he learns to see himself in God's presence and he learns Who God is to him. There is "a time to be silent and a time to speak" (Ecc 3:7b). For Elijah, the time to be silent is now come, until the next designation from God comes to speak again. It is a time of further preparation for his service in public which we see in the next chapter, when he stands before the whole people. Other servants have also known such a period. We see it with Moses, David, John the baptist, Paul and also with the Lord Jesus.

The LORD provides Elijah with bread and meat by means of unclean birds, ravens, and water from the brook. The prophet Obadiah, as we see in the next chapter, provides a hundred prophets of the LORD with bread and water (1Kgs 18:4). Ravens do not take care of their young, but God maintains them (Psa 147:9; Job 39:3). In His sovereignty, however, He uses the ravens for others (cf. Psa 50:11). Thus He always has means at His disposal to provide His own with what they need, even if those means act against their nature. The way in which God takes care of Elijah is also a disgrace to Israel. Apparently there is no one in Israel who wants to take care of the prophet.

The bread and meat that the ravens bring him speaks of the Lord Jesus. He is "the bread of life" (Jn 6:35). The Lord Jesus also says of the "bread" the following: "And the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh" (Jn 6:51b). In John 6 He presents Himself as the food that is the means to deliver us from all that is under death. If we live out of Him, we become free from it. We can learn that from what Elijah is experiencing here.

Three times Elijah has experienced the special provisions of God's care for his sustenance: here at the brook Cherith through the ravens, further on in this chapter at the widow through the flour and oil that do not run out and in 1 Kings 19 where the Angel of the LORD gives him a bread cake and water (1Kgs 19:5-8).

### **Verses 7-9 | Elijah Must Go to a Widow in Zarephath**

7 It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land. 8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 9 "Arise, go to

*Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."*

Elijah learns how faithful God is in His care for him. Yet the brook dries up. The general judgment he has given on Israel also affects him. He is also part of the people. He is also a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel in the end time, and the three and a half years of drought is a picture of the great tribulation that will also last three and a half years. The believing remnant will flee for a period of three and a half years to the wilderness and be fed there (Rev 12:14), as Elijah during that time is fed by the LORD.

We also learn here the lesson that God can give us something, but that this does not mean that it will always stay that way. We can never content ourselves with what we have received from Him and claim it forever. The danger is always present that we attach ourselves to the blessings, while God wants us to attach ourselves to Him. The lesson is that we will not rely on the gifts, but on the Giver. Elijah must learn to trust in something that never ends: God's caring faithfulness, as is evident from the flour and oil, as we shall see in a moment.

The brook dries up, but the sources present in God Himself never dry up. He has already arranged a new home for Elijah, in Zarephath, about one hundred and thirty kilometers from the brook. Elijah entered a family where he is placed, as it were, in the next class of his formation by God. In this family we can see a picture of a local church. In order to be able to enter the public domain and do a service, training in the local church is of great importance. The service for the Lord is not about theological training, but about the practical formation of being a church, in which each member is important for the formation of each other member.

Where Elijah ends up, it does not seem to be a place where his problems are solved immediately. It is indeed a place where God can prove His power and love all the more. He always does that where there is nothing. God uses a widow in Zarephath in Sidon. Sidon is the place where Jezebel comes from and where the effects of drought are also noticeable. A servant himself would not think of such a place.

This command must have been miraculous for Elijah. But unlike Jonah, who has to go to a place where he does not want to go and therefore flees



from the LORD (Jona 1:3), Elijah goes. In that place of extreme wickedness God wants to further form His servant. At the same time, the woman is also formed. There is an interaction.

### Verses 10-16 | A Handful Flour and a Little Oil

*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 jar, that I may drink." 11 As she was going to get [it], he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." 12 But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." 13 Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring [it] out to me, and afterward you may make [one] for yourself and for your son. 14 For thus says the LORD God of Israel, "The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth." 15 So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for [many] days. 16 The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.*

At the gate of the city Elijah meets the widow and asks her a question to know if she is the woman the LORD intended (cf. Gen 24:14). The woman in turn recognizes him. The test makes it clear that this woman has faith, in contrast to the many widows in Israel to whom Elijah could not be sent (Lk 4:25-26). That she believes, we hear from what she says about the LORD. She speaks of Him as the One Who lives.

It seems that she can meet Elijah's demand for some water. In any case, she leaves to fetch water. When Elijah also asks for bread, however, the widow has to answer that she has nothing but a handful of flour and a little oil. This acknowledgment of reality is exactly what God can use.

She does not refuse to use it for Elijah, but says that this is the last thing she has for her son and herself and that both of them will have to die after using it. There is nothing in her of the spirit of Nabal who, at David's re-

quest to give him some of his wealth, answers: "Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat ..., and give it to men whose origin I do not know?" (1Sam 25:11).

Elijah says to her to use it for him, after he has reassured her with the words "do not fear". He promises her in the Name of the LORD God of Israel, that the flour and oil will not run out. He calls the Name of the God of Israel in the through and through pagan Sidon. God's Name sounds brightest from the mouth of a man of God who is in an environment where the greatest darkness reigns.

The widow accepts the word of the prophet and believes that she will not lose. Those who trust God will make available to Him the little bit they have without objecting. Those who deal with God will first seek His kingdom. They will do so in the faith that the other things will then be given to them (Mt 6:33). Happy are those who, in hope against hope, continue to believe and who obey in confidence in God's provisions.

This is what God wants: that we go to the Lord Jesus with the little we have. It is, as someone once said, "Little becomes much if God stands behind it." We see that also with the miraculous feeding. What do a few loaves and a few fish mean to so many thousands of people (Jn 6:9)? Give it to the Lord. He distributes it so that everyone may be satisfied and there even remains some for others (Mt 14:20).

If we can see the widow's house as a local church of believers, full of weakness, this scene gives us encouragement. We see that God wants to work there by means of the little there is. It is "the day of small things" (Zec 4:10) and of "little power" (Rev 3:8).

The full power of the Holy Spirit from the beginning, when He was poured out (Acts 2:1-4), is still there today (1Cor 2:12; Gal 5:16,25), but is no longer fully realized by the unfaithfulness of the church. Yet there is still "a handful", "a little". This will never disappear as long as the church is on earth and there are local believers who believe in the Lord Jesus and His work and in the power of the Spirit.

The flour and oil are multiplied. This multiplication takes place by using the flour and the oil. The woman experiences the truth of the word: "There is one who scatters, and [yet] increases all the more" (Pro 11:24a). The op-

posite is also true. There may be plenty, but when used for one's own benefit, God will blow in it and it becomes little (Pro 11:24b; Hag 1:9; 2:17).

The widow receives a prophet in the name of a prophet and receives the reward of a prophet (Mt 10:41). She will not have complained that there is so little, because day after day she experiences its presence and she lives from it. She must have been surprised every day that it is still there.

We can apply the flour and the oil spiritually. The flour can be seen as a picture of the Lord Jesus as Man. Flour is used for the grain offering (Lev 2:1). Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20,27). The Man Christ Jesus, Who is God revealed in the flesh, was completely guided by the Spirit on earth. The Lord Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35) and anointed with Him (Acts 10:38). The grain offering is also exposed to fire (Lev 2:2,9,14). In it we see the picture that He, the true Man devoted to God, has undergone on the cross the fire of God's judgment.

Even if there is only a little awareness of the perfection of the Lord Jesus and even if there is only a little awareness of the power of the Holy Spirit, when we go with this awareness to the Man of God, the Lord Jesus, He will work with it. The awareness of little power and the holding to the Name of the Lord Jesus are characteristics of the church in Philadelphia (Rev 3:8).

In the midst of the general decay in Christianity, it is still possible to put God's thoughts into practice, even if only with a few who are so weak in themselves. As encouragement the Lord says: "I am coming quickly" and calls: "Hold fast what you have" (Rev 3:11).

### **Verses 17-18 | The Widow's Son Dies**

*17 Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. 18 So she said to Elijah, "What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!"*

It is a small, but happy company, there in that house in Zarephath. In this time of scarcity, they always have to eat, because the man of God has moved in there. Then comes the trial in that house. It is the next class in the school of God. If we can assume that Elijah was by Cherith for one year

and with the widow for two years, we can see these three years as teaching years in the school of God.

The first year, the first class, is by Cherith. The second year, the second class, is with the widow to learn that the handful of flour and the little oil are sufficient in days of the greatest weakness. Now comes the third year, the third class, with the lesson of death and resurrection. After the exercise in the mystery with Cherith and the formation in the family, the church, we now learn that the foundation of blessing and life lies in death and resurrection.

The only son of the widow becomes ill and dies. That empties the house. It is not only a trial for the woman, but also for Elijah. This profoundly dramatic event brings the woman to a renewed awareness of God's hand in her life. She is reminded of a sin, the burden of which she apparently had not yet lost.

That may happen to us. There are things that happen in which we suddenly find ourselves in God's presence. Through a sudden incident, God can bring us to a standstill and immediately reminds us of a sin that we have committed, but which we have hidden or forgotten and which we have not yet confessed. God works this out to give the opportunity to confess that sin.

The woman addresses Elijah with "man of God". She knows he is. Through him she has come to know God as a Sustainer, Someone Who takes care of her. But now through him she will get to know God in a special way: as the God of resurrection. Elijah is in this house a picture of the Lord Jesus through whom we learn to know God as the God of resurrection and new life.

### **Verses 19-24 | The Son Becomes Alive**

*19 He said to her, "Give me your son." Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him on his own bed. 20 He called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?" 21 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray You, let this child's life return to him." 22 The LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned*

*to him and he revived. 23 Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." 24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."*

Elijah listens to her need and says to her: "Give me your son." Thus the Lord Jesus says to us "give me your problem", just as He once said to a desperate father that he should bring his son to Him (Mk 9:19b). At the same time, Elijah takes the son from her bosom. He disconnects the boy from the natural connection that exists between the boy and his mother. His mother can't help him anymore. All the natural things on which a person can rely must first be taken away if God is to do His work through His life-giving power.

Elijah brings the boy to his upper room. Later the woman in Shunem also brought her son to an upper room (2Kgs 4:21); there the believers also laid Dorcas (Acts 9:37); there Eutychus was also brought back after he fell out of the window of the upper room (Acts 20:8-12). An upper room is a place above the earth, where those who are there are with God as it were. Elijah puts him on his bed, his deathbed, so to speak. Then he stretches himself upon him, making himself one with him symbolically. He does that up to three times.

Every new life is based on the fact that the Lord Jesus made our problem of sin His on the cross. All subsequent problems that may arise in our lives are also made His in His service in heaven as High Priest and Advocate. As Elijah calls to God, so does Christ pray for us.

Elijah prays fervently to God to let life return to the child. Before this fall we do not read of anyone who has been brought back to life from the dead. This makes Elijah's faith in God as the God of the resurrection all the more remarkable. He is an example to us in His faith in the power of God over death. However, he is not an example for us to pray for the revival of a dead person. Thus David did not expect to bring his child back to life through prayer and fasting (2Sam 12:23). Elijah has a power to work miracles that David did not have.

When Elijah calls to God as his personal God, God listens to the voice of Elijah and brings outcome. He restores life and thus confirms Elijah as the

man who restores things. Elijah gives the child back to its mother. He is the prophet who restores the relationship between the generations and makes the hearts of parents go to the children and the hearts of children to the parents (Mal 4:5a,6a). God also wants to do this with us if we can no longer live to His honor because of a problem of any kind.

Elijah's prayer is clear: "let this child's life return to him." In this we clearly see the existence of the soul in a state separate of the body, which is also a proof that the soul does not die after death. The LORD hears the prayer. As a result, the woman acknowledges that Elijah is a man of God. We will also give all honor to the Lord Jesus when we have experienced His power to give life. Thus the death of this child, as well as later that of Lazarus (Jn 11:4), becomes a reason to glorify God and to honor His prophet.

## 1 Kings 18

### **Verse 1 | The Lord Will Give Rain Again**

*1 Now it happened [after] many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."*

After more than three years the LORD orders Elijah to show himself to Ahab again, because He is going to give rain. What a merciful God! The promise of the LORD that He is going to give rain does not take away that Elijah prays for it, as it appears further on. The promise is precisely an exhortation to pray.

Elijah will come and restore everything, the Lord Jesus said to His disciples (Mt 17:11). Elijah's character is that of restoration. Moses is the law giver. Elijah brings the people back to the law after they have deviated from it. Moses was prepared in the wilderness for forty years. Elijah has also been prepared by the LORD. Moses has performed with Pharaoh and Elijah with Ahab. Then they are both prepared by God in silence for their service. In John the baptist the service of Elijah is fulfilled. John is also prepared and then comes into the public domain.

Now comes the appearance in public for Elijah. He has to show himself to Ahab. The restoration of the people is preceded by the apparition of Elijah. He brings hearts back to God. Ahab is the spiritual leader of God's people. The restoration is not without him, because he is the representative of the people.

### **Verses 2-6 | Ahab and Obadiah**

*2 So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine [was] severe in Samaria. 3 Ahab called Obadiah who [was] over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly; 4 for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.) 5 Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of*

*the cattle.” 6 So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.*

Obedying the command of the LORD, Elijah sets off to Ahab to show himself to him. Before that meeting takes place, we hear of a man, Obadiah, who is at the court of Ahab and of whom we read that he feared the LORD greatly. The palace of Ahab and the fear of the LORD are two opposing worlds. Obadiah cannot openly confess that he fears the LORD greatly, for he also fears Ahab. The fear of the LORD must go hand in hand with turn away from evil (Pro 3:7).

Yet the LORD has used Obadiah. In his fear of the LORD he has taken care that a hundred prophets did not fall into the hands of the murderous Jezebel. He even kept them alive by providing them with bread and water. This is indeed no small matter at a time when water is scarce and harvests fail due to drought. Possibly he was helped in this by the seven thousand who did not bow their knees before Baal (1Kgs 19:18). In any case, it is no small achievement for which the LORD will surely reward him.

But he cannot be a real witness to the LORD, as Elijah is. He walks on the lead of Ahab and gets his commands from him and not from the LORD like Elijah. Obadiah cannot possibly be an open witness to the LORD, because he remains connected with evil.

Whoever wants to be a real witness cannot be connected with evil. A believer who lives in fellowship with the world will act as the world. He will strive to keep the world livable and even improve it. Whoever wants to be a man of God must cleanse himself from the vessels to dishonor (2Tim 2:20-21). Obadiah does not do that. On the contrary, he is working, together with Ahab, to undo the consequences of God’s judgment.

Ahab cares more about his cattle than about his people, his subjects. For his cattle he goes looking for water. He orders Obadiah to search part of the land as well. Ahab apparently trusts Obadiah fully. This is how he got to know Obadiah. Although Obadiah is in the wrong position and is forced to participate in a foolish expedition, it shows that he is generally good at his work. A person who fears the LORD will be a useful force for his employer who does his job well, even though sometimes it must be said of a job that it is not a job of faith.



**Verses 7-15 | Obadiah and Elijah**

7 Now as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is this you, Elijah my master?" 8 He said to him, "It is I. Go, say to your master, 'Behold, Elijah [is here].'" 9 He said, "What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death? 10 As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to search for you; and when they said, 'He is not [here],' he made the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you. 11 And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah [is here]."' 12 It will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although [I] your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. 13 Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, that I hid a hundred prophets of the LORD by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water? 14 And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah [is here]"; he will then kill me.'" 15 Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today."

On the way to Ahab, Elijah bumps into Obadiah. Two men who fear the LORD meet. However, there is a world of difference between them. One is a declared opponent of Ahab, the other is doing his best, hand in hand with Ahab, to ensure that in this time of scarcity the horses of Ahab at least have something to eat. Obadiah is shocked when he sees Elijah and calls him "my master". Elijah corrects him and says that Ahab is his master. That is what Obadiah also himself says in verse 10. This reminds us of the word of the Lord Jesus: "No one can serve two masters" (Mt 6:24a).

Elijah is used to obeying immediately. If the LORD says "go", then he goes (verses 1-2). If Obadiah receives the same assignment from Elijah, he objects to it with all kinds of objections. He easily complies with Ahab's plans, but can hardly bow to God's plan. This is often the case in the lives of Christians who join the world. When the Word of God asks for simple obedience, they have all kinds of excuses to get out of it.

Fear dominates the life of Obadiah. He is afraid of Elijah and he is afraid of Ahab. He fears more for his own life than for that of Elijah. He tells how Ahab had Elijah restlessly searched to kill him, in the superstitious opin-

ion that the disaster then would stop and rain would come again. There is also no peace with regard to Elijah with Obadiah. For him, Elijah is also a danger. He sees Elijah as the object of his master's hatred and not as the representative of the living God.

Many believers live in the cleavage that characterizes Obadiah's life. They are in systems where all kinds of evil teachings are. They condemn these teachings, but they stay where they are. They tell themselves that they might still be useful. They are, however, in ever-increasing disturbance of conscience. On the one hand they feel that the Lord Jesus is dishonored, and they sometimes want to protest against it; on the other hand they are afraid of the religious leaders. This situation will ultimately lead to them either silencing their conscience or leaving that place.

Nor does Obadiah understand anything of the work of the Spirit. He believes that the Spirit will do something special with Elijah, causing him to run into the greatest difficulties and even to fear for his life. He does not know God's thoughts and therefore he suggests thoughts about the Spirit that are totally outside the spiritual reality. Never will the Spirit do anything that would put out of action the Word of God or go against the Word of God. Elijah said in the power of the Spirit that Obadiah must announce him to Ahab. It is an insult to the Spirit to assume that He will suddenly work something else.

Obadiah feels compelled to justify himself. The reason he is so afraid of his life is because he is so full of himself. He who has lost himself does not fear for his life, for he has already lost it. Obadiah mentions everything he has done for the LORD. But the Lord does not want us to speak about ourselves like this (Pro 27:2). Paul calls himself "insane" (2Cor 11:23) when he is forced to speak about himself. People who give up high about themselves do not find appreciation among spiritually-minded people. Nor is Elijah impressed by the achievements of Obadiah's achievements. Without saying a word about it he turns around and goes to show himself to Ahab.

### **Verses 16-18 | Elijah meets Ahab**

*16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.  
17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?" 18 He said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house*

*[have], because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals.*

Finally, Obadiah obeys. He goes to Ahab and tells him that Elijah is there. Then Ahab goes to Elijah. Israel's most powerful man and outlawed Elijah meet. But Elijah is far above this man, who accuses him of plunging Israel into misfortune. Those who bring God's Word and point out sin are often identified as the cause of troubles (cf. Acts 16:16-24).

Elijah points his finger at Ahab himself and explains why he is the cause of Israel's misery. On the one hand Ahab forsakes the commandments of the LORD and on the other hand he has followed the Baals. These two sides always constitute the misfortune of man in general and of the Christian in particular who deviates from God.

### **Verses 19-21 | All the People and Elijah at Carmel**

*19 Now then send [and] gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, [together] with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." 20 So Ahab sent [a message] among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long [will] you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.*

That Elijah is the superior is evident from the orders he gives Ahab. And Ahab obeys. Elijah commands that all Israel be gathered, as well as the false prophets of Baal, the people who proclaim the false doctrine of Baal. Also the four hundred prophets, who receive their food from Jezebel, must come. The place of action is also determined by Elijah: Mount Carmel. This is the most suitable place for the meeting between the God of Israel and the idols of the Sidonians. Mount Carmel is located between Israel and Phoenicia where Tyre and Sidon are.

Then all the Israelites and the prophets gather at Mount Carmel. Opposite this crowd is the loner Elijah. Of the seven thousand who did not bend their knees before Baal, there is nothing to be seen. Obadiah will not stand beside him either. Although Elijah is alone and faces the masses, he sees the whole people and loves them. He carries them on his heart.

When all Israel and the prophets have gathered with Elijah, he first has a word for the people. Impressively he asks them when they will make a choice. But the people are silent. They are waiting. This apathy is terrible. It's reminiscent of the lukewarmness that reigns in the church in Laodicea (Rev 3:16).

### Verses 22-25 | Elijah Determines the Test

*22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. 23 Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire [under it]; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire [under it]. 24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea." 25 So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire [under it]."*

Then Elijah acts. He takes the initiative and explains 'the rules of the game' for the confrontation between God and Baal. The prophets of Baal may first choose from the two bulls and bring their sacrifice first. They also get the most time to call to their god. Elijah gives them every advantage. He can only do that because he trusts God completely. He does not know the outcome, yet still he does, because he knows God's will. That brings him to faith to give this testimony.

Baal is the god of the weather and therefore also of rain. He must be persuaded to give rain again. Fire from heaven on the sacrifice must make clear Who God is. Elijah knows the history of the fire on the sacrifice. He knows the history of Abraham where the fire comes from heaven (Gen 19:24). He also knows of the fire on the altar and the fire in judgment on Nadab and Abihu (Lev 9:24; 10:1-2). He knows the fire of blessing when the fire hits the innocent sacrifice and the people can go free. Elijah has let fire come from heaven on enemies (2Kgs 1:10-14), but does not do that on the people. He loves the people. Therefore the fire does not come on the people, but hits the sacrifice, as it turns out shortly.

**Verses 26-29 | Baal Is Called**

*26 Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. 27 It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened." 28 So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. 29 When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the [evening] sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.*

Baal's prophets prepare everything in the way Elijah has indicated. Then the spectacle breaks loose. That must have been impressive. Eight hundred and fifty prophets are a lot. At a distance stands the lonely Elijah. A little further on stands the mass of the people, still silent. It does not matter to them from whom the rain comes, from Baal or from God.

Elijah is not silent. When the prophets have been working for a long time without any result to persuade their god to take any action, Elijah starts to ridicule their foolish attempts with biting mockery. The prophets of God have always mocked the idols (Isa 44:12-20). Elijah ridicules their god by assuming he is occupied and has no time to answer. He is a god who cannot do two things at the same time. It may also be that he has gone aside, that is to say that he is on the toilet to do his needs and then of course he can't hear them. He cannot do that either when he is travelling, because he is a very limited god with only a small area as his terrain.

On the other hand is the God of Elijah, our God, the all-powerful God, the God of the universe, Who created heaven and earth and maintains everything. He is also the all-present God, who is present everywhere, and the all-knowing God, who is involved in all things, and to Whose attention nothing escapes.

According to their pagan customs, the prophets cut themselves to arouse the compassion of their god. What a god who should be brought to action with such actions! But all the toil and self-chastisement of the prophets is answered with total silence on the part of Baal. Of course Baal remains

dead, for there is only one living God. What a defeat for the prophets of Baal.

In this manner they continue until the time of the offering of the [evening] sacrifice or the evening grain offering. The whole chapter lights up against the background of the cross. It is the ninth hour. At that hour Christ died as the real grain offering and burnt offering on the cross. It is the moment that Daniel receives an answer to his prayer, as well as Ezra, and as Cornelius, the first convert from the Gentiles (Dan 9:21; Ezra 9:4-5; Acts 10:3). When the gods are silent and the people are silent, the God of Elijah answers.

### Verses 30-35 | Elijah Prepares the Sacrifice

*30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down. 31 Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." 32 So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed. 33 Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid [it] on the wood. 34 And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour [it] on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. 35 The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water.*

Then it's Elijah's turn. He commands the people to come forward, to him. He distracts the attention of Baal to focus it on himself and then on the LORD. They come. They must see clearly that he restores the altar of the LORD, which has been overthrown. He does not build a new, different altar. Nor does he renew the old altar. He rebuilds the altar from twelve stones to "the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob", who is made "Israel" by God's grace. "Jacob" is the name of weakness and failure. On that basis, judgment should be executed. But the LORD has given him the name "Israel". That is what God has made of him, and then there is blessing.

With the restoration of the altar, Elijah expresses the unity of the people of God. He does this as a loner, the man of God, but he does so "in the name

of the LORD". He thereby confesses His authority. The authority of that Name is still the basis for making the unity of the church visible, even if only with a few (Mt 18:20). It comes down to personal faithfulness in the acknowledgment of the authority of the Name of the Lord Jesus.

He continues to set up the altar for the purpose for which he is building it: that God may glorify Himself through it. He places wood on the altar. Then he cuts the ox of the second choice in pieces. He then orders the pouring of water on the altar. This is done by means of a total of twelve pitchers with water, which also reminds us of the twelve tribes. He does so three times, just as he has stretched himself out over the boy three times (1Kgs 17:21). Only God can give life out of death, of which the number three speaks.

In this way, Elijah avoids any suspicion that he would have used some sort of trick to bring the fire over the sacrifice. Every human intervention is eliminated. In practical terms, he will have had the water taken from a nearby spring. Spiritually we see that a man of God has always hidden sources.

### Verses 36-40 | Elijah Calls to God and God Answers

*36 At the time of the offering of the [evening] sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. 37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and [that] You have turned their heart back again." 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God." 40 Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*

Then he who is expressly called "Elijah the prophet" turns to God. He does so without a show like the prophets of Baal, but short, simple, penetrating, especially trusting and with a view to the return of the people to God. The whole power of God is concentrated in this one man. He addresses himself to the "LORD, the God of" – the promises to – "Abraham, Isaac and Isra-

el". When everything is lost, there can only be an appeal to the God of the promises. We also see that Elijah speaks of God as the "God of ... Israel", that is again what God made of Jacob and not what Jacob is in himself.

Elijah does not speak of the LORD 'my' God. He does so in his personal prayer. Here it is a public prayer and he prays that God will make Himself known as the God of His people Israel. He also prays for himself that it will become clear that he is connected with Him and acts in His command and carries out that command as He has told him. He prays at the time of the evening sacrifice. That is a wonderful moment. It is the time when later the Lord Jesus will die on the cross as the foundation for the unity of God's people. On the basis of that sacrifice God answers prayers. It is the hour that the Lord Jesus also called, but did not receive an answer. God accepts the sacrifice of Elijah and the people acknowledge that the LORD is God.

Elijah prays that it will become clear that God has brought repentance to their hearts. Restoration begins with those who have faith and prayed in silence and in public. Then the fire falls on the burnt offering. A burnt offering is made so that the man who brings it may be acceptable to God (Lev 1:9,13,17), not by reason of what man is in himself, but by reason of the pleasure God has in the offering. We may know that we are pleasing to God because He sees us in the Beloved (Eph 1:6).

The result is not only that the people are spared, that judgment passes them by, but that the hearts of the people return to God and trust God again. The result is also that the heart of God is turned back to this people and goes out to them. We see this when we look at the burnt offering that the Lord Jesus was on the cross for God. That burnt offering brings Elijah.

The fire consumes everything. When the people see it, it falls down and confesses loudly that the LORD is God. It is important that this is also the case with us. This will be evident from a radical removal of all elements that have taken the place of God. Everything that stands in the way of or does not conform to this confession must be removed from our lives. Elijah is radical. It seems hard, but it's about the holiness of God.

The first assignment for this returned people is to seize the prophets of Baal. No one should escape. That is how we must act. In the same way, there must also be merciless dealing with people who bring a false doc-



trine. This does not happen in our time by killing them, but by breaking and refusing every fellowship with them. Their word goes on like cancer and you cannot have patience with cancer (cf. Deu 13:5,9-11; 18:20). The slaughter takes place at the brook Kishon, where once the Canaanites were killed (Jdg 4:7,13; 5:21; Psa 83:9).

### Verses 41-46 | The Rain Is Coming

*41 Now Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a [heavy] shower." 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees. 43 He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back" seven times. 44 It came about at the seventh [time], that he said, "Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare [your chariot] and go down, so that the [heavy] shower does not stop you.'" 45 In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.*

After the fire comes the rain. Ahab is the first to be told that rain is approaching. There was nothing spoken about him during the whole event on the Carmel. He has followed the whole spectacle. He has been silent all the time. Elijah did not speak to him, but now speaks to him. He instructs Ahab to go home to eat and drink; after all, that is the only thing he is interested in. He also does not need to be present at the effect of Elijah's prayer for rain.

When Ahab, the leader of God's people, is on his way to his coveted meal, the man of God, the lover of God's people, goes up the mountain to pray. Elijah has prayed that it will not rain unless at his word (1Kgs 17:1). That time is now come. God has said that He will give rain again (1Kgs 18:1). That is what Elijah believes, and he already hears the noise of it (verse 41). We could say that Elijah did not have to pray. But this is not how the man of God talks. He knows that God wants to be prayed to and that God wants to use the prayer of His servant to give rain and blessing. Although

He has announced it, He gives it on the basis of prayer and in connection with the sacrifice.

In fact, Elijah had to pray seven times. In public a short prayer was sufficient to bring down fire from heaven. In secret a sevenfold prayer is needed to let the rain come. It is not only about prayer, but about persistent and faithful prayer. There is spiritual exercise connected to this. Elijah also uses his servant. He gives him a nice task. The servant may look forward to the answering of the prayer. He may go and look to the west, over the sea, to see if there are any clouds coming. Every time he obeys and is exercised in the same way. God gladly fulfills His promises in answer to the prayers of His own. So rain and blessing comes again upon the people of God.

We may pray for rain. Rain is the rain of heaven and represents the activity of the Spirit in the teaching of God's Word (Deu 32:2). In Egypt there is also water, but that is brought over the land by human effort (Deu 11:10). We long for the rain of heaven, the doctrine from the heavenly source. We may have a place around the altar of twelve stones, but we may also receive the doctrine that drips like rain. We must also pray for this and look forward to the hearing. Many want to eat and drink with Ahab, but only so few want to pray with Elijah. It starts with a cloud like the hand of a man, but grows into a sky full of clouds with rain.

Elijah commands Ahab to be fast, because otherwise the ground will be so marshy that he will not advance. While Ahab rushes away, Elijah is even faster and outruns Ahab. We can assume that he is enabled to do this by the power of the Spirit. It is a spiritual enthusiasm because of God's work that he was allowed to do.

This action by Elijah more or less ends his public service. He still acts as a prophet, but the actual goal of his mission has been achieved. Through his service, the people have returned to God, at least in his confession.

## 1 Kings 19

### Verses 1-3 | Elijah Runs for His Life

*1 Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." 3 And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.*

Ahab tells his wife Jezebel everything Elijah has done. He gives testimony of the work of *Elijah*, but that is the work of *God* with a mighty result. It has no effect on Ahab itself. Nor does he speak of the rain, but of the prophets who Elijah killed with the sword.

Jezebel represents the papal power, a power that we see especially in the Middle Ages. We see this in the church history given to us in Revelation 2-3 and specifically in the church in Thyatira, where Jezebel is mentioned by name (Rev 2:20). Just as the popes ruled over kings, so does Jezebel rule over Ahab. In Revelation 17 we see the woman sitting on a scarlet beast (Rev 17:3b). This symbolizes that she has the kings in her power.

When Jezebel hears her husband's report, she sends a messenger to Elijah to announce the death sentence to him. She is only possessed of one thing: Elijah must die. She lets him know. Elijah is not far away. The messenger does not have to look far. The message is clear and very threatening. We may wonder why Jezebel, if she really wanted to kill Elijah, did not immediately do so. Did she fear reactions from the people? Or was she afraid of Elijah herself? In any case, she wants to threaten him, perhaps with the hope that he would flee. She doesn't tolerate him in her surroundings. If she has indeed had the intention to frighten Elijah and thereby chase him away, she succeeds in her intention.

Elijah has had his peak. What a great service he did on Mount Carmel. But now that he is confronted with death, that threat is too much for him. When he hears the message of Jezebel, he flees, afraid of his life. Where is the fearlessness of the man who dared to stand up for God against 850

false prophets and an ungodly king and the mass of a doubting people? This only happens when you start thinking about yourself and no longer about God. It happens when you get disappointed with the results of your service. Now he has brought the people back to God and the only answer is that they want to kill you! Elijah is the disappointed servant. Is this not recognizable to all who may serve the Lord?

It says that Elijah “saw” (as the Hebrew text may read) what Jezebel is planning. He ‘sees’ the great danger hanging over his head and he sees it alone. He sees not to the LORD. And because he sees not the LORD, but only the danger for his life, he flees. The man with an enormous spiritual victory falls prey to the fear of a woman. What happened to Elijah here also happened to Peter when he walked over the water. “Seeing the wind” (Mt 14:30) he did not see the Lord anymore, and so things went wrong. He then no longer lived in faith but by sight (cf. 2Cor 5:7). This is also happening with Elijah.

The Spirit of God writes to us what kind of man Elijah is: “A man with a nature like ours” (Jam 5:17). He who has been afraid of nothing becomes afraid of his life. So it is with every servant. They have their peaks, followed sometimes by a low point, a breakdown. What is the reason for this with Elijah? Is it because of disappointment in the reaction of the people or of Ahab? It seems that he forgets that the LORD brought him to that great deed. He also forgets that he has to leave the consequences to the LORD. The result is that he is only occupied with himself.

The Lord Jesus also knew disappointment (Isa 49:4a; Mt 11:20-24), but how different is His reaction (Isa 49:4b; Mt 11:25). There is no self-pity with Him, but He gives everything and Himself over “to Him who judges righteously” (1Pet 2:23). He experiences everything with His God and takes everything out of His hand.

Elijah comes to Beersheba, which means ‘well of the oath’. However, it does not remind him of it. He leaves his servant there. But God does not leave His servant, and follows Him.

#### **Verses 4-8 | Under a Juniper Tree**

*4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and*

said, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers." 5 He lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, "Arise, eat." 6 Then he looked and behold, there was at his head a bread cake [baked on] hot stones, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 The angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you." 8 So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Elijah goes into the wilderness, sits under a broom and wishes to die. In his wish to die, it already sounds that he thinks he is better than his fathers. God does not answer his prayer, for God has other, higher plans for his end on earth. This is how God often deals with our prayers. In the meantime, however, Elijah still has to learn and do a few things, learn about himself and God, and do something about his succession. A servant has never ceased to be taught and service must be transferred. God will continue His work, even if we are no longer confident in it.

Elijah is at the end of its strength. Many servants know that feeling. It makes you despondent when there is no result or when expected results fail. It can also be the same with the prophetic service in the meeting. It is about the servant introducing God to the church and not himself. It is exhausting to maintain oneself and to be important oneself. Elijah considers himself better than his fathers. Whoever is allowed to perform a certain service must be aware that he is no better than others.

When Elijah had to hide from Ahab, God used ravens and a widow to take care of him. Here God uses an angel, possibly it is the Lord Jesus Himself. This is how God is towards His servant who is completely down. There God comes to him. God is personally busy taking care of Elijah. He gives him food and grants him his sleep, just as He has given food and rest to a whole people for forty years.

The angel touches him and Elijah wakes up. It is a gentle touch. There are no words of reproach, but words of encouragement to get up and eat. Elijah gets a bread cake, not meat. The bread cake speaks of the Lord Jesus in His life on earth, of His humanity. It is a bread cake baked on coal. It represents the Lord Jesus, tried by God in the circumstances of life. The

grain offering speaks of the Lord Jesus as Man on earth, which we see in Psalm 16, which we can call 'the psalm of the grain offering', presented in a special way.

There is also a jar of water for his refreshment and also for cleansing. The water is a picture of the Word of God. By reading God's Word we are refreshed and our thoughts are also cleansed of self-pity. Water in a jar represents the Word of God in our lives.

God makes sure that Elijah gets the strength to go further. He encourages him to eat twice what he has prepared for him. God always gives us the power to do what He asks of us. Spiritual food gives strength for the way; we cannot go without it.

Food gives Elijah the power to go "to Horeb, the mountain of God". Elijah is on his way to God through the wilderness, a journey of forty days and forty nights. The Lord Jesus was also in a desert, forty days and forty nights, but He is there with the devil.

### **Verses 9-14 | At Horeb**

*9 Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD [came] to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." 11 So He said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; [but] the LORD [was] not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, [but] the LORD [was] not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake a fire, [but] the LORD [was] not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing. 13 When Elijah heard [it], he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice [came] to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 Then he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."*

Elijah enters a cave at Horeb. Moses has also been in a cave (Exo 33:22). Moses also had a problem and that of the judgmental God against a godless people on the one hand and the gracious God Who wanted to spare His people on the other hand.

After Elijah had spent the night in the cave, God asked him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" That should force him to reflect. Elijah, however, is full of himself and what one wants to do to him, and that while he has so dedicated himself to the LORD, and this alone. The whole forty-day journey did not change his mind. He is still the same disappointed prophet.

He is charging Israel before God. The people are very unfaithful to God and to His prophets, and even the one who is left, they want to kill. What a people! He has forgotten that there are several faithful. To God this is a serious matter, which is evidenced by the fact that God cites this pleading against Israel with Him in the New Testament (Rom 11:2a-4). God does so with no fault of any Old Testament believer except with what Elijah does here. Here Elijah is a prosecutor of the people. In the New Testament many believers are quoted from the Old Testament, but only their acts of faith come to the fore there. Elijah is a negative exception.

Then he must stand before the LORD (verse 11). That is where the Lord wants each one of us to be: before Him. There the LORD passes by. But before this happens, some impressive events take place. The LORD first sends a great wind, then an earthquake, and then a fire. They are manifestations of His power. Every time it says that the LORD was not in it. Maybe Elijah thought: "How impressive such manifestations of God's power would be if you could go to the people with them!" But, and this is decisive, *God would not be in it.*

So where can the LORD be found then? He shows Himself in "a sound of a gentle blowing". Elijah remained unmoved when he saw the power of God, perhaps with a sense of excitement. But as he hears the sound of that gentle blowing, he wraps his face. Here he sees himself before God, Who shows Himself to him as the merciful God. There is nothing that makes a man so small as to be confronted with a gracious God.

It is not the time of judgment that is represented in the different elements – wind, earthquake and fire. This seems to appeal to Elijah, but the LORD is

not in it, not yet. Now He is still in grace dealing with His people and with His servant. This is shown by the sound of a gentle blowing. It is not about impressive, deafening manifestations, but about peace and quiet.

Again the question is asked: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And, incomprehensibly if we don't know ourselves a little, Elijah answers with the same words. Rocks can be broken, but breaking hearts is more difficult. Elijah says with his remarks that with his death the testimony before God has disappeared from the earth. He has no eye for the 7,000 whom God sees.

### Verses 15-18 | Three Commissions for Elijah

*15 The LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; 16 and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. 17 It shall come about, the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall put to death. 18 Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."*

When Elijah, so to speak, has submitted his resignation as a prophet to God, God accepts it. He gives him some commissions to finish his service. He must anoint three people.

Again God says "go" (verse 15; 1Kgs 18:1), but now to return on his way. The first thing he has to do is to anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Elijah does not carry out this task personally, but through Elisha. Hazael is anointed by Elisha. This king will become a means of disciplining God's people, for the people are unfaithful and deviated from God.

Besides Hazael, Jehu must also be anointed. Also this anointing was not done by Elijah personally, but by Elisha. Jehu will kill him who has escaped the sword of Hazael. That is how it happened. Jehoram, who had escaped Hazael, was killed by Jehu.

The third task of Elijah is to anoint Elisha. Elisha belongs to the 7,000 that God has left. Elijah does, however, fulfil the task of anointing him. That is to say that he appoints Elisha as his successor by means of a symbolic



act. It is unique in the service of the prophet that he has a successor. Elisha replaces Elijah.

With Elisha we see the principle of grace. We don't read that Elisha killed anyone. Elisha does not kill by the wind, the earthquake and the fire, as Hazeal and Jehu will do, but lets the sound of gentle blowing be heard.

### Verses 19-21 | The Calling of Elisha

*19 So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs [of oxen] before him, and he with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him and threw his mantle on him. 20 He left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" 21 So he returned from following him, and took the pair of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the implements of the oxen, and gave [it] to the people and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah and ministered to him.*

Of the three commissions God has given, Elijah has personally only appointed Elisha as his successor. There he goes first, and not to Hazeal and Jehu who are mentioned earlier by the LORD. The story continues immediately with the calling of Elisha, the third and last part of the Divine command.

This does not mean the end of Elijah's own service work. We read about him again in 1 Kings 21, where he denounces Ahab the judgment in the vineyard of Naboth (1Kgs 21:17-22), and also in 2 Kings 1, where he denounces Ahaziah's death (2Kgs 1:3-4). For Elisha, these years, in which he lives in the proximity of the prophet and serves him, have undoubtedly been a good time to prepare for his own task.

The anointing of Elisha is done in a symbolic way. The symbolic act of Elijah in the calling of his successor is that he throws his mantle on him (verse 19). The gesture is telling enough. With this he tells Elisha to succeed him. He doesn't persuade Elisha to follow him; he leaves that to the LORD. Elisha must draw the conclusion himself.

Elisha receives the mantle of the prophets from Elijah's hand and will in the future be allowed to wear it (2Kgs 2:12-13). This mantle also plays an

interesting role later on, when Elijah is taken up into heaven. The water of the Jordan divides to both sides as soon as Elijah and later Elisha hit the water with the mantle (2Kgs 2:8,14). The Jordan, which ends in the Dead Sea, can be called the Death River. The power of death must give way to the power of God that reaches farther than the limits of death.

While Elijah, which means 'my God is Yahweh', is described as the prophet of judgment, Elisha, which means 'my God is salvation', is pre-eminently the prophet of grace. Every time we see him healing and saving. Where he appears on the stage, there is life and hope.

Elisha participates in the spirit of Elijah when he sees him go to heaven. Thus we have been given part in the Spirit of Christ after His glorification in heaven. In the power of that Spirit we can fulfil our calling and task. When Elisha is called to follow Elijah, he is busy on the land. Even now, God is still calling people in the midst of their busy work to give it up and to give their time and strength to Him (cf. Mt 4:18-22).

Elisha must have been a rich farmer. He has to give up a lot. We see this also with Moses and Paul who also gave up all natural benefits for the Lord. God calls Moses when he is in the most privileged position. Moses gives up that position for "the reproach of Christ" (Heb 11:24-26). In the same way, Paul gives up an enormously privileged position in the religious world.

If people give up their jobs and want to go into the work of the Lord because they do not like their jobs, it is not from the Lord. For example, a businessman whose business is going badly must not give up doing business in order to do the Lord's work. He must consult with the Lord on how to improve his business.

Elisha is plowing with twelve oxen in front of him. He is at the twelfth pair of oxen. God calls him where he is, at the twelfth pair of oxen. The number twelve is emphasized. It recalls the altar that Elijah built and for which he used twelve stones (1Kgs 18:31). The number twelve makes us think of all the people of God. Twelve pairs of oxen point out that God wants His whole people to serve Him.

Elijah throws his mantle on Elisha's. From now on, Elisha shall no longer go through life as a farmer, but as a prophet. God calls whomever He wills,

and He calls where He wills. He calls honorable and He calls low people. He calls farmers to plough in the fields of this world and then sow the seed of the Word of God. He calls fishermen to make them fishers of people. God is sovereign and His calling is living and powerful.

Elijah does not convince Elisha with words to follow him. Through a gesture Elisha is brought into exercise. To persuade a person to serve the Lord without his heart and conscience being exercised only brings misery.

Elisha first wants to greet his father and mother and say goodbye to them. He asks Elijah for permission to do so. Elijah does not answer this question. He does not ask Elisha to be held accountable. He leaves it a matter between Elisha and God.

God's calling often intervenes deeply in existing situations and relationships. Calling is not without obligation and can lead to a break with family members or close friends. We also see this in the life of Elisha. He has to say goodbye to his family, his father and his mother (verse 20). He willingly follows and leaves his oxen, just as later the disciples abandon everything they possess in order to follow the Lord Jesus. Even though he is rushing after Elijah, he had the problem of his family relationships: "Let me kiss my father and my mother, then I want to follow you."

The prophet's answer is permissive, but it clearly reminds him also of God's calling, which can no longer be undone: "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" The wording of this answer is a bit vague. Elijah leaves it to Elisha. Elisha didn't have to *follow* Elijah so much, but *succeed* him.

In the Gospels we read about someone who wants to follow the Lord Jesus, but makes it a condition: "'I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home" (Lk 9:61). Presumably he wants to use this as an excuse to postpone the following of the Lord. But the Lord, Who knows and understands the hearts, then answers him as follows: "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:62).

God's calling doesn't allow any delay. This calling requires a determination of the heart to serve the Lord and the setting of certain priorities. The kingdom of God must come first in our lives. Happily with Elisha there is

no hesitation to follow. He is prepared to put his hand to the plough, no longer in the field of his father but in the 'field' of God, the working field of the twelve tribes of Israel. Although from a human point of view he is facing an uncertain future, God gives him a much greater field of work than the one he leaves behind.

Elijah's response is responded to by Elisha by taking a radical decision. We do not read that he has been to his parents. It can be. What we read is that he completely breaks with the past. He does not hesitate. He burns all his bridges, as it were. That's how he starts his new task. He certainly did not begin to perform signs and miracles under Israel. He must first listen to the words of the prophet Elijah and, among other things, take care of his personal needs (2Kgs 3:11). He starts with simple work, but to live near the prophet gradually prepares him for other tasks.

This principle also applies to us. Living in the presence of our Lord and Master and listening to His Word form the necessary basis to fully equip us "for all good work" (2Tim 3:16-17).

## 1 Kings 20

### Verses 1-6 | Ben-hadad Besieges Samaria

*1 Now Ben-hadad king of Aram gathered all his army, and there [were] thirty-two kings with him, and horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria and fought against it. 2 Then he sent messengers to the city to Ahab king of Israel and said to him, "Thus says Ben-hadad, 3 'Your silver and your gold are mine; your most beautiful wives and children are also mine.'" 4 The king of Israel replied, "It is according to your word, my lord, O king; I am yours, and all that I have." 5 Then the messengers returned and said, "Thus says Ben-hadad, 'Surely, I sent to you saying, "You shall give me your silver and your gold and your wives and your children," 6 but about this time tomorrow I will send my servants to you, and they will search your house and the houses of your servants; and whatever is desirable in your eyes, they will take in their hand and carry away.'"*

A believer like Elijah can have their highs and lows. A wicked man like Ahab has only lows, despite so much evidence of God's goodness. This chapter also shows this. God is good to Ahab, but he ignores it and reacts to it in pure willfulness.

In this chapter we hear nothing from Elijah. He has resigned and the LORD has accepted his resignation. He still has three tasks to complete. His service is over, although we hear from him once more. We do come across several prophets in this history. We also see that Ahab hasn't changed. In this history God gives Ahab the opportunity to deal with a great enemy, Aram or Syria. He doesn't do that and then dies later by the hand of the Syrians. An evil spared by us will not spare us and we will perish by it.

Yet something has changed because of the Carmel. The people have been reminded that there is a God in Israel. Also the hearts of the people are inclined towards God again. Then God sends blessing. That is astonishing when at the same time we see how little the people do with it. Here we see a gracious God. With a small trace of repentance God shows grace. We will also see this with Ahab in the next chapter. God also proves that He is the holy God.

The kings who go with Ben-hadad will be tribal princes. All cities have their own king. Syria is an important enemy of the ten tribes. They besiege Samaria. The enemy does not want to continue the siege and proposes a compromise, in which he sets the conditions. He proposes to Ahab to escape further siege and starvation.

Here we see that Ahab hasn't changed. When Ben-hadad attacks him and makes a foolish proposal, he accepts it. Ahab is prepared to extradite his wives and children, as long as he stays out of harm. He even calls Ben-hadad "my lord". He does not think about taking refuge in God. He accepts the proposal. Because of this he would also have to hand in Jezebel.

In his hubris Ben-hadad makes another demand. He wants to send his servants into town to take away everything they want.

### Verses 7-12 | Ahab Consults the Elders

*7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land and said, "Please observe and see how this man is looking for trouble; for he sent to me for my wives and my children and my silver and my gold, and I did not refuse him." 8 All the elders and all the people said to him, "Do not listen or consent." 9 So 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.'" And the messengers departed and brought him word again. 10 Ben-hadad sent to him and said, "May the gods do so to me and more also, if the dust of Samaria will suffice for handfuls for all the people who follow me." 11 Then the king of Israel replied, "Tell [him], 'Let not him who girds on [his armor] boast like him who takes [it] off.'" 12 When [Ben-hadad] heard this message, as he was drinking with the kings in the temporary shelters, he said to his servants, "Station [yourselves]." So they stationed [themselves] against the city.*

Ben-hadad's second proposal panics Ahab. Now everything that is desirable in his eyes will be taken (verse 6). That goes too far for him. Instead of resorting to God, he calls together the elders with whom he consults as a man of the world. He is a weak man and cannot decide for himself. The elders advise him not to accept Ben-hadad's proposal.

In his answer to Ben-hadad, Ahab does not repeat the strong answer of the elders, but gives a weak answer. He reiterates his willingness to meet the first demand and once again calls Ben-hadad "my lord".

Ben-hadad has been agitated and now wants to take over the city. He poetically points to the enormous army he has. Ahab responds with a proverb. This saying means as much as: You shouldn't have a big mouth before you have achieved results. The saying we have for that is: You should not share out the bearskin before the bear is dead.

### Verses 13-21 | A Prophet Promises Ahab Victory

*13 Now behold, a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver them into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" 14 Ahab said, "By whom?" So he said, "Thus says the LORD, 'By the young men of the rulers of the provinces.'" Then he said, "Who shall begin the battle?" And he answered, "You." 15 Then he mustered the young men of the rulers of the provinces, and there were 232; and after them he mustered all the people, [even] all the sons of Israel, 7,000. 16 They went out at noon, while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the temporary shelters with the thirty-two kings who helped him. 17 The young men of the rulers of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out and they told him, saying, "Men have come out from Samaria." 18 Then he said, "If they have come out for peace, take them alive; or if they have come out for war, take them alive." 19 So these went out from the city, the young men of the rulers of the provinces, and the army which followed them. 20 They killed each his man; and the Arameans fled and Israel pursued them, and Ben-hadad king of Aram escaped on a horse with horsemen. 21 The king of Israel went out and struck the horses and chariots, and killed the Arameans with a great slaughter.*

Then a prophet appears on stage. Possibly the prophet is one of the 7,000, or one of the 100 hidden by Obadiah. It is God's concern that Ahab will know that He is the LORD. This will happen because He executes the judgment.

The prophet gives some indications on behalf of God how Ahab can win the battle. Miraculously Ahab listens to this, perhaps because he sees no other possibility. God comes to his aid in pure grace. Once again He wants to show that He is there. He is going to help Ahab in spite of everything, for the sake of the faithful in the people. Ahab's indifferent attitude does not prevent God from His intention to save his people despite this unwilling king.

Ahab is interested in this deliverance and informs how it will go. The prophet tells him that this will be done by a selection of young men. God uses the suitability of the persons, while it is clear that He Himself gives the victory, for there are few. We also see this with Gideon and his 300 men (Jdg 7:2,21). When asked by Ahab who should take the initiative to fight, the prophet answers that he should take the initiative.

Ben-hadad is so overconfident, that he allows himself to drink himself drunk in the middle of the day. He has no eye for the danger that threatens. Diffused by the drink, he thinks he can ward off this danger. His men have only to capture the men of Ahab.

It runs differently. The men of Ahab defeat every man they meet. They are inviolable to the men of Ben-hadad. That is only because of the LORD. When Israel was God's people, the people always won through Him. Never did the people gain a victory because they were the superior.

### **Verses 22-25 | The Prophet Informs Ahab**

*22 Then the prophet came near to the king of Israel and said to him, "Go, strengthen yourself and observe and see what you have to do; for at the turn of the year the king of Aram will come up against you." 23 Now the servants of the king of Aram said to him, "Their gods are gods of the mountains, therefore they were stronger than we; but rather let us fight against them in the plain, [and] surely we will be stronger than they. 24 Do this thing: remove the kings, each from his place, and put captains in their place, 25 and muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we will be stronger than they." And he listened to their voice and did so.*

When the battle is won, the prophet warns Ahab that Ben-hadad is not definitively defeated. Ben-hadad will come back. The prophet tells him to consider what to do. He has a year to do so.

Ben-hadad is also considering. He and his men evaluate the situation. A proposal is being made that will be successful in the next battle. Ben-hadad is advised to fight in the plain, because "their gods are gods of the mountains". This makes it a battle between God and the idols. Here we hear how the servants of the king of Syria think about God. Today theologians also



speak so about God, as a god of a primitive people, a god they themselves invented.

### Verses 26-29 | Israel Beats the Syrians Again

*26 At the turn of the year, Ben-hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. 27 The sons of Israel were mustered and were provisioned and went to meet them; and the sons of Israel camped before them like two little flocks of goats, but the Arameans filled the country. 28 Then a man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because the Arameans have said, "The LORD is a god of [the] mountains, but He is not a god of [the] valleys," therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" 29 So they camped one over against the other seven days. And on the seventh day the battle was joined, and the sons of Israel killed [of] the Arameans 100,000 foot soldiers in one day.*

When the armies have positioned themselves opposite each other, a man of God comes. He tells Ahab that the battle that is about to break loose is a battle in which the LORD will prove His Name. Because His Name is at issue, He gives Israel victory.

It is not about the victory in itself, but about getting to know the power of the LORD. God does not only allow things, but works them to show that He is there. Thus Job did not accept what happened to him from the hand of Satan, but from the hand of God (Job 1:21b).

They defeat a huge number of enemies. The LORD mocks those who mock Him. As for Ahab, he has another lesson to learn. As in verse 13, it is written in verse 28 that Ahab should acknowledge by the victory, that God is the LORD.

### Verses 30-34 | Ahab Spares Ben-hadad

*30 But the rest fled to Aphek into the city, and the wall fell on 27,000 men who were left. And Ben-hadad fled and came into the city into an inner chamber. 31 His servants said to him, "Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings, please let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will save your life." 32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins and [put] ropes on their heads, and came to*

*the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let me live.'" And he said, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." 33 Now the men took this as an omen, and quickly catching his word said, "Your brother Ben-hadad." Then he said, "Go, bring him." Then Ben-hadad came out to him, and he took him up into the chariot. 34 [Ben-hadad] said to him, "The cities which my father took from your father I will restore, and you shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria." [Ahab said], "And I will let you go with this covenant." So he made a covenant with him and let him go.*

What does Ahab do after the victory? He is surprised to hear that Ben-hadad is still alive. He even appears to be pleasantly surprised. A living enemy is a more beautiful trophy than a dead one. At the same time he calls this enemy of God and His people "my brother". However, he is not his brother, but his enemy. He proves kindness to the wrong person. God loves man, but not his sins. Therefore He commands man to repent and He also gave His Son. God loves His children, but not their wrong deeds.

Ahab is persuaded by Ben-hadad to a misplaced show of grace and lets him live. Ben-hadad gives him back a number of cities and makes a covenant with him. Ahab does not deal definitively with this enemy of God and His people. In this way he proves his insensitivity to the will of God.

The wicked Ahab fraternizes with a wicked man. The application for us is that we do not condemn evil in our brother if we live in evil ourselves. It will be more so that the evil in the brother attracts us, because it sends out a signal that we can continue doing evil.

Ben-hadad talks beautifully and promises Ahab a trading place. Ahab takes the bait and lets him go. He has the king of Syria in his power. God has given him in his power to kill him, but he lets him go. Thus Saul spared Agag, and also the cattle, while God had commanded to eradicate everything. Then Samuel kills that evil power (1Sam 15:8-9,32-33). Ahab should have done that here.

### **Verses 35-43 | Ahab's Covenant Judged**

*35 Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to another by the word of the LORD, "Please strike me." But the man refused to strike him. 36 Then he said to him, "Because you have not listened to the voice of the LORD, behold, as*

soon as you have departed from me, a lion will kill you." And as soon as he had departed from him a lion found him and killed him. 37 Then he found another man and said, "Please strike me." And the man struck him, wounding him. 38 So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. 39 As the king passed by, he cried to the king and 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 for any reason he is missing, then your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' 40 While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." And the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided [it]." 41 Then he hastily took the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him that he was of the prophets. 42 He said to him, "Thus says the LORD, '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.'" 43 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and vexed, and came to Samaria.

This history may have ended for Ahab, but for God it is not. Ahab has made it clear that he does not acknowledge God, even after God has so graciously given outcome in his hopeless situation. He abuses grace as a reason for fulfilling his own desires.

We become witnesses of the preparation of a message for Ahab. A son of the prophets, a pupil-prophet, must go and bring Ahab the message from God that God will punish his failure. The pupil-prophet must make use of a similarity that he must play himself. For this it is necessary that another pupil-prophet beats him in such a way that he is wounded and must be connected. What the prophet has to do shows the seriousness of what Ahab has done. It is no small matter. The prophet must look like a soldier who comes out of battle wounded.

If the pupil-prophet to whom he asks to strike him refuses to do so, that refusal is punished with death. This shows the seriousness that the word of the prophet must be taken as the word of God. The man who refuses to strike the pupil-prophet is killed because he has not listened to the voice of the LORD. The prophet must have been known as such.

We must remember that this is not about two ordinary people, but about a prophet who tells another prophet to strike him. It must be known that the prophet who refuses, knows that it is a word of the LORD, but that he *will* not strike the other, against the word of the LORD. He chooses not to harm his fellow prophet, but with this he is disobedient to the LORD. This must be punished, given the seriousness of the situation. We see something similar with the man of God from Judah in 1 Kings 13. His disobedience is also punished with being killed by a lion (1Kgs 13:20-24,26).

We must not only fulfill our tasks that we understand and agree with, but we must also fulfill a task, simply because it is asked of us. We need to teach our children to obey, even if they do not understand or see the point in it. We should not always explain in detail to our children why we want them to do something. It is not about negotiations, but about teaching them obedience. The whole of society is a society of negotiation and only then doing. We must make sure that this spirit does not take hold of our families.

Then he asks another pupil-prophet to strike him, this one does. The other man strikes him so hard that he injures him. This may be to indicate that the prophet identifies with the pain God feels about the infidelity of the leader of His people. The prophet dresses his wound in a way that makes him unrecognizable. In this way he “waited for the king by the way”.

When the king arrives, he speaks to him. He asks the king for mercy because he has done something that costs him his life or a large sum of money. He tells what happened. He was “busy here and there” when the man he had to guard escaped. Being busy here and there is a bad thing for a soldier who must always be attentive.

When the prophet has spoken, Ahab passes judgment. With this he judges himself. This is also the case with David after his sin with Bathsheba, who, after a parable, passes judgment and is told: “You are the man! (2Sam 12:7a). Ahab should have struck Ben-hadad and will now be struck himself, just as the prophet who refused to strike the man of God was struck himself. He has been busy here and there, so he has been negligent in doing what he had to do.

The lesson for us is to remove the evil from the midst of the church (1Cor 5:13b), not only in view of the honor of God, but also in view of our own

salvation. If we don't stop the evil, it will grow and affect everything. Ahab let Ben-hadad go and will now die by Ben-hadad. God has never been merciful to evil. We see this in the judgment of His Son.

Ben-hadad himself has also come to an end. He is murdered by Hazael according to the word of the LORD to Elijah. Hazael suffocates him in a blanket (2Kgs 8:15).

The reaction of a man so graciously treated by God to the message he receives is terrible. God always bothers him. But he does not understand that it is to his own salvation. His reaction is a total rejection of all God's proofs of grace. If we react grumpily to God's actions with us we are in a bad mood. Then it turns out that we only think of our own pleasures and find God troublesome, Someone Who does not grant us our pleasures.

We may stand before the Lord and ask, "Lord, what is there of Ahab in my heart? Am I willing to give up all kinds of things, as long as they don't come up with things that I consider important? Do I recognize the proofs of Your help in the fight against the enemy, that I may honor You for the victory? Or did I make an alliance with the enemy somewhere?" We can pray: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way" (Psa 139:23-24).

## 1 Kings 21

### Verses 1-2 | Ahab Wants the Vineyard of Naboth

1 Now it came about after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which [was] in Jezreel beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden because it is close beside my house, and I will give you a better vineyard than it in its place; if you like, I will give you the price of it in money."

The words "after these things" herald a new phase in the life of Ahab and thus a new character in the service of Elijah. Elijah's service is closely linked to that of Moses. In the law are two parts. On the first tablet of stone the relationship to God is regulated. On the second tablet of stone is the relationship between the neighbors is regulated. The sins that people commit are sins against God or against their neighbor, whereby a sin against their neighbor is of course also a sin against God. The first sin in the history of man is a sin against God (Adam), the second sin is a sin against the neighbor (Cain).

Thus in the first part of Ahab's history we see the question of idolatry, which is sin against God. That issue was resolved at Carmel. Now Ahab's sin comes against his neighbor. He becomes a fratricide. We can also say of sin that it has two main characteristics: first, corruption – in which corruption is also divided into lust and lies – and second, violence. Ahab sins in this chapter in a way that sin comes to light in all these aspects. He *lusts* for his neighbor's piece of land and uses *lies* and *violence* to gain possession of it.

There are two instruments of evil: Ahab and Jezebel. With Ahab we see the lust and with Jezebel we see the lie and the violence. Here we see the history of Christianity or the kingdom of God, entrusted to the responsibility of man. The period of Ahab and Jezebel corresponds to the period of Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29), which is the period of the roman-catholic church since the Middle Ages. In that letter Jezebel is reproached because of her idolatry and fornication (Rev 2:20). This can be found in the first part of the period of Ahab and Jezebel.

Babylon the great is essentially the same as Thyatira, but in the end time (Revelation 17-18). Here we see sin against the neighbor, for the blood of the saints is in her. Here we see the violence. Martyrs are killed within the church by the leaders of the church.

This is what we see in this history of Naboth, a faithful one whose only "mistake" is to hold on to the inheritance of the LORD. That Ahab takes this inheritance, the LORD takes very seriously. Now that Ahab and Jezebel violate the brother, a heavy judgment follows. God also takes it very seriously when someone causes damage to the church of God (cf. 1Cor 3:17).

The same principles of the Middle Ages are still supreme in Christianity today. The leaders (Ahab) still try to rob the people of their heavenly inheritance. We also see the principle of Jezebel, the godless religion that resists the true servant of God. Man's religion always hates the religion of the Spirit. Many have lost their lives because they have held fast to Scripture and what God has given them. Ahab is the representation of a Christianity that is completely focused on the earth. We see Jezebel in the priests in the Middle Ages who misuse the name of God to kill the people of the church. Satanic forces are active in Christianity, which is increasingly characterized by roman-catholicism.

Ahab covets the vineyard of his neighbor, of Naboth. What Ahab wants is forbidden by the law. Each tribe and each family have received their own specific inheritance by allocation from the LORD. Only if a brother was impoverished he was allowed to sell his inheritance, but then in the jubilee year it returned to him, the original owner (Lev 25:13-34). However, Naboth is not impoverished and is therefore not forced to sell his inheritance.

He also rejects the offer of another vineyard. It is about him not for a more beautiful vineyard, but about his *own* vineyard; for he has received it from the LORD. In picture this suggests that we do not enjoy the joy of another. It is about one's own joy. Every believer has his spiritual blessings in the heavenly land. Every believer has his own experiences with the Lord, with his own fruits which he enjoys together with the Lord.

The prophet Micaiah speaks about this too. He speaks about the characteristics of the false leaders (Mic 2:1-2). But he also lets us hear how the LORD

intended it: “Each of them will sit under his vine And under his fig tree” (Mic 4:4). Each one has his own joy and righteousness that only he knows (cf. Rev 2:17b).

### Verse 3 | Naboth Refuses Ahab His Vineyard

3 But Naboth said to Ahab, “The LORD forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.”

Naboth is clear in his rejection of the proposal. It had to be. There are things that we should not think about, but that we should immediately and decisively say ‘no’ to. We must do this against any proposal that is tantamount to compromising something of the blessings of the land.

Naboth shows here the awareness that the land is not his, but that it belongs to the LORD and that he is steward over it. The fruit of his land is for the LORD. It is a vineyard, and wine represents joy which cheers God and men (Jdg 9:13). He refuses the offer to get another vineyard to replace it. Then it would be a piece of land that a man has given him and he has lost the land that God has given him. Never can what a person gives, bring real joy. Selling the land is also not an option. Naboth can’t be bribed.

Do we appreciate the blessings God has given us? Our blessings are in the heavenly places. There we are “blessed with all spiritual blessing ... in Christ” (Eph 1:3). They are all given to us to enjoy them together with the Father. How could we surrender these blessings for the enjoyment of earthly blessings? Then we would be very ungrateful to its Giver. We cannot give up these blessings without denying Him.

The enemy is cunning. He tries to focus our attention on all kinds of other things and not on “the things above, where Christ is” (Col 3:1). It is to be feared that many believers have exchanged their God-given ‘vineyard’, their spiritual blessings, for a ‘vineyard’ given to them by men. Then the feeling becomes important and the measure for experiencing blessing. If someone feels comfortable with a certain way of serving God, God also will be okay with it. But his will is not asked for.

### Verses 4-15 | Jezebel Lets Naboth to Be Stoned

4 So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he said, “I will not give you the



inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food. 5 But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "How is it that your spirit is so sullen that you are not eating food?" 6 So 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 a vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" 7 Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now reign over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." 8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city. 9 Now she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast and seat Naboth at the head of the people; 10 and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death." 11 So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent [word] to them, just as it was written in the letters which she had sent them. 12 They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the people. 13 Then the two worthless men came in and sat before him; and the worthless men testified against him, even against Naboth, before the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones. 14 Then they sent [word] to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned and is dead." 15 When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, 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."

Reactions like Naboth's are poorly received. Ahab behaves like a deprived child. He is a weakling who, as a spoiled child, always wants to have his way. He lies on his bed and does not eat. When Jezebel comes to him, she wants her husband to explain why he is so sullen. Ahab tells her what happened. Jezebel knows a solution for that. She promises Ahab that she will give him the vineyard of Naboth. She has her own methods for this. Ahab can already, as far as she is concerned, rejoice in his 'gift'. He can get up, eat and be cheerful, for she will make sure that he gets his way.

Jezebel is the strong, ruthless character that disregards God and neighbor. She goes unscrupulously towards her goal. In Jezebel's case, in her are present the full measure of murderousness to carry out her own will at all costs and especially at the expense of those who fear God.

Jezebel doesn't waste any time. A person like Naboth should be killed as soon as possible. She writes letters in the name of Ahab, seals them with the seal of Ahab and sends them "to the elders and to the nobles" of the city of Naboth. These high lords are as depraved as two worthless men who they let testify against Naboth by order of Jezebel. The nobles of the city do without a reply directly what is written to them.

They let two men who do not care about God or commandment themselves give a terrible testimony in a sham trial against a righteous man. Every word they accuse Naboth of is a word they are guilty of themselves in all their depravity. After this indictment Naboth is killed without any form of trial.

In what is done to Naboth here, he resembles the Lord Jesus. Just as one does with Naboth, one also does with the Lord Jesus. Also against Him two worthless people are sought as witnesses who can accuse Him (Mt 26:59-61).

When Naboth is killed, the elders and nobles send a message to Jezebel. Jezebel goes to Ahab with this message and tells him that he can take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, because "Naboth is not alive, but dead". Soon it will become clear how much she is mistaken. She does not take into account God for Whom all those who have died in faith in Him, the living God, live.

### **Verses 16-22 | Elijah Announces Ahab His Verdict**

*16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. 17 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it. 19 You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Have you murdered and also taken possession?"' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours."'" 20 Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And he answered, "I have found [you], because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD. 21 Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel;*

*22 and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked [Me] to anger, and [because] you have made Israel sin.*

Jezebel may think that Naboth is dead, but Naboth's God is not dead. Since 1 Kings 19 we have not seen Elijah anymore, but here he gets another assignment from God. Elijah is informed by God of what Ahab has done and must go and announce him the judgment.

What Elijah must say because the word of the LORD has literally been fulfilled. We see this in the history of Jehu (2Kgs 9:36-37). Jehu is on his way to kill the house of Ahab. Jehoram sees Jehu coming and goes to meet him and meets him "in the property of Naboth the Jezreelite" (2Kgs 9:21). This makes it clear that the people killed Naboth in his own property, apparently not in the vineyard. We also read there that the sons of Naboth were stoned with him (2Kgs 9:26), as a result of which also the heirs were exterminated and no more claim can be made on the land of Naboth.

At the place where Ahab thought he would finally enjoy undisturbed his unlawfully acquired possessions, Elijah meets him. Again that wretched Elijah. He can drink that man's blood. He calls him "my enemy". So much so is Ahab filled with hatred toward this representative of God. Yet he is powerless against the man of God.

Without the introductory "thus saith the LORD" Elijah pronounces the judgment in the name of God. First Elijah confirms that he has found him. Thus every man will be found by God. No one can make himself untraceable before the omnipresent God. That Ahab sees Elijah like this is because he "sold" himself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD. He has sold his soul to Satan. All the fame and honor he has as king, he has got from Satan. The price he has paid is that of his soul. He who has so surrendered himself to the power of Satan, sees someone who reminds him of God as an enemy.

Elijah lets Ahab know what the LORD will do with him and his descendants. He refers to what happened to the kings who ruled before him. Ahab knows the history of the people and therefore knows what this means for him. He knows what happened to those houses and it will happen to his

house as well. How important it is that we learn from history, that we let it warn us and take the lessons to heart.

### **Verses 23-26 | The Judgment on Jezebel Is Announced**

*23 Of Jezebel also has the LORD spoken, saying, 'The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.' 24 The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven will eat." 25 Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him. 26 He acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the sons of Israel.*

Unlike with the two kings mentioned, the wife of Ahab is also announced the judgment, which will inevitably come (2Kgs 9:30-37). The reason is given in verse 25. There has not been a more godless king than Ahab. He owes this characterization above all to his wife Jezebel. His wickedness reaches this absolute low point because he has listened to his even more wicked wife Jezebel.

### **Verses 27-29 | Ahab Humbles Himself**

*27 It came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently. 28 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, [but] I will bring the evil upon his house in his son's days."*

After the description of the announcement of the judgment follows the reaction of Ahab. He humbles himself as he has never done before. He was struck in a small corner of his heart and shows that to his surroundings. God's reaction to this is extraordinarily striking. Although God knows that his repentance is not deep and is only temporary, He gives respite from judgment. That is grace. The small trace of repentance is reason for God to prove patience.

Then the word of the LORD comes again to Elijah. Now not with message but with a communication for Elijah personally. The content is telling. God

tells Elijah that Ahab really humbled himself before Him. That had to be said, otherwise you wouldn't believe it. Although this humiliation is only temporary, it is a reason for God to postpone judgment. In this we see that God answers the slightest trace and the most superficial form of true humility with great grace.

The LORD introduces His communication to Elijah with the words "do you see?" This indicates that Elijah's attention is being drawn to this in particular. He will not have thought it possible and therefore did not expect it. It is a lesson for us that we should always keep our eyes open for a work of God's grace in cases where we least expect it.

# 1 Kings 22

## Introduction

This chapter concludes the history of Ahab. He was a rich and prosperous king (verse 39), who also brought prosperity to his people. However, that is not the way God describes history. God writes history about the heart. The world describes the great deeds of a man it honors; God describes the evil deeds of people who do not take Him into account.

## **Verses 1-4 | Ahab Wants Jehoshaphat to Join Him**

*1 Three years passed without war between Aram and Israel. 2 In the third year Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. 3 Now the king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we are still doing nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram?" 4 And he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?" And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."*

By the grace of God there is no war for three years. It is a grace that follows the grace at Carmel and the showing of grace to Ahab for his repentance, which gives him respite of judgment.

What we read from verse 2 onwards is a history that is almost verbatim repeated in 2 Chronicles 18, because this history is also about Jehoshaphat, a king of the two tribes. Here the histories of the ten and two tribes come together.

The reason is not beautiful. There are friendly relations between the faithful and good king Jehoshaphat and the wicked Ahab. Jehoshaphat makes three covenants. He makes a covenant with Ahab, with the son of Ahab, Ahaziah – that is a business covenant - and with another son of Ahab, Joram or Jehoram. He should never have had those friendship-like relationships with a bad king like Ahab, because by doing so he has fellowship with evil.

Jehoshaphat goes to Ahab. That means a literal descent from Jerusalem to Samaria, because Jerusalem is high, on a mountain. It is also and espe-

cially a spiritual descent. Jehoshaphat has related himself with Ahab with marriage ties (2Chr 18:1). Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, marries Ahab's daughter, the corrupt Athaliah. So Jehoshaphat and Ahab become friends. Jehoshaphat goes to Ahab, without invitations, on his own initiative. On that occasion Ahab organizes a party (2Chr 18:2). That will be a trap.

Jehoshaphat is there, but very cunningly Ahab talks to his servants – and not directly to Jehoshaphat – about an attack on the king of Aram or Syria. When the proposal is incidentally launched, Ahab asks Jehoshaphat if he wants to join him. Without thinking, Jehoshaphat makes an unconditional promise that he will certainly go along. He promises his cooperation in the strongest possible way and fully commits himself to this evil king. He takes on an unequal yoke (2Cor 6:14-15).

### Verses 5-8 | Jehoshaphat Wants to Consult the Lord

*5 Moreover, Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire first for the word of the LORD." 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 refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for the Lord will give [it] into the hand of the king." 7 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here that we may inquire of him?" 8 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. [He is] Micaiah son of Imlah." But Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so."*

It seems that Jehoshaphat suddenly thinks of the LORD. He wants to hear a word from the LORD. He should have done this first. But how are we? Have we not often made decisions, and have we taken a certain path, and only then asked the Lord to go with us? How important it is to be led through the eye of the Lord and not to be like a horse that needs to be corrected because we always want to go the wrong way (Psa 32:8-9). We follow a zigzag route. We must first ask the Lord for His guidance and only then go that way.

Jehoshaphat did not have to ask if the proposed road is the right one, because the road is evil. We should ask if we do not know whether the road is a good one. If it is perfectly clear that we are going the wrong way, we

should not pray. The Lord does not listen to such a prayer and says that we should not pray, but listen to the Scriptures. Praying for something against the Scriptures is asking the Lord to bless a way of disobedience.

In order to comply with Jehoshaphat's request, Ahab has no fewer than four hundred prophets to show up. However, they are not prophets of the LORD, but prophets who moderate themselves to speak in the name of the LORD. The prophets are not just people who mean well, but who see it wrong, no, they are people who speak through demons. They are not false prophets because they speak the wrong word, but because they are controlled by evil spirits.

These people are not interested in the will of the LORD, but in the advantage of the king. It may be that these are the four hundred priests of Astarte who have escaped judgment and who have now adopted a different name. The LORD is for them a new idol. Ahab chooses teachers who speak what he wants to hear (2Tim 4:3-4). We must be careful not to listen only to the speakers we like to hear because they say things we like to hear.

We may ask the Lord to keep us from any compromise with people who profess to belong to God's people, but only for their own benefit. We too must learn to listen, not to a message that sounds good, but to God's Word. As for our speaking, it is necessary to ask the Lord's help to speak only God's Word and not what one likes to hear.

It is clear that the church is not going in the right direction. We see that a gospel is being preached with a message that things will be better and more beautiful. It is all presented more gloriously: 'There will be a revival', this will happen and that will happen. They propose: 'Go into battle, enter into discussion with the world, start governing, join in.' There are some 'doomsayers' who go against this. Of them is told that they preach nothing but doom and disappointments and that the world will be worse off. Whosoever preaches the Word of God in a warning manner will be seen as such.

Ahab is also interested in hearing what he should do. He has a very primitive idea of God. If he only gets a favorable message, then, he thinks, the gods are forced to give him the victory. The prophets prophesy under the influence of demons. This is evident from what Micaiah says later in this



chapter. They are wizards or witches who open themselves up to demonic powers that use them to respond to people's superstition.

The greatest witch is Jezebel. She is a woman who not only believes in idols made of wood and stone, but she is a charmer of evil spirits who could bring this evil to God's people. Every witch had to be eradicated inexorably, because they can cause so much evil from the realm of darkness. Dark powers are controlling the land. That tidal wave has also come over the Netherlands. They are not fairy tales, but what was once Christian is increasingly falling prey to pagan superstition.

However, Jehoshaphat is not satisfied. Deep inside him is still the awareness that the true God is also there and that He must be asked. Therefore he asks for "a prophet of the LORD", emphasizing "of the LORD" because the other prophets are not. This means that Ahab will again have to deal with a prophet of the LORD. Not only Elijah is sent by God on his way, and not only Elijah is his enemy, but also every other true prophet of the LORD. The man who speaks the truth is an enemy of Ahab.

Ahab's enmity also concerns Micaiah. He sees in Micaiah someone who brings evil upon him. In his folly and short-sightedness, he attributes the evil that Micaiah professes to Micaiah himself. This is the superstition or blinding work of Satan who excludes God. It does not come to mind in Ahab that evil is in himself and is the reason for the truth that the prophet speaks.

### Verses 9-14 | Micaiah Is Called

*9 Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah." 10 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in [their] robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. 11 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron for himself and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these you will gore the Arameans until they are consumed.'" 12 All the prophets were prophesying thus, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper, for the LORD will give [it] into the hand of the king." 13 Then the messenger who went to summon Micaiah spoke to him saying, "Behold now, the words of the prophets are uniformly favorable to the*

*king. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably.”*  
14 *But Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I shall speak.”*

While Micaiah is picked up, the false prophets prophesy. That will have happened, just like at the Carmel, with the necessary rituals. False prophets not only speak, they also want to impress through all kinds of spiritual manifestations, injuring themselves and getting out of mind. That is what happens in all pagan peoples. In the same way, all kinds of elements of idolatry have entered the Christian worship service. People are brought into a trance by sensational manifestations, which they falsely claim to be manifestations of the Spirit. Also deafening music is used that causes a narrowing of consciousness, causing actions to be performed that will not be remembered later on.

One of the false prophets, Zedekiah, dramatically foretells the victory of Ahab. The horns and words he uses are reminiscent of what Moses says about Joseph in his blessing, which he pronounces about the twelve tribes (Deu 33:17a). He imitates Moses. In that way pious statements are often made, but they serve as a varnish to make the lie acceptable. This sounds like music to people’s ears. It’s like the Christmas carols echoing through the shops. The words are about the Child in the manger, but the music is meant to put the people to sleep and encourage them to buy.

The man who has to pick up Micaiah, tries to persuade him not to have an aberrant opinion of what the false prophets have said. Micaiah must not become a killjoy. Today’s prosperity preachers are also the people who speak pleasant words. The question is not whether God speaks, but what people like to hear. God is not King, the customer is king.

But Micaiah is not influenced by the opinions of the many. He knows doubtless that he goes to the lion’s den and that the whole atmosphere is filled with demons. However, he goes in full confidence that the LORD is with him. However great the threat of the enemy may be, the power of the LORD is infinitely greater. Micaiah does not yet know what to say, but he trusts that the LORD will let him know what to say (cf. Lk 21:14-15).

Do we dare to apply that to ourselves or do we go with the big crowd that with beautiful words gives us the feeling that we are somebody? If the

latter is the case, grace cannot work because with such an attitude we pass by God. The prophets in the Old Testament did not bring a good message at all. Jeremiah's message, for example, that the people will be deported, is not accepted either. Although it is not experienced in this way, it is a great grace from God that He always gives someone who speaks words in which His heart and thoughts clearly emerge.

### Verses 15-28 | The Message of Micaiah

*15 When he came to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" And he answered him, "Go up and succeed, and the LORD will give [it] into the hand of the king." 16 Then the king said to him, "How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" 17 So he said,*

*"I saw all Israel  
Scattered on the mountains,  
Like sheep which have no shepherd.  
And the LORD said,  
'These have no master.*

*Let each of them return to his house in peace.'"*

*18 Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" 19 Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left. 20 The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that. 21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' 22 The LORD said to him, 'How?' And he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice [him] and also prevail. Go and do so.' 23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you." 24 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?" 25 Micaiah said, "Behold, you shall see on that day when you enter an inner room to hide yourself." 26 Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; 27 and say, 'Thus*

*says the king, "Put this man in prison and feed him sparingly with bread and water until I return safely." 28 Micaiah said, "If you indeed return safely the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Listen, all you people."*

There Micaiah stands opposite four hundred prophets, representatives of the religious class and opposite the highest rulers, the representatives of the whole people. Because the rulers rule over God's people, they are also religious leaders. The sight alone must make a great impression on Micaiah. The grim, hostile atmosphere will have struck him. The loner opposite the mass. The messenger who has picked him up has already tried to influence him to speak as the others and not to speak as a loner opposite all.

By the power of faith and trust in the LORD, Micaiah does not succumb to the pressure. On the contrary, he mocks the whole company. This is clear from his first answer. In this answer he seems to say the same as the other prophets have said and thus seems to join them. But there is a heavy sarcastic undertone in what he says. He imitates the four hundred and pretends to be one of them. Ahab feels that too. He realizes that what Micaiah says is meant to be sarcastic. He is therefore not satisfied with this answer. He wants to know what the real message of Micaiah is.

Micaiah answers with what he has seen and heard in a vision. He describes that the intended mission will result in a scattering of the people. The reason for this is that the people have no leader who trusts in God. A leader who lets the people trust in God keeps God's people together (Num 27:16-17). A leader who does not take God into account, forsakes the people and the sheep become the wolf's prey (Jn 10:12). With the Lord Jesus is concern for sheep that have no shepherd (Mt 9:36) and to His disciples He speaks of the striking down of the shepherd and the scattering of the sheep (Mt 26:31).

After this prophecy, Ahab addresses Jehoshaphat and points out that he is right with what he said about Micaiah. Do you see that Micaiah is a prophet of doom? But Ahab looks no further, blinded eyes by the prince of darkness as he has.

But Micaiah is not finished yet. He has another message. From that message it appears that there is an invisible world that lets these four hundred

prophets say what Ahab likes to hear. But Micaiah may stand before Ahab as a prisoner, the word of the LORD cannot be bound. Ahab served the idols and with them the demons. Baal does not exist as a dead idol; Baal however does exist because of the demons behind it. In the invisible world, demons are working together to mislead people with death as the end result.

We can make an application for today. In the great Christianity it is no longer about what God's Word says, but about what one likes to hear and what connects to the experience. The charismatic movement is particularly responsible for this. In many cases we have to conclude that there are spiritual powers behind this that leads people away from Christ and from the Word of God because it is purely about the feeling of man.

It is becoming increasingly clear how wrong certain influences are, especially by songs that are sung. Several songs contain statements about, for example, the atonement, which remove aspects of the atonement of the Lord Jesus or highlight them in a way that is not in accordance with the Word. We must clearly warn against this, because it leads people away from obedience to the Word and from the uniqueness of Christ and His work. Therefore we must also be clear to ourselves by asking about the will of God in every situation, which comes down to asking: What does the Word of God say?

Micaiah says from a new vision that the demons are ultimately under the authority of God. What Micaiah sees in the vision, is presented to us humanly, so we can understand it. We are witnessing a discussion that is starting. One says this, the other that, all very human. Then a spirit comes and says: "I will entice him." After a question from the LORD and an answer from the spirit, the LORD says: "'You are to entice [him] and also prevail. Go and do so.'" We clearly see that the LORD is in charge of this whole event. He finally determines the deployment of evil spirits and the success in what they undertake. The evil spirits also serve His purpose, against their will.

We see the calamity that God has decided about Ahab. That calamity is certain (verse 23), there is no change to be made. It is also certain how that calamity will occur: "The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?'" (verse 20)?

Through this message, the uprising in the heart of Zedekiah becomes public. Zedekiah claims that what he said is by the Spirit and that it cannot be by Micaiah. His pretentious words are accompanied by violence. He strikes Micaiah on the cheek. People of the world cannot assume that the four hundred are wrong and that one is right. Micaiah would be the only one who has the Spirit of the LORD? There is a unanimous testimony of the masses. Are only those few faithful Christians right?

Micaiah does not protest against the mistreatment. He only says that it will become clear that his words are truth. Zedekiah will notice this when he flees and is anxious to find a place where he can be safe from judgment, a place he will seek in vain.

The 'reward' Ahab has for Micaiah for speaking the truth is being locked up in prison. The words spoken by Ahab with the order for confinement give Micaiah another reason to testify. There is no fear to be noticed with this man of God. Violence and prison do not lead him to a change in his message. He does not compromise, but preaches the pure Word of God. Every abuse leads him to pronounce a confirmation of what he has said.

In all of this there is no moderation or self-exaltation. He points out that he has spoken God's words and that their truth will be proven in the fulfillment of what he has announced. He even dares to add that he will prove to be a liar when Ahab returns in peace, so when his words will not come true (cf. Deu 13:1-4; 18:20-22).

In his closing words he no longer addresses Ahab, but all peoples. He makes his words a testimony to all peoples. Later another prophet, Micah, will speak the same words (Mic 1:2). It is a word that relates to the Lord Jesus and the time when He will be famous among the peoples.

### **Verses 29-33 | Ahab and Jehoshaphat Go to War**

*29 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up against Ramoth-gilead. 30 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into the battle, but you put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle. 31 Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, "Do not fight with small or great, but with the king of Israel alone." 32 So when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "Surely it is the king of Israel," and they turned aside*

*to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out. 33 When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.*

Jehoshaphat, too, does not seem to have been really impressed by Micaiah's speech. He lets himself not be warned, we do not hear a word from him that he will not go. In any case, he does abort the undertaking, but goes to war with Ahab. He probably has to go along out of himself, because he has committed himself to go along. Jehoshaphat knows everything that awaits him, what is going to happen, but he can't go back.

Jehoshaphat seems to be completely at the mercy of Ahab. Ahab determines the tactics and Jehoshaphat follows slavishly. Ahab will disguise himself, but he tells Jehoshaphat to keep his royal clothes on. Ahab thinks that by disguising himself he can escape the judgment that has been announced. This is primitive superstition. He also behaves cowardly, because by letting Jehoshaphat keep his royal clothes on, he knows that the enemy will focus mainly on Jehoshaphat, who can be recognized as king.

God's Spirit tells us that the king of Aram or Syria has commanded his men to focus only on the king of Israel. Ahab and Jehoshaphat know nothing about this order. The enemy will search until he finds the king. It's only about him. When the battle burns loose, it is not surprising that the enemy's arrows are on Jehoshaphat. After all, he is recognizable as king. For the enemy he is the king of Israel. That's the result of his going along with Ahab. The world no longer sees a difference between those who fear God and those who do not fear Him. What a warning for us.

When Jehoshaphat notices that the enemy is aiming for him, he cries out for help (verse 32). In the description of this history in 2 Chronicles 18 it then follows: "And the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from him" (2Chr 18:31). What a grace from God. Whosoever calls unto Him in his need shall be helped by Him. It is a miracle of the LORD that they discover that he is not the king of Israel and turn away from him.

### **Verses 34-40 | The Death of Ahab**

*34 Now a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take*

*me out of the fight; for I am severely wounded.” 35 The battle raged that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot in front of the Arameans, and died at evening, and the blood from the wound ran into the bottom of the chariot. 36 Then a cry passed throughout the army close to sunset, saying, “Every man to his city and every man to his country.” 37 So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria. 38 They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood (now the harlots bathed themselves [there]), according to the word of the LORD which He spoke. 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 which he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 40 So Ahab slept with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son became king in his place.*

Just as Jehoshaphat is spared by a miracle of the LORD, so Ahab is killed by a miracle of the LORD. Without the soldier, who at random draws the bow and shoots the arrow away, knowing who he strikes, he strikes Ahab deadly. Ahab is not killed by a stray arrow. No soldier shoots in the wild. It is an arrow controlled by the LORD to strike Ahab deadly.

Ahab is not instantly dead. He instructs the driver of his chariot to drive away from the battle. The wound appears to result in death. Ahab loses more and more blood, life flows away from him. He remains in the turmoil of battle, without opportunity to dress the wound. Finally, he dies because the blood continues to flow from the wound.

It shows how accurately the LORD fulfils His word. When Ahab has died, he is taken to Samaria and buried there. The car with the blood of Ahab is washed “by the pool of Samaria”. The pool is given a further indication: it is the place where “the harlots bathed themselves”, these are the temple harlots, women who serve as temple prostitutes in the Baal’s service. By this we are reminded at the death and funeral of this wicked king of this horrible religion and its deep depravity. In this way Ahab disappears from the stage and so he remains in the memory.

### **Verses 41-50 | Jehoshaphat King Over Judah**

*41 Now Jehoshaphat the son of Asa became king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. 42 Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was*



*Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 43 He walked in all the way of Asa his father; he did not turn aside from it, doing right in the sight of the LORD. However, the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense on the high places. 44 Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel. 45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might which he showed and how he warred, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 46 The remnant of the sodomites who remained in the days of his father Asa, he expelled from the land. 47 Now there was no king in Edom; a deputy was king. 48 Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber. 49 Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships." But Jehoshaphat was not willing. 50 And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of his father David, and Jehoram his son became king in his place.*

In a few verses the government of Jehoshaphat is described. In 2 Chronicles this is much more extensive. In the books 1 Kings and 2 Kings the emphasis is on the history of the kings of Israel. Jehoshaphat is a God-fearing king, but one who has unfortunately several times connected himself with godless Israel and its king. For example, he has allied himself with Ahaziah to build ships (2Chr 20:36). But even before the ships have, so to speak, left the port where they were built, God lets the fleet perish. Jehoshaphat seems to have learned from that. If Ahaziah the son of Ahab wants to do anything together with him, he refuses (verse 49).

After his death he is succeeded by his son Jehoram. Unfortunately, this son does not walk in the footsteps of his father's faith (2Chr 21:5-6), which despite the various mistakes Jehoshaphat made, was clearly present with him.

### **Verses 51-53 | Ahaziah King Over Israel**

*51 Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. 52 He did evil in the sight of the LORD 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, who caused Israel to sin. 53 So he served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done.*

When Ahab has died, he is succeeded by his son Ahaziah. He is no exception to all the kings of Israel. He also does what is “evil in the sight of the LORD”. His bad way has three aspects: walks “in the way of his father”, “in the way of his mother” and “in the way of Jeroboam”. He unites all the evils of His predecessors within himself. Thus evil increases. In such a way you can only do what is evil in the sight of the LORD and provoke Him to anger.



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