

Title: **1 KINGS**
 Christ the Prince of Peace

Text: 1 Kings 11:11

Subject: *Solomon's Influence upon Israel*

Date: Tuesday Evening—April 15, 2003

Tape # X-53b

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Introduction:

(Proverbs 4:23) "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."

Salvation is entirely the work and gift of God's free grace in Christ. Our only standing before God is Christ. His blood alone is our atonement. His righteousness alone is our righteousness. We have no other righteousness but his. **Our personal obedience or disobedience has absolutely nothing to do with our acceptance before God.** Believers are "*accepted in the Beloved,*" only in the Beloved, and once accepted never unaccepted. "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*"

Yet, we must never imagine that obedience and disobedience to the revealed will of God are matters of indifference. Obedience on the part of God's own is so very important (to the honor of our God, the cause of Christ, and our own souls) that the Lord God was determined to kill Moses if he did not circumcise his sons, though his wife was adamantly opposed to it (Ex. 4:24-26).

How foolish and selfish we are when we presume that our behavior no one but ourselves! None of us is an island. We all influence others for good or for evil. This is something we ought to keep in mind all the time. You and I are responsible, not only for ourselves but also, for those who are influenced by us. Those

to whom God has providentially given positions of authority over others are particularly responsible to lead those who are under them by example.

- Political Figures—A nation is morally elevated or debased by the moral character of its president and national leaders.
- Pastors—A local church usually follows the example of its pastor in doctrine, in behavior, and in faithfulness.
- Teachers—Children are, to a great degree affected for life by their teachers.
- Parents—Mothers and Fathers mold the lives of their children by everything they do.—Temper—Conduct—Divorce—(Ellisons, Bradleys, B. D.).

KEY

The importance of our influence upon those around us is set before us dramatically in the life and reign of Solomon as it is described in 1 Kings. Chapters 1-11 give us a picture of Solomon's greatness and glory as the king over all Israel for forty years. Then, chapters 12-22 display the horrible consequences of Solomon's disobedience upon the kingdom. These chapters set before us the first eighty years of the divided kingdom, a kingdom divided because of the evil influence of Solomon's life. The key to understanding the last half of 1 Kings is found in God's Word to Solomon in 1 Kings 11:11.

(1 Kings 11:11) "Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant."

Still, the message of 1 Kings is Christ, of whom Solomon was in many ways a type. If you read Psalm 72, which was "A

Psalm for Solomon,” you will immediately see that the things there spoken of Solomon could only find their fulfillment in Christ, the Prince of Peace.

ADONIJAH

First Kings begins with David still on the throne. He was old and dying. Solomon’s brother, Adonijah tried to seize the kingdom for himself, though David made it clear that Solomon was to succeed him as king. Adonijah’s scheme failed and Solomon was established as king. But there are two things connected with the opening of 1 Kings that I cannot fail to mention.

First, David’s family suffered as the consequence of his sin in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba until the very day of his death, and even beyond his death, just as Nathan had told him it would (2 Sam. 12:10). When he sent for Bathsheba, I am sure, the thought never crossed David’s mind that he would bring such trouble to his family and God’s kingdom by the indulgence of his lust. What a sad, sad bequeathal he made to his family by his behavior.

Second, when David was dying his servants found a beautiful young woman to come, lay in his bed, to nourish him, hoping that she might rouse his physical passions and thereby help their beloved king recover.

Needless to say, this incident has raised many eyebrows. But the situation was not as it might appear. There is no record that Bathsheba disapproved, no record that the Lord disapproved, and no record of disapproval of any kind from anyone. This was not a perverse device concocted by perverse men. This young lady, Abishag, married David on his deathbed. How can that be stated so confidently, when there is no record of the marriage? In chapter two, Adonijah made one last ditch effort to seize the

throne from Solomon by deceit, which resulted in his just execution. Adonijah persuaded Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, to ask him to let marry Abishag. Bathsheba did not see through the thing, but Solomon did. Solomon knew that if Adonijah married Abishag he would have a rightful claim to the throne. That could not have been the case if Abishag had not been married to the King (2:22).

OVERVIEW

1 Kings then begins with the reign of Solomon and takes us through the terrible division of the kingdom under Rehoboam his son. Then we see the various dynasties within the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the lives of the kings of the single dynasty of the house of David in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

In each case, the focus is always on the king, because it was the king's relationship with God that determined the condition of the nation. When the king walked with the Lord, God's prosperity and triumph rested upon the kingdom by God's blessing. The rains came at the right time, the crops grew and the land flourished. The nation prevailed over their enemies even though the enemies came in allied forces.

But when the king disobeyed God and led the people into the worship of other gods, immediately famines broke out, plagues came, invading armies came, and the kingdom fell into hard times spiritually, morally, and politically. The kings who walked in obedience were types of Christ, such as David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, and Josiah. But the kings who walked in disobedience were pictures of the anti-Christ, leading the people away from God and into apostasy.

SOLOMON

Before his death David called Solomon before him and solemnly charged him to walk in the ways of the Lord his God, and to teach his children after him, that the kingdom might endure in safety and prosperity forever (2:1-4). He told Solomon that he must wisely and justly deal with Joab, his brutal and bloody general, and Shimei, who violently cursed David on the day he fled from Absalom (vv. 5-9). David kept his word concerning those wicked men by sparing their lives; but they were ultimately executed at the command of Solomon. He also made Zadok the priest, replacing Abiathar and fulfilling of the prophecy given to Eli many decades before.

As I said, Solomon was, in many ways, a magnificent type of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. His kingdom was a kingdom of peace.

(1 Chronicles 22:9) "Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon (Peaceable), and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days."

Solomon's peaceable kingdom was the result of David's mighty conquests. And it is because of Christ's conquest over all our enemies that we now enjoy the glorious reign of his peace in our hearts. All who are under the dominion of grace, all who are ruled by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ are ruled in peace.

- Christ has made peace.
- Christ is our peace.
- Christ gives us peace.

(Romans 14:17) "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Solomon was also a king to whom the Lord God gave wisdom beyond measure. His wisdom as the king of Israel also foreshadowed Christ, who is made of God unto us Wisdom, in “*whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*”

Psalms 72 describes the glory of Solomon and the glory of his kingdom. But that Psalm, as I said, finds its ultimate fulfillment only in our great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Like Solomon, our Mediator is King and possesses his kingdom because the Lord God made him King and gave him his kingdom** (1 Kings 5:4; Ps. 2:8; John 17:2).

(1 Kings 5:4) "But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, *so that there is* neither adversary nor evil occurrent."

(Psalms 72:7-9) "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. (8) He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. (9) They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust."

(Psalms 72:11-15) "Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. (12) For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and *him* that hath no helper. (13) He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. (14) He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. (15) And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; *and* daily shall he be praised."

(Psalms 72:17-18) "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in

him: all nations shall call him blessed. (18) Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things."

THE TEMPLE

Solomon's most significant achievement was the building of the temple in Jerusalem. He was raised up specifically for that purpose (1 Chron. 28:5-10).

(1 Chronicles 28:5-10) "And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. (6) And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him *to be* my son, and I will be his father. (7) Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day. (8) Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave *it* for an inheritance for your children after you for ever. (9) And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. (10) Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do *it*."

In the fourth year of his reign, Solomon began to build the temple, Four hundred and eighty years after the Israelites came out of Egypt. They were now settled in the land of promise, enjoying a season of rest from warfare, and tremendous prosperity. Solomon enlisted the assistance of his father's friend, Hiram the king of Tyre, from whom he obtained huge quantities

of cedar and cypress wood as well as skilled workers in bronze and gold (5: 1-12).

The stones for the temple were quarried from beneath the Temple mount and were finished within the quarry so that "*neither hammer nor ax nor any iron tool (was) heard in the house, while it was being built*" (6:7). This is a picture of God's work of grace in the building of his spiritual temple, the church (Eph. 2:20-22).

(Ephesians 2:20-22) "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

There is no clanging noise of human works heard in the building of God's holy temple. The salvation of God's elect is altogether the work of his free grace in Christ. We contribute nothing to it by our works (Eph. 2:8-9).

The temple was built along the same pattern as the tabernacle in the wilderness; but it was double the size and was indescribably more magnificent than the tabernacle. Yet, like the tabernacle, the temple's beauty and splendor was to be seen from within. Almost everything within was covered with pure gold.

It took Solomon seven years to build the temple. But we are told, "*Solomon was building his own house thirteen years*" (7:1). That fact is recorded for a reason. Any time our time, talents and possessions are devoted more to our own comfort and pleasure than they are to the cause of Christ, the glory of God and his kingdom, they are misused; and that misuse indicates a horrible self-centeredness on our part.

- The temple was a picture of God's true house and abode, the church (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 3:15).
- Solomon's temple was costly and glorious.
- It is set before us throughout the Book of Hebrews as a picture of our Savior's great work of redemption (Heb. 9:12; 10:11-14, 18-22).
- It took Solomon seven years to build it.
- When it was finished the glory of God filled the holy place, so much so that the priests could no longer do their work (8:10-11).

When the temple was complete, it was solemnly dedicated to God. The ark of the covenant was brought out of the tabernacle and installed within the holy of holies in the temple. When the priests pulled out the staves by which the ark was carried for the last time and came out from the holy place after installing the ark in the holy of holies, a cloud of glory from the Lord suddenly filled the temple, and when Solomon saw this evidence of God's immediate presence with his people, he was overwhelmed with joy and arose to bless the people (8:15-21).

Then kneeling (v. 54) before the altar of burnt offering and raising his outstretched hands, Solomon uttered a tremendous, instructive **prayer of dedication**, recognizing the faithfulness of God and the peril of departing from his ways (vv. 22-53). His understanding of God's infinite greatness, majesty and glory was manifest in his words, "*Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house that I have builded*" (8:27). Then he outlined the many circumstances by which the people might be caused to turn away from the Lord and the method by which they might recover as they turned again to God in repentance, looking to Christ who was symbolized by the ark and mercy seat in the temple.

When Solomon arose from prayer he pronounced another blessing upon the people and offered thousands of sacrifices (8:54-64). At the close of the day, the joyful people returned to their homes. Never was there a greater day in the history of Israel.

The Lord appeared again to Solomon in a dream (9:2-9) and assured him that his prayer had been heard. He assured Solomon that his promises to David his father were renewed to him, upon the condition that he and his descendants walked before the Lord God in faithful obedience. If they failed to do so, the temple would be torn down and the people would be driven from the land and become a byword and a proverb among the nations. Indeed, that is exactly what happened.

Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches, and in wisdom. He made silver to be as gravel stones in the street (11:23, 27). He was truly a remarkable type of Christ our King.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

Chapter ten records the famous, beautiful story of the Queen of Sheba coming to Jerusalem to meet Solomon. “*Behold, a greater than Solomon is here!*” What a picture this is of a sinner coming to Christ.

- She heard of Solomon’s greatness.
- She came to him from a country far away. We “*who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*”
- She communed with him of all that was in her heart and proved him with many questions.
- Solomon told her everything she wanted to know and gave her all her desire, according to his royal bounty!
- There was no more spirit in her.
- When she had seen all, she said...

(1 Kings 10:7-9) "Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. (8) Happy *are* thy men, happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom. (9) Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."

The gospel of Christ is that true report of the grace and glory of God, which we heard in the land of our alienation from God. It was by the hearing of the gospel that we were brought to Christ. By the glad tidings of the gospel Christ was revealed in us and we were granted life and faith in him by the grace of God (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). Like Solomon, our Savior has granted us all that we could desire and has given all the fulness of his royal bounty "*according to his riches in glory.*"

SOLOMON'S GREAT FAILURE

Solomon was a great king. He was a great man, a man in whom God had put his grace, upon whom the Lord God poured out his Spirit. He was, as we have seen, a great type of Christ, the Prince of Peace. But Solomon was only a man, no more. He was a sinner saved by grace. But he was still a sinner.

- Solomon went down to Egypt for help. He made a league with Pharaoh.
- He took Pharaoh's daughter to be his wife.
- He multiplied horses.
- He multiplied wives.
- His wives turned his heart to serve other gods.
- Therefore the Lord God divided the kingdom, and constantly increasing wars between Israel and Judah ensued. Idolatry

became rampant. Moral degeneracy followed. Homosexual prostitutes were advanced in the land!

(1 Kings 11:11) "Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant."

The Lord appeared to Solomon a third time to announce to him that the kingdom would be torn from him and given to another. Yet for David's sake it would occur after Solomon died, during the lifetime of Solomon's son. Immediately, adversaries began rising up against Solomon, including Hadad the Edomite on the south, Rezon in the land of Syria on the north, and from within the kingdom itself, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite who lifted up his hand against the king.

Ahijah the prophet was sent by God to meet Jeroboam outside of Jerusalem. Ahijah took off his new garment and tore it into twelve pieces. He handed ten pieces to Jeroboam, symbolizing that he would be given ten of Israel's twelve tribes. Only two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) would remain with the house of David.

God's promised blessing to David was extended to Jeroboam, too, upon condition of obedience. If he would walk in David's ways, believing God, he would have David's mercies. When Solomon heard of this he tried to kill Jeroboam, but he fled into Egypt and stayed there until Solomon died.

After forty years of unparalleled magnificence and prosperity, Solomon died and was buried in the city of David, his father. What a sad, tragic end to a life that had begun with great promise and possibility!

A DIVIDED KINGDOM

Solomon, by his disobedience, (Yes, by the disobedience of an obedient, believing, faithful man!), brought the kingdom into a division from which it never recovered. He stands as a beacon to warn us of the sure, far reaching, and long lasting consequences of disobedience.

When Solomon's son, Rehoboam, came to Shechem to be anointed king, Jeroboam led the people who had returned from Egypt to ask that the new king grant them relief from many of the burdens which Solomon had placed upon them. The king sent them away for three days and consulted with both the old men who advised his father and the young men with whom he grew up. With despotic pride he followed the counsel of the young men and told the people that their burdens would be increased (12:1-15). The result was widespread revolt. The ten tribes chose Jeroboam to be their king, fulfilling God's word to Solomon.

JEROBOAM

Jeroboam set up his capital at Shechem. Fearing that the people might eventually return to the authority of Rehoboam if they continued to worship at Jerusalem, he made **two golden calves** and led the northern tribes into idolatry, from which they never recovered. He set one of the calves up in Dan in the far north and the other at Bethel, at the border with Judah. Calling Israel to worship, he said, "*Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*" (v. 28). This was exactly what **Aaron** had done at the foot of Mount Sinai, when he made a calf of gold that the people began to worship. They called that calf, Jehovah (Ex. 32:5), not openly denying that Jehovah was their God, but foolishly misrepresenting him as no more than the gods of the nations around.

That is exactly what the most deceitful forms of idolatry do today. It is but a form of godliness that denies the power of God. It retains the words and phrases and the ordinances of the gospel, but denies the character of God, representing him as one who is pathetically helpless without the aid of men. Every form of freewill/works religion that makes the will and work of God dependent upon the will or work of man for its efficacy follows the deadly sin which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, introduced to the Northern Kingdom.

From this moment on, David and Jeroboam became representative of two spiritual principles that are seen throughout the rest of the nation's history. In Judah a good king "*walked in the ways of David, his father.*" Every good king served the Lord God, tearing down idols, destroying the practice of idolatry and establishing the worship of God. In Israel, the northern kingdom, the evil kings "*walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.*"

It is significant that in Israel, the northern kingdom, there was not even one good king. Israel's throne was occupied by a succession of kings who walked in idolatrous way of Jeroboam. They frequently gained the throne by murdering their predecessor. Yet, God graciously sent prophet after prophet to the rebel nation. He who is God indeed is God "*who delighteth in mercy!*"

In Judah there were a few good kings among many who were evil, but those good kings, who "*walked in the way of David,*" stand out like lights in the darkness. Among them were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah and Josiah.

When the Lord God sent his prophet to Jeroboam, denouncing his wickedness and announcing the immediate overthrow his altar, **Jeroboam stretched out his hand** to order the prophet's arrest. When he did his hand withered; and he could not draw it back. He begged the prophet to pray for him, and he did. The hand was restored; but Jeroboam was yet without repentance toward God (13:1-6).

When the prophet left for home, he disobeyed the word of the Lord and entered into another prophet's house to eat and drink with him after the man lied and told him God had sent him. There he was told that he would die as a result of his disobedience. On the way home a lion met him and killed him. Though no excuse can be made for the lying prophet, there is a solemn lesson here that must never be overlooked.—When we know what God would have us do, in any circumstance, we must not confer with flesh and blood, and we must not be persuaded to disobedience, even though an angel from heaven or another prophet suggests a change. Learn this, too.—Even faithful prophets, like faithful Solomon, are only sinful men at their best.

God's judgment fell upon Jeroboam, just as the faithful prophet had told him it would. Ahijah, the prophet, sent word to Jeroboam by his wife that God who had exalted him to power and made him king over Israel would, because of his sin, remove him from the throne. The sign of it would be the death of his son. As Jeroboam's wife brought the news to her husband the child died. We know nothing else of Jeroboam's twenty-two year reign of wickedness and idolatry. His son, Nadab, took the throne after him.

REHOBOAM

Things were not much better in the southern kingdom of Judah, where Rehoboam reigned (14:21). His seventeen year reign was

also characterized by the introduction of idolatry and the reappearance of homosexual prostitutes within the land. God sent the king of Egypt to invade the land in judgment. He took all the treasures of gold out of the temple and the king's palace. Bronze shields and vessels replaced them to remind the king of the deterioration of the worship in the land. War raged continually between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, and ultimately it is recorded that Rehoboam, too, slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David.

ASA

Abijam, his son, reigned in Rehoboam's stead. But he only reigned for three years, before he died. Then one of the good kings, Asa, began a forty-one year reign. Asa eliminated homosexuality in the land and destroyed the idols. He even destroyed his own mother's gods and removed her from the office of queen because of her idolatry (15:9-13). Without question, Asa's bold zeal for God and his people preserved Judah, for the time, from the decay and corruption, which was rampant in Israel.

Israel suffered continually under the rule of wicked, idolatrous kings who "*walked in the way of Jeroboam.*" When Ahab, the vilest of them all, ascended the throne, with his even more vile wife, Jezebel, God sent a prophet whose name rings through history as a prototype of John the Baptist—Elijah.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

All mere men fail in many ways. But man's failure never nullifies God's purpose or prevents his faithfulness. He is ever on his throne, unceasing in goodness, unfailing in faithfulness, and unchanging in his purpose. Solomon failed; but God intervened in mercy.

By taking Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon, as his wife Ahab brought the worship of Baal into Israel. "*Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him*" (16:33). Yet, where sin abounded grace abounded more.

- **Elijah appears on the scene, as out of nowhere** (chap. 17).

The next four chapters (17-20) describe the constant, faithful, unflinching boldness of God's prophet, Elijah and the constant, stubborn rebellion of Ahab in his defiance of God's right to be God.

We know nothing about Elijah's previous life, except the fact that he came out of Gilead. He suddenly appeared on the scene and confronted Ahab with an announcement of divine judgment. He told Ahab that it there would be neither dew nor rain for three years; and that when the rain did come it would only be by his word, as the prophet of God (17:1).

A CHOSEN GENTILE

Severe drought began immediately. The Lord sent Elijah to the brook Cherith where he was miraculously fed by ravens and protected from the fury of Ahab and Jezebel. Then God sent him to Zerephath on the coast of Sidon, where he lived with a widow and her son.

The Lord Jesus holds this woman before us as a monument of God's unalterable purpose and method of grace (Luke 4:24-26). Ahab and all of Israel forsook the Lord God for idols; but God's purpose of grace was unaltered. This poor, Gentile widow was one of God's elect who must be called. So God sent his prophet to her, confronted her with the claims of Christ as her Lord, and

she surrendered all to him (17:13-14). But she lost nothing by giving up her life to Christ. Rather she was constantly supplied with all her need (17:15-16). Even when it appeared that she would lose her only son, he was raised to life by the power of God (17:17-24). And through this dear, elect lady God's prophet and God's cause were maintained in the world.

What a picture this is of God's saving purpose of grace!

- When the Jews despised Christ and rejected God's revelation of his grace in him, God sent the gospel to the Gentiles.
- By the preaching of the gospel the Lord God is calling out his elect from among the Gentiles.
- Bowing to Christ, trusting him, we find in him a constantly supply of all our souls' needs, even in this desolate world.
- And now, through chosen Gentiles, the purpose and cause of our great God is maintained in this world (Rom. 3:3-4).

- **Elijah and the prophets of Baal** (chap. 18).

After three years Elijah was sent back to confront Ahab, who had been looking for Elijah for three years, wanting to kill him, came out to meet him.

(1 Kings 18:17-18) "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* (18) And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim."

Elijah then challenged Ahab to gather all the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. There he would show Ahab and all Israel that Jehovah alone is God. Then we have that story that is so familiar. It is a story full of drama, majesty and instruction.

On one side are four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the groves. On the other side Elijah stands alone, crying out, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him" (v. 21). Elijah mocked the prophets and mocked their helpless, useless god, as they vainly cried out for Baal to descend and burn up the sacrifice that waited on the altar. Elijah mocked them by suggesting that perhaps their dumb idol was asleep, or had gone on a journey, or even had gone to find a bathroom to relieve himself.

Then, it was Elijah's turn. After drenching his sacrifice with water he prayed and God answered by fire from heaven, devouring the sacrifice and licking up the water. Elijah's prayer was very short, but remarkably instructive.

(1 Kings 18:36-39) "And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I* have done all these things at thy word. (37) Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again. (38) Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench. (39) And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God."

When it was proved that the prophets of Baal were false prophets, they were put to death. Then, in answer to the prayer of Elijah, the rain, which had not fallen for three years, now came in great torrents.

- The Lord kept his Word and preserved his kingdom, in spite of everything!

When her prophets were slain and her gods were proved to be nothing but useless idols, Jezebel was enraged. She threatened Elijah with immediate death (19:2). Then, Elijah too proved himself to be nothing more than a man. He was God's true prophet; but, like all God's servants, he was only a sinner saved by grace.

That bold, lion-hearted man, who was so courageous and triumphant on Mount Carmel, in the face of eight hundred and fifty false prophets, fled in fear before a single woman. Still, the Lord God graciously met his needs, encouraged his faith, upheld him in grace, made himself known to him anew, and used him as his prophet. Even when we believe not, "*he abideth faithful.*"

Being assured that there were yet seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, Elijah was then sent to anoint Hazael to be king of Syria, Jehu to be king of Israel, and Elisha to be prophet in his own place (vv. 9-18). The obedient prophet returned to the land and, finding Elisha plowing with oxen, cast his mantle upon him. After offering a sacrifice, Elisha took up his new role as servant to the old prophet.

The Lord God protected Israel from Ben-hadad and the Syrians (chap. 20), but sent a prophet to Ahab to announce his doom. Ahab returned to his house, "sullen and vexed" (20:43).

The selfish, self-serving king of Israel coveted the vineyard of his neighbor, Naboth. When Naboth refused to sell it to him, Jezebel, steal the vineyard for her sulking husband. This base idolater falsely accused Naboth of cursing both God and the king and had him killed. Persecutors never lack for imagination in the appearance of justifying their villainous deeds

But when Ahab went to take possession Naboth's vineyard Elijah confronted him again, with all the boldness he had in days gone by. When Ahab heard God's message, he showed great outward signs of repentance before the Lord; but. Though it was only an outward show of repentance, God promised not to take the kingdom from his house until after he was (21:29).

The final chapter in both Ahab's life and the Book of I Kings is about Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab. Ahab the king of Israel, wanted Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, to go to war with him against Syria. The two kings, sought the will of God by the counsel of four hundred false prophets who cowered before Ahab. The hireling prophets told them what Ahab wanted to hear, and assured them of victory. But Jehoshaphat insisted upon consulting Micaiah, a true prophet of God. Micaiah, being a faithful prophet, told them the mind of God and prophesied that Ahab would be killed in the battle.

(1 Kings 22:34) "And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded."

True to his cowardly character, Ahab placed Jehoshaphat in a conspicuous place during the battle, hoping that the Syrians would mistake Jehosaphat for himself and be killed. But "*a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness.*" (Our God is the God of circumstances. There are no accidents in his world.) Ahab's body was brought Samaria and the dogs licked up his blood from the chariot according to the word of God. The final account of 1 Kings briefly summarizes the reign of Jehoshaphat of Judah, who

walked in the good way of his father Asa. This story is picked up and continued in the second book of Kings.

ELISHA'S CALL (chap. 19).

But there is one other event, recorded in chapter nineteen, that must not be overlooked. Here we have the record of Elisha's call. Elisha's ministry was a source of healing and of blessing. In that he was typical of Christ.

- **Elijah passed by him.**

As he was plowing his fields with his servants, he saw the outlawed prophet of Gilead coming toward him.

- Elijah cast his mantle upon him.

Passing by him, Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha. Elisha knew the meaning of this sign. Though he was a very wealthy man, he had now been called of God to be Elijah's servant, to follow him, minister to him in lowliness and humility, and perhaps even to die with him. Immediate decisiveness was demanded. Elisha immediately counted the cost and made his choice.

- After seeking Elijah's permission, he kissed his parents good bye, burned his oxen, gave everything away, and followed the Lord, serving his prophet Elijah, totally abandoning his former life.

That is exactly what happens when the Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, passes by chosen, redeemed sinners and casts upon them the skirt of his righteousness, calling them to life and faith. The sinner called by grace willingly forsakes all and follows Christ (Luke 14:25-33).

And that is exactly what happens when the Lord God calls a man to preach the gospel. The man called of God to the work of the gospel confers not with flesh and blood, but willingly forsakes all for Christ, that he may give himself to the most noble of all callings.

(Proverbs 4:23) "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."