

1 KINGS

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BACKGROUND

1 Kings tells the history of Israel from 971 to 852 B.C. Beginning with the final days of David's reign, it records Israel's glory days during the reign of Solomon, then the tragic civil strife that resulted in a separation between the 10 northern and two southern tribes in 931 ([1 Kings 12](#)). It ends with the reign of the northern king Ahaziah, where 2 Kings takes up the story.

1, 2 Kings, originally one document, *interprets* the history it reports, showing how Israel's spiritual decline led to a decline in its political fortunes (see [Purpose](#)).

AUTHOR

Unknown, perhaps Jeremiah (see [2 Kings: Author](#)). The author probably made use of court records such as *The Book of the Acts of Solomon* ([1 Kings 11:41](#)), *The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel* ([1 Kings 14:19](#)), and *The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah* ([1 Kings 14:29](#)).

DATE

The statement in both 1 and 2 Kings that a nationwide lack of righteousness had existed "to this day" ([1 Kings 12:19](#); [2 Kings 17:23](#), [34](#), [41](#)) suggests that most of the events of these books were recorded in the final years of the southern kingdom, c. 630-600 B.C.

LOCATION

Probably Jerusalem, considering the author's use of court records. *The History of the Kings of Israel* must have been brought to Jerusalem after the fall of the north.

PURPOSE

- Israel's kings needed to be reminded of the "prophetic" interpretation of their nation's history: Obedience to God brings reward; disobedience brings punishment (see [1 Samuel: Purpose](#)). This is illustrated repeatedly through the lives of Solomon and his royal successors.

- The prophetic principle applied to all Israelites as well, with the lives of the kings serving as examples.
- With its many reports of the fulfillment of specific prophecies, 1, 2 Kings has reminded believers down through the ages of the power and truth of God's Word (see exposition on the following passages: [§ 1 Kings 2:26-27](#); [§ 1 Kings 13:1-10](#); [§ 1 Kings 15:25-32](#); [§ 1 Kings 16:8-14](#); [§ 1 Kings 16:29-34](#)).

UNIQUE FEATURES

- 1 Kings records a great tragedy as Solomon, who was "wiser than anyone else" ([1 Kings 4:31](#)), gave himself over to the temptations of wealth and women ([1 Kings 10:14-11:13](#)).
- It records the building and dedication of Israel's first Temple, which lasted nearly four centuries (968-586 B.C.). Compare 5-8 with [2 Chron. 2-7](#).
- During Solomon's reign, Israel attained its largest size ever—much larger than present-day Israel. Solomon not only solidified but also expanded the gains made by David ([1 Kings 4:24](#); see exposition on [§ 2 Samuel 8:10-18](#)).
- [1 Kings 17:22](#) records the first of eight bodily resurrections (besides that of Christ) recorded in the Bible (see exposition on [§ Acts 20:7-12](#)).

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

(See [2 Chronicles: Comparison with Other Bible Books](#).)

OUTLINE

1. THE TRANQUIL YEARS: THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF ISRAEL ([1 Kings 1:1-11:25](#))
 1. Solomon's coronation and early triumphs ([1 Kings 1-2](#))
 1. Solomon's triumph over Adonijah his brother ([1 Kings 1](#); [1 Kings 2:13-25](#))
 2. David's charge to Solomon; his death ([1 Kings 2:1-12](#))
 3. Solomon's triumph over Abiathar the priest ([1 Kings 2:26-27](#))
 4. Solomon's triumph over Joab the general ([1 Kings 2:28-35](#))
 5. Solomon's triumph over Shimei the troublemaker ([1 Kings 2:36-46](#))
 - B. Solomon's talent, treasure, territory, and team ([1 Kings 3-4](#))
 - C. Solomon's Temple ([1 Kings 5-8](#))
 1. Preparation ([1 Kings 5](#))
 2. Construction ([1 Kings 6-7](#))
 3. Dedication ([1 Kings 8](#))
 - D. Solomon's further triumphs and treasures ([1 Kings 9-10](#))

1. Triumphs and treasures described ([1 Kings 9](#))
 2. Treasures admired by the Queen of Sheba ([1 Kings 10:1-13](#))
 3. Treasures described ([1 Kings 10:14-29](#))
 - E. Solomon's transgressions and decline ([1 Kings 11:1-25](#))
- II. THE TURBULENT YEARS: THE CIVIL WARFARE OF ISRAEL ([1 Kings 11:26-22:53](#))
- A. Jeroboam, first northern king ([1 Kings 11:26-14:20](#))
 - A. Jeroboam rebels against Solomon ([1 Kings 11:26-40](#))
 - B. Death of Solomon ([1 Kings 11:41-43](#))
 3. Jeroboam rebels against Rehoboam ([1 Kings 12:1-15](#))
 4. Jeroboam rules the 10 northern tribes ([1 Kings 12:16-14:20](#))
 - B. Rehoboam, first southern king ([1 Kings 14:21-31](#))
 - C. Abijam (Abijah), second southern king ([1 Kings 15:1-8](#))
 - D. Asa, third southern king ([1 Kings 15:9-24](#))
 - E. Nadab, Baasha, second, third northern kings ([1 Kings 15:25-16:7](#))
 - F. Elah, Zimri, fourth, fifth northern kings ([1 Kings 16:8-20](#))
 - G. Omri, sixth northern king ([1 Kings 16:21-28](#))
 - H. Ahab, seventh northern king ([1 Kings 16:29-22:40](#))
 1. Apostasy ([1 Kings 16:29-34](#))
 2. Association with Elijah ([1 Kings 17-19](#))
 3. Association with Ben-hadad ([1 Kings 20](#))
 4. Association with Naboth ([1 Kings 21](#))
 5. Association with Jehoshaphat ([1 Kings 22:1-40](#))
 - I. Jehoshaphat, fourth southern king ([1 Kings 22:41-50](#))
 - X. Ahaziah, eighth northern king ([1 Kings 22:51-53](#))

TIMELINE

971 B.C.:	Death of David, Solomon king
931 B.C.:	Kingdom divided, Israel, Judah
874 B.C.:	Ahab king of Israel, Elijah begins ministry

1 Kings 1:1-4 *Keeping the king comfortable.* As King David approached death, his servants found a young woman to care for him and keep him warm at night. He did not, however, have sexual relations with her ([1 Kings 1:4](#)).

1 Kings 1:5-10 *Enter Adonijah, ready to rebel.* David's oldest surviving son, Adonijah, proclaimed himself king. He won the support of Joab the military leader and Abiathar the priest, but did not seek the support of Nathan the prophet or of Solomon.

Like his half brother Absalom, who had also led a rebellion ([2 Samuel 15-18](#)), Adonijah was "very handsome" ([1 Kings 1:6](#)).

1 Kings 1:11-27 *They report the rebellion to the dying David.* Bathsheba and Nathan reported Adonijah's rebellion to David, reminding him that he had chosen Solomon as his successor.

1 Kings 1:28-40 *"Solomon shall succeed me!"* David assured Bathsheba and Nathan that Solomon was indeed his chosen successor, and he ordered his immediate coronation. The coronation took place amid great celebration ([1 Kings 1:38-40](#)). Solomon rode to his coronation on David's own mule ([1 Kings 1:33, 38](#)), symbolizing his right to his father's throne (see [1 Kings 1:44](#)). Contrary to Western culture, riding a mule was considered an honor and was customary for the inauguration of kings.

1 Kings 1:41-49 *The other celebration turns to panic.* As Adonijah and his followers celebrated his coronation, they heard the noise of Solomon's coronation. For fear of Solomon, everyone forsook Adonijah and went their separate ways. Had David died before proclaiming Solomon king, Adonijah's rebellion may well have succeeded.

1 Kings 1:50-53 *The repentant rebel is put on probation.* With his followers in mutiny, Adonijah feared Solomon and fled to the Tabernacle for protection. Solomon promised not to kill him, so long as he caused no more trouble. Solomon neither punished Adonijah nor gave him a blanket pardon—a preview of the wisdom God would later grant him.

1 Kings 2:1-12 *David's last words and death.* Aware that death was near, David gave Solomon some final words of advice. He urged him to keep the law, noting that God's promises to the house of David depended on this. He also urged him to punish Joab and Shimei but to show kindness to the family of Barzillai (see [2 Samuel 17:27-29](#); [2 Samuel 19:31-39](#)).

David then died, at the age of 70 (see [2 Samuel 5:4-5](#)). 40 years ([1 Kings 2:11](#)) was an impressive reign; Solomon would also reign 40 years (971-931 B.C.), but few other Israelite kings would last that long.

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[1 Kings 2:26-27](#) *Spared for David's sake.* Though he had supported Adonijah's rebellion, Solomon spared Abiathar the priest because of his long-standing loyalty to David. He did, however, remove him from the priesthood, fulfilling the curse on the house of Eli (see exposition on [§1 Samuel 2:30-36](#)).

[1 Kings 2:28-35](#) *He seeks asylum at the altar, to no avail.* Joab, who had also taken part in the rebellion, sought asylum at the Tabernacle as had Adonijah ([1 Kings 1:50](#)). But Solomon, following his father's advice ([1 Kings 2:5-6](#)), had him executed. Benaiah replaced Joab as head of the army, and Zadok, from whom the Sadducees would take their name, took Abiathar's place as priest (see [2 Samuel 15:23-29](#)). The Lord had predicted that the priest who replaced Eli's last descendant would be the first of a line of priests that would last "forever" ([1 Samuel 2:35](#)). Ezekiel's references to Zadok's descendants ([Ezekiel 40:46](#)) bear this out.

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[1 Kings 2:36-46](#) *He disobeys, departs, and dies.* Though Shimei was not a part of Adonijah's rebellion, David warned Solomon about him ([1 Kings 2:8-9](#)) because of his curse against David ([2 Samuel 16](#)). Solomon confined Shimei to a limited area. When Shimei crossed the boundary, he was condemned to die.

[1 Kings 3:1](#) *The first of his many wives.* Solomon made a treaty with the king of Egypt and married his daughter—the first of his many foreign wives. The prophets forbade marriage to foreign women, not because of their race, but because of their idolatry. In all likelihood these women never became true believers in God; such marriages were simply for the establishment of commercial and military alliances.

[1 Kings 3:2-4](#) *He loves the Lord, but . . .* [1 Kings 3:1](#) indicates that Solomon was already planning to build a Temple for the Lord. Meanwhile the Israelites, including Solomon, were offering sacrifices at "local altars," traditionally translated "high places." While [1 Kings 3:2](#) seems to excuse this practice because they lacked a more suitable place of worship, "except that" ([1 Kings 3:3](#)) would suggest that it

displeased God, and [1 Kings 1:39](#) suggests that the Tabernacle was still available for true believers (see exposition on [Numbers 33:50-56](#)).

[1 Kings 3:5-15](#) *"Name it, and it's yours!"* The Lord offered Solomon anything he desired, and Solomon asked for the wisdom to rule Israel well. He would later affirm that wisdom is preferable to wealth ([Eccles. 7:11](#)). Because he asked for wisdom and not wealth, God gave Solomon good health and great wealth as well ([1 Kings 3:13-14](#)). As Solomon would also later write, tangible blessings such as health and wealth often follow wisdom ([Eccles. 7:11](#)).

[1 Kings 3:16-28](#) *Wisdom wins the day and saves a baby.* When two women were brought to Solomon claiming the same baby, Solomon proposed to settle the dispute by dividing the baby in half, whereupon the identity of the true mother became readily apparent. Though Solomon's proposition may seem cruel, the successful resolution of the case won him the respect of all Israel—and a permanent place in the history of jurisprudence!

[1 Kings 4:1-19](#) *His cabinet and his kitchen cabinet.* [1 Kings 4:1-6](#) lists Solomon's government, military, and religious officials. As in David's time ([2 Samuel 8:15-18](#)), the presence of such a list indicates solidity and order in the kingdom. [1 Kings 4:7-19](#) lists Solomon's 12 governors who, while surely having other responsibilities, provided food for his household. While David established Israel's capital and expanded its territory, Solomon organized its infrastructure.

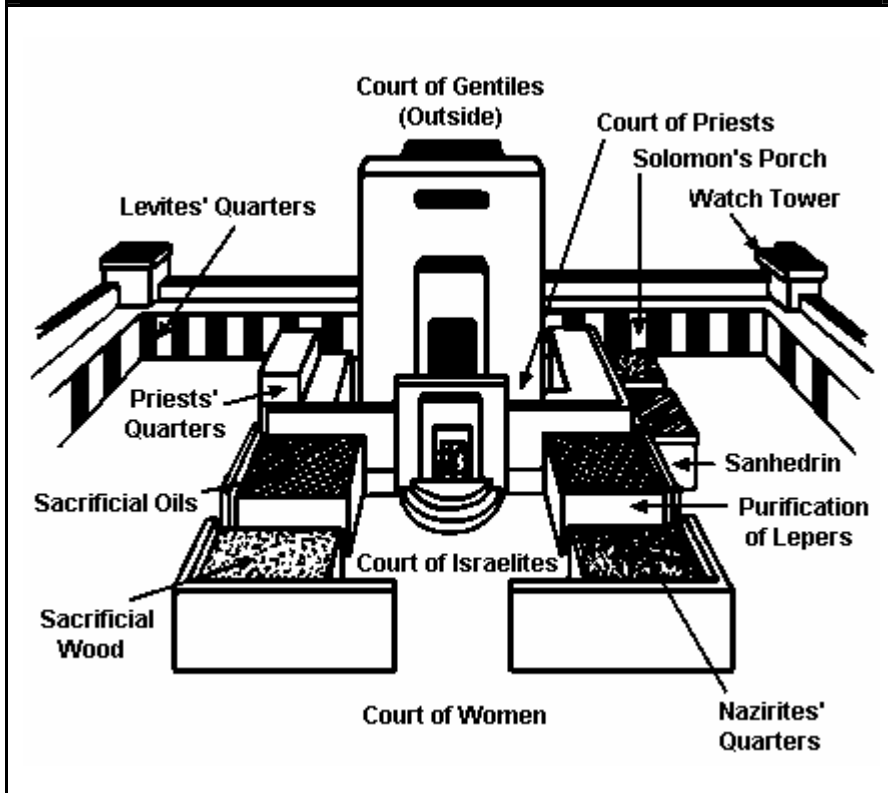
[1 Kings 4:20-28](#) *With peace and prosperity for all.* Both Solomon's household and the nation as a whole enjoyed peace and great prosperity during his reign. This was truly the golden age of Israel, as indicated by the building of the Temple and many other public buildings ([1 Kings 5-7](#)). See [Unique Features](#).

[1 Kings 4:29-34](#) *The depth, breadth, and fame of his wisdom.* Solomon was "wiser than anyone else." He became known throughout "all the surrounding nations," not just for his wisdom but for his knowledge of nature. [1 Kings 4:32](#) supports the Bible's claim that Solomon authored most of the proverbs in the book of Proverbs. He would also author two other biblical books, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.

[1 Kings 5:1-12](#) *"I need your help." . . . "It's as good as done!"* Solomon asked Hiram, king of Tyre in Lebanon, to provide cedar logs for building the Temple. Hiram, who respected Solomon as a wise ruler ([1 Kings 5:7](#)), readily agreed and asked for gifts of food in return. Solomon began sending him yearly shipments of grain, and there was peace between the two nations. Throughout the OT, the expression "cedars of Lebanon" is synonymous with strength and grandeur ([Psalm 29:5](#); [Isaiah 2:13](#)). There are few cedars in Lebanon today, however.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Solomon's Temple](#)

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE



[1 Kings 5:13-18](#) *180,000 workers, 3,300 bosses.* Solomon relied on the conscription of some 180,000 workers, plus 3,300 supervisors, to gather the stone and timber for building the Temple. This massive use of forced labor recalls Samuel's warning about the nature of kings (see exposition on [§1 Samuel 8:10-18](#) and [§1 Samuel 14:47-52](#)), and resentment over the servitude would be one of the factors in the division of Israel upon Solomon's death ([1 Kings 12:4](#)). Note, however, that according to [2 Chron. 2:17-18](#); [2 Chron. 8:9](#), the 150,000 workers mentioned in [1 Kings 5:15](#) were non-Israelite residents of the land (see exposition on [§1 Kings 9:15-25](#)).

» See also: [Illustration: Solomon's Temple](#)

[1 Kings 6:1-13](#) *Building Basics, Part One.* The writer gives the dimensions of Solomon's Temple and describes its floor plan. The Temple was about 90 x 30 x 45 feet high—twice the size of the Tabernacle.

As Solomon built the Temple, God renewed his covenant with Israel: He stood ready to deliver on all he had promised, if only the people would remain faithful to their side of the agreement ([1 Kings 6:11-13](#)).

Scholars disagree on exact dates, but if 967 B.C. is accepted as the date when construction began on the Temple, then the 480 years mentioned in [1 Kings 6:1](#) suggests 1446 B.C. as the approximate date of Israel's exodus from Egypt.

» See also: [Illustration: Solomon's Temple](#)

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[1 Kings 6:14-38](#) *Building Basics, Part Two.* The writer now focuses on the materials and ornamentation used for the Temple's interior. The interior was lined with cedar and overlaid with gold.

Special attention is given to the Most Holy Place, which would house the Ark of the Covenant. The large cherubim described in [1 Kings 6:23-28](#) would have been in addition to the cherubim on the Ark itself.

The Temple was completed seven years later, in 960 B.C. ([1 Kings 6:37-38](#)). It would stand for 374 years before being destroyed by the Babylonians in 586.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Solomon's Temple](#)

[1 Kings 7:1-12](#) *His private and public palaces.* Solomon also built several houses for himself, including one or two residences ([1 Kings 7:1-2](#)), a separate house for his first wife ([1 Kings 7:8](#)), a more public building for his kingly duties ([1 Kings 7:7](#)), and a "Hall of Pillars" ([1 Kings 7:6](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Solomon's Temple](#)

[1 Kings 7:13-51](#) *The craftsman and his craft.* The work on the Temple and other buildings was supervised by Hiram, a craftsman from Tyre whose mother was an Israelite ([1 Kings 7:13-14](#), [40](#), [45](#)). Hiram's work is described in detail ([1 Kings 7:15-50](#)).

Besides the furnishings built by Hiram, Solomon included in the Temple "all the gifts his father, David, had dedicated" ([1 Kings 7:51](#)). David had, of course, wanted to build the Temple himself ([2 Samuel 7:1-17](#)) and had apparently begun setting aside various items for that purpose ([2 Samuel 8:11](#)). Solomon's inclusion of these things in the Temple would have reminded the people of the legitimacy of his claim to David's throne.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Solomon's Temple](#)

[1 Kings 8:1-11](#) *Transferred from Tabernacle to Temple.* The Ark of the Covenant was moved from the Tabernacle to the Temple amid a worship ceremony led by Solomon. This transfer was from one hill of Jerusalem to another—from the City of David northward to what is today known as the "Temple Mount" area.

With the Ark installed in its new home, the cloud of God's presence filled the place so much that the priests were unable to continue their duties ([1 Kings 8:10-11](#)), an event reminiscent of the day the Tabernacle was dedicated ([Exodus 40:34-35](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Solomon's Temple](#)

[1 Kings 8:12-21](#) *He begins by blessing them.* Solomon presented the Temple to the Lord ([1 Kings 8:12-13](#)), then blessed the assembled people. He reminded them of God's promises to Israel, symbolized by the Ark and the Temple in which it now rested.

[1 Kings 8:22-53](#) *"Hear our prayers from this place!"* Solomon then turned again to pray to God. He affirmed that God is not limited to dwelling in the Temple; he still lives in heaven ([1 Kings 8:30](#)). Not even all of heaven can contain him ([1 Kings 8:27](#)).

He prayed that the nation would remain true to God, but that God would forgive them when they sinned ([1 Kings 8:31-32](#)) and would not let them be totally destroyed by natural disasters or wars brought on by their sin ([1 Kings 8:35-36, 46-52](#)).

Solomon's prayer included a plea that God's grace would extend to foreigners who expressed faith in him ([1 Kings 8:41-43](#)).

He ended his prayer by reminding the Lord of Israel's special relationship with him ([1 Kings 8:53](#); see [Exodus 19:5-6](#)).

[1 Kings 8:54-61](#) *"He is faithful, so be faithful."* Solomon then turned and spoke to the people again, urging them to remember God's faithfulness and to be faithful to him in return. [1 Kings 8:56](#) recalls the words of Joshua ([Joshua 21:45](#); [Joshua 23:14](#)). [1 Kings 8:22](#) and [1 Kings 8:54](#), along with various descriptions in the Prophets, suggest that OT believers prayed with arms extended toward heaven, presumably facing upward with eyes open ([Exodus 9:29-33](#); [Ezra 9:5](#); [Isaiah 1:15](#)).

[1 Kings 8:62-66](#) *14 days of dedication.* The Temple was then officially dedicated, with a ceremony involving thousands of burnt offerings, followed by a feast lasting 14 days. An atmosphere of great joy prevailed. The borders of Israel mentioned in [1 Kings 8:65](#) are larger than the traditional north-to-south borders of "Dan to Beersheba" ([1 Kings 4:25](#); see [Unique Features](#)).

[1 Kings 9:1-9](#) *"Will this Temple last? It's up to you."* God appeared to Solomon a second time (see [1 Kings 3:5-14](#)), promising to bless Israel if they obeyed him, but warning that if they began following other gods, their beautiful new Temple would be destroyed. God would appear to Solomon again in [1 Kings 11:9-13](#).

[1 Kings 9:10-14](#) *He doesn't like his 20 towns.* 20 years after their friendship began, Solomon gave King Hiram 20 cities in Galilee, but when Hiram went to see them he was not very impressed. Nonetheless, he gave Solomon a substantial gift of gold in return.

[1 Kings 9:15-25](#) *Achievements at what price?* An account of Solomon's building projects and land acquisitions is introduced as an explanation for his extensive use of forced labor ([1 Kings 9:15](#)), suggesting what a sore point this had become. [1 Kings 9:20-22](#) suggests that only foreigners were conscripted (see [2 Chron. 2:17-18](#)), but [1 Kings 5:13](#) and [1 Kings 11:28](#) indicate Israelites were enslaved as well. Whatever the situation, Solomon's labor practices were unpopular enough to help divide the kingdom ([1 Kings 12:4](#)).

On "the Millo" ([1 Kings 9:15, 24](#)), see exposition on [2 Samuel 5:6-16](#) and [Millo](#). On the cities mentioned in [1 Kings 9:15-19](#), see [Fortresses Built by Solomon](#). The nations mentioned in [1 Kings 9:20](#) are a painful reminder of Israel's failure to eradicate the Canaanites.

[1 Kings 9:26-28](#) *Solomon the sailor.* Solomon extended his empire to the Red Sea, where he built a fleet of ships that sailed to Africa and Arabia, bringing great wealth to Israel. With Joppa already established as a port on the Mediterranean ([2 Chron. 2:16](#)), Israel now had two coasts from which to trade.

[1 Kings 10:1-13](#) *"The half has not been told!"* Having heard of Solomon's great wisdom and wealth, the queen of Sheba came to visit and was astounded at what she saw.

[1 Kings 10:14-29](#) *Wisest and wealthiest in the world.* Further details are given concerning Solomon's wealth, wisdom, and fame. Estimates of his net worth range from tens of millions to several billion dollars. Unfortunately, while [chapter 10](#) marks the peak of Solomon's fame and fortune, [1 Kings 11](#) will record his spiritual downfall.

[1 Kings 11:1-8](#) *They turn his heart from God.* Solomon married hundreds of women, in many cases for political reasons. These marriages were in direct violation of God's will ([1 Kings 11:2](#)) and led Solomon to turn his heart from God and worship his wives' gods.

Just as Solomon's "political" marriages affected him spiritually as well, Israel's great prophets would proclaim that there was no such thing as merely political alliances on the national level; such alliances always had spiritual implications. To trust in the chariots of Egypt was to distrust the Lord ([Isaiah 30:1-3](#); [Isaiah 31:1](#)).

[1 Kings 11:9-13](#) *The price of paganism.* The Lord appeared to Solomon a third time, expressed his anger over Solomon's apostasy, and declared that the kingdom would be taken away from his family. Only one tribe would remain, "for the sake of your father, David." To turn one's heart toward other gods ([1 Kings 11:4](#)) is to turn one's heart away from the Lord ([1 Kings 11:9](#)).

[1 Kings 11:14-25](#) *The adversaries begin arriving.* Soon after condemning Solomon, the Lord began raising up leaders to oppose him. Hadad ([1 Kings 11:14-22](#)), an Edomite who had fled an Israelite massacre, returned and caused trouble for Solomon ([1 Kings 11:25](#)).

While Hadad attacked from the southeast, Rezon, a Syrian, attacked from the north ([1 Kings 11:23-25](#)). He would cause problems throughout the rest of Solomon's reign.

Solomon knew that God used foreign nations to judge Israel ([1 Kings 8:46](#)), but he probably didn't expect that he would be the one to bring on such judgment.

[1 Kings 11:26-40](#) *A ripped-up robe brings rebellion.* Jeroboam, an "industrious" young man ([1 Kings 11:28](#)), had been appointed by Solomon to oversee some of his slave laborers. One day a prophet told Jeroboam about God's denunciation of Solomon. Ripping a robe into 12 pieces and giving 10 to Jeroboam, he predicted that Jeroboam would one day rule 10 of Israel's tribes. Not willing to await God's timing, Jeroboam rebelled ([1 Kings 11:26](#)) and fled to Egypt when Solomon tried to kill him ([1 Kings 11:40](#)).

[1 Kings 11:41-43](#) *The death of Solomon.* Solomon died after ruling 40 years, and his son Rehoboam became king. He would reign from 931-913 B.C.

1 Kings 12:1-15 *A stupid reply to a sincere request.* When Jeroboam heard that Solomon was dead and Rehoboam was king, he returned from exile, gathered his followers, and petitioned Rehoboam to renounce Solomon's oppressive policies. Rehoboam's older advisers urged him to do as Jeroboam had requested. His younger friends, however, recommended that he threaten even greater oppression. Seeking to break away from his father's shadow and establish his own identity, Rehoboam took the advice of the younger men, thus hastening the division of the nation.

1 Kings 12:16-20 *"Down with David! Up with Israel!"* When the people heard Rehoboam's scornful response to their request, they declared their independence and made Jeroboam their king. Judah, the tribe of Rehoboam and his royal ancestors, remained loyal to him. This was the "one tribe" God had promised to the Davidic line ([1 Kings 11:13](#)).

The tribe of Benjamin would also remain loyal to the Davidic kings ([1 Kings 12:21](#)), but the southern kingdom would always be known as simply "Judah" because of the strength and religious importance of this one tribe. (Concerning Benjamin's association with Judah, see exposition on [2 Samuel 19:40-43](#); [Ezra 1:5](#).)

Having entered Canaan in 1406 B.C., Israel had survived there without a king for some 350 years. Now in 931, just 120 years after getting its first king in 1051, Israel was a divided nation.

1 Kings 12:21-24 *"Don't fight; this is my doing."* Rehoboam gathered his fighting men and prepared for war with the 10 renegade tribes, but the Lord put a stop to those plans, saying that the division of the kingdom was his will. God had his reasons for allowing this division and did not want more needless bloodshed.

1 Kings 12:25-33 *A new religion for the new nation.* Jeroboam established Shechem as his headquarters. Fearing that the people would defect to Rehoboam if they went to Jerusalem to worship, Jeroboam established Dan and Bethel as alternative religious centers, complete with their own Temples, non-Levite priests, and feast day. Jeroboam would reign 931-909 B.C.

1 Kings 13:1-10 *His arm freezes as the altar splits.* A "man of God" came to Bethel, where Jeroboam was worshipping at his new altar. The man prophesied that disaster would befall the altar. When the prophecy was immediately validated by a supernatural sign, Jeroboam tried to befriend the man, but, following God's instructions ([1 Kings 13:9](#)), the man refused the hospitality and departed.

The man's prophecy ([1 Kings 13:2](#)) would be literally fulfilled more than 200 years later by a man named Josiah ([2 Kings 23:15-16](#)). Josiah was one of only two people in the Bible whose exact names were predicted by a prophet. The other was Cyrus, named some 100 years before his birth ([Isaiah 44:28](#)).

As with all true prophets, the man from Judah was not interested in any earthly reward for his ministry (see [2 Kings 5:15-27](#); [Acts 8:14-24](#)).

1 Kings 13:11-34 *An old prophet, a young prophet, and a complacent king.* As the man of God returned home, an old prophet of Bethel heard of his prophecy, intercepted him on the road, and

invited him to come back to Bethel. When the man of God refused, the old prophet falsely claimed that God was behind the invitation. The man of God accepted the invitation and was later killed by a lion for having done so. When the man of God was buried, the old prophet told his sons that, when he died, they should bury him with the man of God.

Though not specifically stated, the old prophet apparently resented the man of God's prophecy against Bethel. Yet when God actually spoke through the old prophet ([1 Kings 13:20-24](#)), he came to believe the prophecy against Bethel ([1 Kings 13:32](#)) and therefore wanted to be buried with the man of God in order to escape God's judgment on Jeroboam's false religion.

The miraculous nature of these events is underscored by the unusual behavior of the lion ([1 Kings 13:28](#)).

Even after these remarkable events, Jeroboam was unrepentant. The writer notes ([1 Kings 13:33-34](#)) that Jeroboam's downfall ([1 Kings 14](#)) resulted directly from his rebellious religious practices. The political fortunes of Israel, whether united or divided, were always tied to its obedience to God.

[1 Kings 14:1-18](#) *He dies for his father's sins.* When Jeroboam's son Abijah became ill, he sent his wife to Ahijah, the prophet who had predicted Jeroboam's rise to power ([1 Kings 11:29-31](#)). Ahijah predicted that Abijah would die and that the rest of Jeroboam's male heirs would die unnatural deaths and the kingship would be taken from his family—all as judgment on Jeroboam's religious apostasy. The child died as predicted and was mourned throughout the land.

Though his people were divided, God still expected all 12 tribes to obey him. Though the Temple and the Davidic kings were in Judah, God had wanted to work through Jeroboam in the north as well.

[1 Kings 14:19-20](#) *Jeroboam's record: 22 years of transgression.* Jeroboam died after reigning 22 years and was succeeded by his son Nadab. Though Jeroboam's reign was long, little is recorded about him besides his religious apostasy. For at least the next 200 years, Israelites would talk about "the evil ways of Jeroboam" ([2 Kings 17:22](#)).

[1 Kings 14:21-31](#) *Meanwhile in Judah: Idolatry, immorality, and invasion.* As the 10 northern tribes sank into idolatry, the southern kingdom was not doing much better. Even with Jerusalem and the Temple in his domain, Rehoboam allowed the construction of other shrines and the immoral practices they promoted. During his reign Jerusalem was invaded and many of Solomon's treasures were taken ([1 Kings 14:25-28](#)). Rehoboam died and was succeeded by his son Abijam (called Abijah in 2 Chronicles).

[1 Kings 15:1-8](#) *Abijam reigns (913-911), but only because of David.* Abijam reigned for three years and was as evil as his father, but God allowed him to reign and allowed his son to succeed him "for David's sake" ([1 Kings 15:4](#)). Abijam's reign, like Rehoboam's, saw continuous warfare between Israel and Judah ([1 Kings 14:30](#); [1 Kings 15:6-7](#)).

[1 Kings 15:9-15](#) *He deposes his own grandmother!* Judah's next king, Asa (911-870), led a great reform. He got rid of much of the idolatry and immorality and even deposed his own grandmother because of her idolatry.

1 Kings 15:16-24 *A bad deal with Ben-hadad, however.* Asa was able to end the civil war with Israel, but only by making a spiritually compromising alliance with Ben-hadad, king of Syria. Asa's gift to him from the Temple treasuries was surely an affront to God (see [2 Kings 16:7-9](#)).

Asa died after a long reign of 41 years ([1 Kings 15:10](#)), and his son Jehoshaphat (873-848) succeeded him. Though Asa's reign had both good and bad moments, he had laid the foundation for a spiritual revival, should Jehoshaphat want it (see [1 Kings 22:41-50](#)).

1 Kings 15:25-32 *Nadab (Israel, 911-909): As evil as his dad.* (The focus now shifts back to the northern kingdom, until [1 Kings 22:41](#).) Nadab proved to be as evil as Jeroboam. He would also be the first and last of Jeroboam's royal heirs. After just two years, he and all his brothers were killed by Baasha, who then became king. Baasha's slaughter fulfilled the prophecy of [1 Kings 14:7-16](#).

1 Kings 15:33-16:7 *Baasha (Israel, 909-886): Devoured by dogs.* Baasha reigned 24 years. Though he had been God's instrument to judge the house of Jeroboam, Baasha committed the same sins and incurred the same judgment. The curse against Baasha ([1 Kings 16:2-4](#)) is almost identical to that against Jeroboam ([1 Kings 14:7-11](#)).

1 Kings 16:8-14 *Elah (Israel, 886-885): Killed by his charioteer.* Elah succeeded Baasha as king and reigned two years before being killed by Zimri, one of his chariot commanders, while he was drunk. Zimri also killed all the rest of Baasha's male descendants, fulfilling the prophecy of [1 Kings 16:3](#). While the Davidic dynasty survived in the south, the northern kingdom was characterized by such coups.

1 Kings 16:15-20 *Zimri (Israel, 885): The seven-day wonder.* When the people heard that Zimri had killed Elah, they declared Omri, the commander of the army, as their king, and besieged Zimri's palace. Realizing he was doomed, Zimri committed suicide. Zimri's death, like the deaths of five of his predecessors, was God's judgment for his sin ([1 Kings 16:18-19](#)).

1 Kings 16:21-28 *Omri (Israel, 885-873): Good builder, bad king.* After a brief power struggle, Omri became king. Omri brought some measure of stability and prosperity to Israel. He established a dynasty that would last for three generations. And he built Samaria, which would last even longer as the northern kingdom's capital. But Omri was more evil than any of his predecessors ([1 Kings 16:25](#)), paving the way for his notorious son Ahab.

1 Kings 16:29-34 *Ahab (Israel, 874-853): Godless ways, godless wife.* Ahab became king and would reign 22 years. More evil than Omri, he opened the door to total religious rebellion when he married Jezebel and began promoting the worship of her god, Baal. Other northern kings had worshiped foreign gods while claiming to give the highest honor to Jehovah. But Ahab made it clear that Baal would be the focus of his worship.

[1 Kings 16:34](#) records the literal fulfillment of Joshua's curse on Jericho ([Joshua 6:26](#)).

1 Kings 17:1-7 *Elijah: "No rain till I say rain!"* God sent Elijah to Ahab, prophesying a long drought that could be broken only by Elijah himself. God then directed Elijah to take refuge beside a

small stream, where he would have water and food. As the drought worsened, even this stream dried up.

Elijah's ability to prevent rain is shared by the two witnesses of Revelation ([Rev. 11:6](#)).

[1 Kings 17:8-16](#) *Her oil and flour outlast the famine.* With his water supply gone, Elijah was directed to go to Zarephath, where a widow would provide for him. When Elijah arrived at her home, the widow's food supply was nearly gone, yet miraculously it was enough for her and her family as well as Elijah till the drought ended (compare [Matthew 14:14-21](#); [Matthew 15:32-38](#)).

[1 Kings 17:17-24](#) *A lifeless son carried upstairs; a lively son carried downstairs.* The widow's son died, but after Elijah prayed God restored him, confirming to the widow that Elijah was a prophet of God.

[1 Kings 18:1-16](#) *"Tell the ruler it's going to rain!"* Elijah went to Ahab and announced the end of the drought. On his way he met Obadiah, a godly servant of Ahab. When Elijah asked Obadiah to announce his arrival to Ahab, Obadiah resisted, saying that Ahab had been looking everywhere for Elijah and that Obadiah's life would be in danger if he announced Elijah's arrival and then Elijah didn't show up. Elijah assured him that he would show up, so Obadiah reported his arrival and Ahab went out to meet him. [1 Kings 18:4](#) gives a preview of the wickedness of Jezebel.

[1 Kings 18:17-19](#) *"I'm not the problem, but I'm looking at the problem!"* Ahab greeted Elijah as the "troublemaker" of Israel, an ironic greeting, to say the least, as Elijah was quick to point out. Elijah told Ahab to summon the prophets of Baal and Asherah, along with "all the people of Israel," to Mount Carmel. [1 Kings 18:19](#) presents Jezebel as the primary influence in Ahab's religious apostasy. For "Asherah," see [2 Kings 13:1-9](#).

[1 Kings 18:20-30](#) *Will your god come through?* As the people gathered on Mount Carmel, Elijah challenged them to choose once and for all between Jehovah and Baal. When they were silent, he proposed a contest to see whose god would provide fire for a sacrifice. The people agreed that that would be a good test of true divinity. Elijah invited the prophets of Baal to go first. They prayed and performed various incantations all day, but no fire came from Baal. Elijah mocked their efforts ([1 Kings 18:27](#)), making Baal's failure all the more evident to the assembled crowd.

[1 Kings 18:31-40](#) *He fixes the altar, prays, and the fire falls!* Elijah then repaired a broken-down Israelite altar, filled it with water, prayed, and fire came from the Lord, consuming the water as well as the sacrifice. Elijah prayed that this demonstration of God's power would turn the people's hearts back to him ([1 Kings 18:37](#)), and that is what happened ([1 Kings 18:39](#)). At Elijah's command, the people seized the prophets of Baal, and Elijah executed them.

1 Kings 18:41-46 *A tiny cloud, then a cloudburst.* Elijah told Ahab the drought would end. A tiny cloud appeared and soon brought heavy rainfall. Both Ahab and Elijah went down from Carmel to Jezreel, Ahab by chariot and Elijah by foot. Elijah, with divine help, outran Ahab's chariot.

1 Kings 19:1-8 *"I'll have your head!"* Ahab reported to Jezebel the defeat at Carmel and Elijah's slaughter of the prophets of Baal. Jezebel sent word to Elijah that she intended to kill him, and Elijah fled. After being ministered to by an angel in the wilderness, he traveled to Mount Horeb, which was either the same as Mount Sinai or close to it ([Exodus 3:1](#); [Exodus 33:6](#)).

As did Obadiah ([1 Kings 18:3-16](#)), Elijah let fear overcome him. As did Jonah ([Jonah 4:3](#)), he begged God to end his life.

1 Kings 19:9-18 *A still, small voice, and 7,000 saints.* Confronted by God, Elijah complained that he was the only one left in Israel who had not forsaken him to worship Baal. God came to him in "the sound of a gentle whisper" ([1 Kings 19:12](#)), traditionally translated as a "still, small voice," assuring him that he was far from the only God-fearing Israelite ([1 Kings 19:18](#)). God also told Elijah to anoint Hazael as king of Syria and Jehu as king of Israel, and to anoint Elisha as his own successor as prophet ([1 Kings 19:15-17](#)). The new kings, along with Elisha, were to be God's instruments of judgment ([1 Kings 19:17](#)).

Though neither was literally anointed by Elijah, Hazael would become king of Syria after murdering Ben-hadad ([2 Kings 8:15](#)), and Jehu (not the same as the prophet mentioned in [1 Kings 19:16](#)) would become king of Israel after Ahab's son Jehoram ([2 Kings 9:1-10](#)).

[1 Kings 19:11-12](#) has been precious to believers down through the centuries who have heard God speak quietly, rather than in grand, thundering tones.

1 Kings 19:19-21 *From plowman of soil to prophet of God.* Elijah found Elisha at work on his farm and commissioned him as a prophet. After bidding his family farewell, Elisha followed Elijah. The story of his ministry will be told in [2 Kings 2-13](#).

1 Kings 20:1-12 *"Don't count your chickens before they hatch!"* Ben-hadad, along with 32 other kings, besieged Samaria. When Ahab answered their verbal threats with sarcasm, they prepared to storm the city. Exchanges of curses and boasts ([1 Kings 20:10-12](#)) were common in ancient battles.

1 Kings 20:13-22 *The defeat of the drunks.* Ahab's army, though greatly outnumbered by the Syrians, defeated them soundly, perhaps in part because the Syrian leaders were drunk and therefore overconfident ([1 Kings 20:16-18](#)). The victory was also supernatural, however: God sent his prophet with instructions and encouragement ([1 Kings 20:13-14](#), [22](#)), giving Ahab one more chance to repent and recognize Yahweh as the true God. Ben-hadad escaped ([1 Kings 20:20](#)), but would later return.

1 Kings 20:23-30 *"Their gods are hillbilly gods!"* Convinced that the choice of battle site had led to their defeat because its hilly terrain favored Israel's "gods," the Syrians mounted a rematch. This time as before, however, Israel was victorious.

It was common in ancient Near Eastern polytheism to view each god or goddess as having a special sphere of power. Baal, for instance, was a god of weather and fertility. It was quite radical in this

context to not only believe in just one God but to believe that he was all-powerful in all areas of influence.

[1 Kings 20:31-34](#) *He foolishly befriends his bitter foe.* Seeing that they were defeated, the Syrian leaders dressed in sackcloth and begged for mercy for their king. Ahab granted their request and made a treaty with Ben-hadad. Such a treaty was totally unnecessary, for God had already revealed that Israel would defeat Syria ([1 Kings 20:28](#)).

[1 Kings 20:35-43](#) *"You spared his life, so you'll die in his place!"* After a very realistic portrayal of the situation among his own peers ([1 Kings 20:35-36](#)), a prophet condemned Ahab for having failed to deal with Ben-hadad as God had commanded. The prophet's parable and Ahab's indignant response ([1 Kings 20:39-40](#)) recall Nathan's parable and David's response ([2 Samuel 12:1-7](#); see also exposition on [2 Samuel 14:1-20](#)).

[1 Kings 21:1-4](#) *Not for sale, at any price!* Ahab offered to buy the vineyard of his next-door neighbor, Naboth. Naboth turned down the offer, saying he could not in good conscience sell his family's inheritance. Ahab was "angry and sullen" about Naboth's refusal. It was extremely important in Israelite culture to keep land within a family. If land ever fell to outside ownership, descendants were expected to reclaim it (see [Leviticus 25:25-28](#); [Ruth 4:1-4](#)).

[1 Kings 21:5-16](#) *Jezebel's poison-pen letters.* When Jezebel learned why Ahab was so despondent, she wrote letters arranging Naboth's death. The plot was carried out, Jezebel announced Naboth's death to Ahab, and Ahab prepared to take possession of Naboth's vineyard. Jezebel's evil nature and her influence over Ahab, hinted at in [1 Kings 16:31](#); [1 Kings 18:4](#), [19](#), are clearly seen here.

[1 Kings 21:17-26](#) *Dogs will attend their deaths.* While Ahab was on his way to the vineyard, a prophet of God was on his way there as well. Elijah confronted Ahab concerning Naboth's vineyard and prophesied that both Ahab and Jezebel would die ignoble deaths (see [1 Kings 22:37-40](#); [2 Kings 9:30-37](#)). Ahab's greeting to Elijah on this occasion ([1 Kings 21:20](#)) recalls his earlier greeting ([1 Kings 18:17](#)).

[1 Kings 21:27-29](#) *A foxhole conversion?* Faced with Elijah's dire predictions, Ahab repented and went into mourning, and the Lord promised to delay carrying out the death sentence against his family. The sentence would be carried out by Jehu ([2 Kings 10:1-11](#)). Ahab's later injustice toward Micaiah ([1 Kings 22:26-27](#)), his treachery toward Jehoshaphat ([1 Kings 22:29-33](#)), and his willful disregard of God's warning through Micaiah (see exposition on [1 Kings 22:13-28](#)) show that his repentance, if truly sincere, was very short-lived.

[1 Kings 22:1-12](#) *"You wouldn't like that other prophet."* Ahab invited Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to help him free Ramoth in Gilead from Syrian control. Jehoshaphat agreed to do so but wanted to make sure it was God's will. Ahab called on 400 of his prophets, all of whom agreed they should fight. Jehoshaphat doubted their word, however, and asked Ahab to send for a "prophet of the LORD" ([1 Kings 22:7](#)), who could be trusted to tell the truth. Ahab admitted that there was one such prophet—Micaiah by name—but expressed hatred for Micaiah, who always prophesied against him. Ahab didn't seem to care about *why* Micaiah's prophecies were always negative.

1 Kings 22:13-28 *Sheep without a shepherd.* Refusing to go along with the crowd, Micaiah prophesied disaster should Ahab go to war. In calling the 400 other prophets liars ([1 Kings 22:19-23](#)), Micaiah had the confidence that came from doing exactly what God told him to do.

Ahab's recognition that Micaiah's initial positive prediction was false ([1 Kings 22:15-16](#)) suggests that Ahab may have seen through the lies of the other 400 as well. His earlier repentance ([1 Kings 21:27-29](#)) certainly showed that he could recognize true prophecy when he wanted to.

1 Kings 22:29-40 *A cowardly king, a poorly aimed arrow.* Ignoring Micaiah, Ahab and Jehoshaphat went to war with Syria. Seeking to circumvent Micaiah's prophecy, Ahab disguised himself and conspired to make Jehoshaphat the focus of enemy attention—and Jehoshaphat nearly died as a result. Finally, however, a random arrow found the disguised Ahab and killed him.

1 Kings 22:41-50 *Judah's king is good, for the most part.* The writer now summarizes the rest of Jehoshaphat's reign, noting that he was a good king, though he failed to continue the reforms of his father Asa as much as he could have (see exposition on [§1 Kings 15:16-24](#)).

1 Kings 22:51-53 *But Israel's next king is bad.* Ahaziah succeeded Ahab his father and reigned for two years (853-852). His evil ways were compared to Ahab, to Jezebel, and to Jeroboam. He would be followed by his brother Jehoram, who would be the final descendant of Ahab to rule. (Ahaziah's story continues in 2 Kings.)

People to remember from 1 Kings

- [Abiathar](#)
- [Ahab](#)
- [Asa](#)
- [Bathsheba](#)
- [Jeroboam](#)
- [Joab](#)
- [Nathan](#)
- [The Queen of Sheba](#)
- [Rehoboam](#)
- [Shimei](#)
- [Solomon](#)
- [Zadok](#)

ABIATHAR

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Facts: Co-high priest with Zadok, escaped bloodbath at Nob ([1 Samuel 22:20-23](#); [1 Chron. 15:11](#))

Father: Ahimelech ([1 Samuel 22:20](#))

Son: Jonathan ([2 Samuel 15:27](#))

Total Bible References: 31

Key References: [1 Kings 1:5-7](#); [1 Kings 2:26-35](#); [1 Samuel 22:11-23](#); [1 Samuel 23:6-13](#); [2 Samuel 15:24-29](#); [2 Samuel 19:11-13](#)

Abiathar Speaks

Solomon could have had me executed, of course, but he didn't. Had he done so it would have been ironic, for my father was executed for befriending his father! My father didn't deserve to die. I probably do. I still don't know what caused me to side with the king's enemies. ([1 Kings 1:7](#); [1 Kings 2:26](#); [1 Samuel 21:1-6](#); [1 Samuel 22:11-20](#))

At least I was loyal when I served as co-high priest under David. It was my privilege to help him when both Saul and later his own son were trying to kill him. In fact, I was the one who convinced the elders of Judah to reinstate David as their king following Absalom's rebellion. God of Israel, may I be remembered as a faithful servant under David, not as a foolish rebel against Solomon! ([1 Samuel 23:6](#); [2 Samuel 15:24](#); [2 Samuel 19:11](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Abiathar

- Even the most seemingly faithful friends may fail us: Abiathar displayed great loyalty to David ([1 Samuel 23:6-13](#); [1 Samuel 30:7](#); [2 Samuel 15:24-29](#); [2 Samuel 19:11-13](#)) but sided against David's son Solomon ([1 Kings 1:7](#), [19](#), [25](#)).
- No matter how long it takes, what God says will happen will surely happen. Abiathar's removal from the priesthood ([1 Kings 2:26-27](#)) fulfilled God's promise 100 years earlier to remove the house of Eli from the priesthood ([1 Samuel 2:30-36](#)).

Key Verse

"Then the king said to Abiathar the priest, 'Go back to your home in Anathoth. You deserve to die, but I will not kill you now, because you carried the Ark of the Sovereign LORD for my father, and you suffered right along with him through all his troubles' " ([1 Kings 2:26](#)).

AHAB

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Fact: Allowed his wife, Jezebel, to turn him into one of Israel's worst kings ([1 Kings 16:29-33](#); [1 Kings 21:7-15](#))

Father: Omri ([1 Kings 16:28](#))

Wife: Jezebel ([1 Kings 16:31](#))

Sons: Ahaziah, Joram (Hebrew *Jehoram*) ([1 Kings 22:51](#); [2 Kings 3:1](#))

Daughter: Athaliah ([2 Kings 8:18](#), [26](#))

Death: Recorded in [1 Kings 22:34-35](#)

Total Bible References: 90

Key References: [1 Kings 16-22](#); [2 Kings 10:1-11](#)

Ahab Speaks

At least the pain is becoming less intense. A bad sign, though—probably due to the loss of so much blood. But of course that was part of the prophecy! Elijah and Micaiah were right. The battle has been lost, and I shall soon die. It was no doubt a terrible blunder allowing my Baal-worshiping wife to turn me against Jehovah God. Where is *her* god when I need him? ([1 Kings 16:30-33](#); [1 Kings 21:19](#); [1 Kings 22:17](#))

The priests on Mount Carmel must have asked the same question! Baal's silence up there was deafening, but Elijah's God responded with fire from heaven. I should have known he was the true one when I was allowed twice to defeat these same Syrians. But not this time! A curse upon my greed, and for my encouraging Jezebel to satisfy it by the murder of an innocent man. ([1 Kings 18:26-29](#), [36-38](#); [1 Kings 20:13-20](#), [28-29](#); [1 Kings 21:1-16](#))

For 22 years I ruled over Israel, never allowing God a place in my heart. Now, in the hour of death, I neither ask for nor desire the relationship to change. I have rejected him; he now returns the favor.

Spiritual Lessons from Ahab

- An unbelieving spouse can help ensure an unhappy and godless life ([1 Kings 16:31-33](#); [1 Kings 21:1-16](#)).
- Unbelievers sometimes blame believers for their troubles: Ahab blamed Elijah ([1 Kings 18:17](#)); Nero blamed the Christians; Hitler blamed the Jews.
- The false gods we worship, whether literal idols or things like fame or fortune, can never answer our prayers or meet our true needs ([1 Kings 18:26](#), [29](#)).

Key Verses

"But Ahab did what was evil in the LORD's sight, even more than any of the kings before him. And as though it were not enough to live like Jeroboam, he married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to worship Baal. . . . He did more to arouse the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him" ([1 Kings 16:30-31](#), [33](#)).

ASA

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Fact: One of Judah's best kings ([1 Kings 15:9-15](#))

Father: Abijam ([1 Kings 15:8](#))

Son: Jehoshaphat ([1 Kings 22:41](#))

Death: Recorded in [2 Chron. 16:12-13](#)

Total Bible References: 58

Key References: [1 Kings 15:8-24](#); [2 Chron. 14-16](#)

Asa Speaks

My feet cause me great discomfort. For two years I have suffered. I fear the simple act of walking will soon be denied me. I suppose the prophet Hanani is laughing at me from his prison cell. Well, let him

laugh as he rots away! I have no intention of releasing him. How dare he rebuke me for my warfare policies and peace treaties! ([2 Chron. 16:7-12](#))

But even as I think about such things, my soul pains me more than my feet. Where is that love and zeal I once had for God? After all, it was through his strength that I fortified Judah's cities, built up its army, and led the people in a mighty revival! Of course who could forget the greatest moment of all, when he supernaturally struck down that massive Ethiopian army as it prepared to invade? I still recall my prayer to him as we faced our enemy: "O LORD, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty! Help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in you alone. It is in your name that we have come against this vast horde." ([1 Kings 15:11-13](#); [2 Chron. 14:6-15](#))

But that was all back then. Here I sit today with diseased feet and bitterness of soul.

Spiritual Lessons from Asa

- God, and God alone, can help the powerless against the mighty ([2 Chron. 14:11](#)).
- God is eager to help us, if only we seek his will ([2 Chron. 16:9](#)).
- Those who rightfully point out our sin cannot be silenced, no matter how much we ignore or persecute them ([1 Chron. 16:7-10](#)).

Key Verse

"The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him" ([2 Chron. 16:9](#)).

BATHSHEBA

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Facts: Wife of Uriah, then David, mother of Solomon ([2 Samuel 11:3, 27](#); [2 Samuel 12:24](#))

Father: Eliam ([2 Samuel 11:3](#))

Sons: Solomon, Nathan, Shimea, Shobab, and 1 unnamed ([2 Samuel 11:27](#); [2 Samuel 12:18, 24](#); [1 Chron. 3:5](#))

Total Bible References: 12

Key References: [1 Kings 1-2](#); [2 Samuel 11-12](#)

Bathsheba Speaks

I think my son was a little upset with me for a while. But then, how was I to know his older half brother was using me to get to him? But all that has been forgotten, I'm sure. He has indeed become a good and wise king. David would have been proud. ([1 Kings 2:1-2, 13-25](#); [1 Kings 4:29-34](#))

I do worry, though, over his growing interest in riches and the many pagan women he has married. Surely he must know God's views on all this. ([2 Samuel 9:1-9](#); [2 Samuel 10:14-29](#); [2 Samuel 11:1-8](#))

I was taken on a special tour through the new Temple the other day. What a magnificent building! If only David, who wanted so much to build it, could have been with me! ([2 Samuel 7:1-2](#))

I think about him constantly. What a horrible way to begin a marriage, with adultery and murder. But that was some 40 years ago. Israel's merciful God has long since forgiven both of us! I bore David five sons, four of whom are still living. I often wonder what our little first son would be doing today

had he lived. Forgive us, tiny one, for our sin caused your death. ([2 Samuel 11](#); [2 Samuel 12:13-18](#); [1 Chron. 3:5](#); [Psalm 51](#))

Nathan and Zadok stop by to see me regularly. I'm convinced much of David's success was because of this godly prophet-and-priest team. ([1 Kings 1](#); [2 Samuel 7:1-17](#); [2 Samuel 12](#); [2 Samuel 15:24-37](#))

Death holds no fear for me. A passage from one of my husband's writings has been my daily source of comfort and assurance: "Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever." ([Psalm 23:6](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Bathsheba

- A person should not allow his or her physical carelessness to entice a member of the opposite sex ([2 Samuel 11:2-3](#)).
- Adultery is sinful, no matter what the circumstances or how otherwise morally upright the people involved ([2 Samuel 11:26-27](#); [Acts 13:22](#)).

Key Verses

"When Bathsheba heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. When the period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her to the palace, and she became one of his wives. Then she gave birth to a son. But the LORD was very displeased with what David had done" ([2 Samuel 11:26-27](#)).

JEROBOAM

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Fact: First northern king of divided Israel ([1 Kings 12:19-20](#))

Father: Nebat ([1 Kings 11:26](#))

Mother: Zeruah ([1 Kings 11:26](#))

Sons: Abijah, Nadab ([1 Kings 14:1](#); [1 Kings 15:25](#))

Death: Recorded in [2 Chron. 13:20](#)

Total Bible References: 84

Key References: [1 Kings 11:26-14:20](#); [2 Chron. 10-13](#)

Jeroboam Speaks

In some ways I have been successful in defying Jehovah God for the entire 22 years of my reign! According to Jacob, Israel's kings were to come from the tribe of Judah. Later, Moses wrote that the priests would proceed from Levi. Finally, Solomon claimed the nation's religious center to be the city of Jerusalem. But I have dismissed all such silly requirements! ([Genesis 49:10](#); [Numbers 3:11-13](#))

In the first place, I'm from the tribe of Ephraim, not Judah. Then, I've replaced the Levitical priests with worthless and ignorant men from other tribes. Thirdly, I've built two new religious centers, Bethel and Dan, to replace Jerusalem. Finally, adding insult to injury, I've introduced the worship of the golden calf in those two cities! ([1 Kings 8:29](#); [1 Kings 11:26](#); [1 Kings 12:25-31](#))

I hate the God of David and Solomon. Thanks to him, my beautiful altar at Bethel has been destroyed and my army has been routed. But worse, what freethinker could possibly worship a deity who once refused to heal his sick son? ([1 Kings 13:1-5](#); [1 Kings 14:1-18](#); [2 Chron. 13:13-19](#))

Yes, I've done things my way these past two decades. But although I've defied him, I'm under no delusion whatsoever that I've defeated him! In fact, to the contrary, this strange sickness that has suddenly befallen me may well be his hand of judgment. ([2 Chron. 13:20](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Jeroboam

- Even those most blessed by God can choose to rebel against him and become the greatest of sinners ([1 Kings 11:37-38](#); [1 Kings 14:14-16](#)). Jeroboam's sins are mentioned 22 times in 1, 2 Kings—more than the sins of any other person in Scripture.

Key Verses

"Then the LORD will shake Israel like a reed whipped about in a stream. He will uproot the people of Israel from this good land that he gave their ancestors and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, for they have angered the LORD by worshipping Asherah poles. He will abandon Israel because Jeroboam sinned and made all of Israel sin along with him" ([1 Kings 14:15-16](#)).

JOAB

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Facts: Commander of David's army, killed Abner, Absalom, and Amasa ([2 Samuel 3:27](#); [2 Samuel 8:16](#); [2 Samuel 18:14](#); [2 Samuel 20:10](#))

Mother: Zeruah ([2 Samuel 2:13](#))

Brothers: Abishai, Asahel ([2 Samuel 2:18](#))

Death: Recorded in [1 Kings 2:28-34](#)

Total Bible References: 138

Key References: [1 Kings 1-2](#); [2 Samuel 2-3](#); [2 Samuel 10-14](#); [2 Samuel 18-20](#); [2 Samuel 23-24](#)

Joab Speaks

It's a little awkward to say the least, visiting the Tabernacle for the first time, not to offer a sacrifice, but to seek protection from my enemies! Actually, I've never before felt any need for God or his sacred building. "Better a sword than a sacrifice!" That has been my philosophy. But now that death is near I realize the emptiness of this godless lifestyle. ([1 Kings 2:28](#))

My heart is too old and set in its ways to change, though. It's all the fault of that idiot Adonijah! I should have known at the beginning that he was a loser—all talk and no performance. But I supported him and now it will cost me my life. ([1 Kings 1:5-7](#))

If only I could have controlled Solomon the way I once controlled his father David. I highly resent all that praise he has received, while I'm totally ignored. Like it or not, he would never have accomplished what he has without my trusty sword. Of course he never forgave me for killing Abner and Absalom. Fools! They all deserved to die! But now it is my turn. ([2 Samuel 3:27](#); [2 Samuel 18:14](#))

"Joab" means "God is judge." That's the name my mother gave me. I stand here in the Tabernacle, grasping the horns of the altar with the growing fear that he indeed will soon judge me!

Someone is shouting outside, demanding my surrender. I recognize the voice—it is Benaiah the lion killer. I refuse! He'll have to come and get me! ([1 Kings 2:34](#); [2 Samuel 23:20-23](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Joab

- Those who live by violence often die by violence ([1 Kings 2:5](#), [28-34](#)).
- Those entrusted to uphold the law ([2 Samuel 8:16](#)) must never usurp that law ([1 Kings 1:5-7](#)).

Key Verses

"Then the LORD will repay him for the murders of two men who were more righteous and better than he. For my father was no party to the deaths of Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. May Joab and his descendants be forever guilty of these murders, and may the LORD grant peace to David and his descendants and to his throne forever" ([1 Kings 2:32-33](#)).

NATHAN

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Facts: Prophet, condemned David for adultery and murder ([2 Samuel 7:2](#); [2 Samuel 12:1-15](#))

Total Bible References: 28

Key References: [1 Kings 1](#); [2 Samuel 7:1-17](#); [2 Samuel 12:1-15](#)

Nathan Speaks

Well, book number two is done. I'll never write as much as Moses. But I hope my biographies of David and Solomon will be helpful to future generations. In a way it's good they're both gone. Each would have been heartbroken over this tragic civil war. It crushes me just to think about it—80 years of tribal unity ruined in as many hours by an arrogant and immature young man. ([1 Kings 12:1-19](#); [1 Chron. 29:29](#); [2 Chron. 9:29](#))

I felt closer to David, of course. I doubt that he would have accepted that severe rebuke from anyone but me. But his blatant sins of adultery and murder had to be condemned. I was right on target. ([2 Samuel 11-12](#))

But there was that occasion when I gave him the wrong advice. Of course, how was I to know God had already determined that Solomon would build the Temple? Admittedly, I had less in common with David's son. But I did name him, you know. His father called him Solomon, meaning "peace," but I named him Jedidiah, meaning "beloved of the Lord." ([2 Samuel 12:24-25](#); [1 Chron. 28:2-6](#))

And I did all I could to make sure that Solomon would succeed David as king, just as he wished. God has decreed, after all, that David's descendants are to rule Israel. ([1 Kings 1:11-27](#); [2 Samuel 7:12-17](#))

But now this! Oh, foolish, foolish Rehoboam! What have you done? Why have you done it? Where will it lead? ([1 Kings 12:1-19](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Nathan

- Sometimes even the godliest counselor may unintentionally give the wrong advice ([2 Samuel 7:1-5](#)).
- A true friend will give reproof as well as affirmation, as the situation demands ([2 Samuel 12:1-12](#); [Proverbs 27:6](#)).

Key Verses

"Then Nathan said to David, 'You are that man! . . . Why, then, have you despised the word of the LORD and done this horrible deed?' " ([2 Samuel 12:7, 9](#)).

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Fact: Foreign queen who came to Israel to verify reports of Solomon's greatness ([1 Kings 10:1-13](#))

Total Bible References: 9

Key References: [1 Kings 10:1-13](#); [Matthew 12:42](#)

The Queen of Sheba Speaks

As if either of us needed the presents we gave each other! But I leave Jerusalem having received more from him than I brought to him. His wealth is indeed impressive, but the wisdom he displayed is absolutely incredible. In fact I found myself sharing the burdens and secrets of my heart with him! ([1 Kings 3:28](#); [1 Kings 4:29-31](#); [1 Kings 10:2-3, 10-13](#); [2 Chron. 9:13-14](#))

To say the least, his power and personality have overwhelmed me! Rumors concerning a king's greatness are almost always exaggerated, but in his case they don't begin to describe the glory! ([1 Kings 10:5-7](#))

Spiritual Lessons from the Queen of Sheba

- Just as the queen of Sheba's skepticism turned to belief upon her firsthand experience of Solomon's wisdom and wealth, skeptics down through the centuries have been convinced when responding to the invitation to "taste and see that the LORD is good" ([Psalm 34:8](#)).
- If the queen of Sheba was willing to go to such great effort to verify the reports of Solomon's wealth, we should be even more willing to explore the spiritual wealth the Bible claims to offer ([Matthew 12:42](#)).

Key Verse

"The queen of Sheba will also rise up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, because she came from a distant land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And now someone greater than Solomon is here—and you refuse to listen to him" ([Matthew 12:42](#)).

REHOBOAM

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Facts: Son of Solomon, first southern king of divided Israel ([1 Kings 11:43-12:24](#))

Mother: Naamah ([1 Kings 14:21](#))

Wives: 18, including Mahalath and Maacah ([2 Chron. 11:18-21](#))

Children: Abijam, Jeush, Shemariah, Zaham, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith are named among 28 sons and 60 daughters ([2 Chron. 11:19-21](#))

Death: Recorded in [1 Kings 14:31](#)

Total Bible References: 50

Key References: [1 Kings 11:43-12:27](#); [1 Kings 14:21-31](#)

Rehoboam Speaks

It's just not fair! Both my father and grandfather lived to reach 70, and ruled over all 12 tribes—for 40 years each. But look at me, only 58, apparently at the end of my life after ruling over just two tribes. It's mostly the fault of those political idiots who advised me at Shechem. Had it not been for their stupid counsel, things no doubt would have turned out differently. If only my father had killed Jeroboam when he had the chance. Without his leadership the 10-tribe revolt probably would not have happened. ([1 Kings 11:40](#); [1 Kings 12:1-20](#); [1 Kings 14:21](#))

But most of all, I blame Jehovah God. It was his prophet who encouraged Jeroboam. And he allowed the king of Egypt to embarrass me by attacking Jerusalem and carrying off many of our greatest treasures. ([1 Kings 11:29-40](#); [1 Kings 14:25-28](#))

Well, for better or for worse, I've done things my way. Admittedly, at the very beginning I forsook the God of Solomon and David. It is painfully obvious now that in the final days of life he has forsaken me! ([2 Chron. 12:1](#), [13-16](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Rehoboam

- "A hothead starts fights; a cool-tempered person tries to stop them" ([Proverbs 15:18](#)). Scripture's most tragic example of this is seen in Rehoboam's senseless answer to Israel's northern leaders, which triggered the civil war ([1 Kings 12:1-16](#)).
- When seeking advice, we should value the voice of experience ([1 Kings 12:1-16](#)).

Key Verse

"But when Rehoboam was firmly established and strong, he abandoned the law of the LORD, and all Israel followed him in this sin" ([2 Chron. 12:1](#)).

SHIMEI

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Fact: Cursed David during the king's retreat from Absalom's revolt ([2 Samuel 16:5-13](#))

Father: Gera ([2 Samuel 16:5](#))

Death: Recorded in [1 Kings 2:41-46](#)

Total Bible References: 18

Key References: [1 Kings 1:8](#); [1 Kings 2:8-9](#), [36-46](#); [2 Samuel 16:5-13](#)

Shimei Speaks

1,000 curses on those two miserable servants! I should have let them rot in Gath. Their attempted escape has cost me my life! Well, I suppose Solomon would have found an excuse to kill me anyway. It's common knowledge that David wanted him to punish me. ([1 Kings 2:8-9](#), [36-39](#))

Looking back, I don't know why David didn't kill me when he had the chance those two times in the wilderness. Probably some sort of weakness on his part. If only my long-dead relative Saul were still on the throne! Whatever you might say about him, Saul knew how to deal with his enemies, including David! In fact, had he killed the son of Jesse, I would not today be standing before this pompous monarch son of his, receiving the death sentence. A plague on those two servants, on Solomon, and on the God of Israel! I hear the footsteps of Benaiah the royal executioner coming my way. ([1 Kings 2:46](#); [1 Samuel 18:11](#); [1 Samuel 22:18-19](#); [1 Samuel 24:5-6](#); [1 Samuel 26:11](#); [2 Samuel 16:5-13](#); [2 Samuel 19:16-23](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Shimei

- "Whoever stubbornly refuses to accept criticism will suddenly be broken beyond repair" ([Proverbs 29:1](#)). Shimei would learn that the hard way: He sinned against David ([2 Samuel 16:5-8](#)) and was twice forgiven ([2 Samuel 16:9-13](#); [2 Samuel 19:16-23](#)). He would later sin against Solomon ([1 Kings 2:36-40](#)) and be executed ([1 Kings 2:41-46](#)).

Key Verses

"Remember Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim. He cursed me with a terrible curse as I was fleeing to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan River, I swore by the LORD that I would not kill him. But that oath does not make him innocent. You are a wise man, and you will know how to arrange a bloody death for him" ([1 Kings 2:8-9](#)).

SOLOMON

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Facts: Israel's richest king, world's wisest man ([1 Kings 3:11-13](#))

Birth: Recorded in [2 Samuel 5:14](#)

Father: David ([2 Samuel 12:24](#))

Mother: Bathsheba ([2 Samuel 12:24](#))

Brothers: Full brothers: Shimea, Shobab, and Nathan ([1 Chron. 3:5](#)). Half brothers: Amnon, Kileab (also called Daniel), Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, Ithream, Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, Nogah,

Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet ([2 Samuel 3:2-5](#); [2 Samuel 5:13-16](#); [1 Chron. 3:1-8](#); [1 Chron. 14:3-5](#))

Sister: Half sister, Tamar ([2 Samuel 13:1](#))

Wives: Many, including Naamah ([1 Kings 3:1](#); [1 Kings 11:3](#); [1 Kings 14:21](#))

Son: Rehoboam ([1 Kings 14:21](#))

Key Events in His Life:

- Proclaimed king of Israel ([1 Kings 1:28-40](#))
- Defeats primary opponents ([1 Kings 2:13-46](#))
- Asks for wisdom, receives wealth also ([1 Kings 3:1-15](#))
- Builds Temple ([1 Kings 5-7](#))
- Visited by queen of Sheba ([1 Kings 10:1-13](#))
- Allows wives to turn his heart from God ([1 Kings 11:1-13](#))
- Faces several rebellions ([1 Kings 11:14-40](#))

Death: Recorded in [1 Kings 11:43](#)

Total Bible References: 297

Key References: [1 Kings 1-11](#); [Neh. 13:26](#); [Psalm 72](#); [Psalm 127](#); Proverbs; Song of Songs; Ecclesiastes; [Matthew 6:28-29](#)

Solomon Speaks

"Happy is the person who finds wisdom and gains understanding." If only I had always observed those words, which I myself wrote! I wasn't born with wisdom, nor did I study or search for it. God graciously gave it to me. How peaceful and productive both the king and his kingdom were when I used my wisdom. How stressful and unsettled things became when it was ignored. ([1 Kings 3:12](#); [1 Kings 4:24-25](#); [1 Kings 11:1-25](#); [Proverbs 3:13](#))

What privileges have been mine: power, fortune, fame, and honor! What opportunities God has given me: building the Temple, presiding over the greatest Passover celebration in history, and establishing Israel as a great nation. But, oh, what greed, lust, pride, and disobedience I have displayed! I allowed my life to be controlled by immorality and idolatry, through the influence of my pagan wives. Indeed, what would Moses have thought had he known one of Israel's kings would so shamefully disregard all three of the very simple commandments he laid down concerning how we should rule? ([1 Kings 4:21, 25](#); [1 Kings 5-6](#); [1 Kings 8:62-66](#); [1 Kings 10:1, 6-8](#); [1 Kings 23](#); [1 Kings 11:1, 9](#); [Deut. 17:14-17](#))

At his invitation, I once asked God for wisdom. The request pleased him and he granted it. In retrospect, perhaps I should have sought something far better, namely, a heart after God's own heart, like that of my father David. ([1 Kings 3:4-13](#); [1 Samuel 13:14](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Solomon

- We should pray for godly wisdom ([1 Kings 3:5-9](#); [Proverbs 4:7](#); [James 1:5](#)).
- God gives his best to those who allow him to make the choice! Solomon received the wisdom he asked for, plus the riches, honor, and long life he did not ask for ([1 Kings 3:12-14](#)).
- "How much better to get wisdom than gold!" ([Proverbs 16:16](#)). While Solomon preached this, he did not always practice it ([1 Kings 10:14, 22](#)).
- Because we are fallen human beings, even the wisest among us can ignore the best advice. Solomon's acquisition of horses ([1 Kings 4:26](#)), gold ([1 Kings 10:14](#)), and wives

([1 Kings 11:1-3](#)) was a direct violation of a four-century-old piece of good advice ([Deut. 17:14-17](#)).

- One's choice of a marriage partner can have a decisive effect on one's life, for good or for ill ([1 Kings 11:3-11](#)).

Key Verse

"There was no king from any nation who could compare to [Solomon], and God loved him and made him king over all Israel. But even he was led into sin by his foreign wives" ([Neh. 13:26](#)).

ZADOK

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 KINGS)

Key Facts: Co-high priest with Abiathar in David's time, high priest in Solomon's time ([1 Kings 2:35](#); [2 Samuel 8:17](#))

Father: Ahitub ([1 Chron. 6:8](#))

Son: Ahimaaz ([2 Samuel 15:27](#))

Total Bible References: 40

Key References: [1 Kings 1:8](#), [38-39](#); [1 Kings 2:35](#); [2 Samuel 8:17](#); [2 Samuel 15:24-37](#); [Ezekiel 44:15](#)

Zadok Speaks

What a wealthy, famous, and wise king he has been these past three decades. He still is rich and well known, but I fear lust and greed have all but snuffed out his wisdom. Yes, there is reason for much concern at this time, especially when one considers his successor son. I have no confidence whatever in young Rehoboam. ([1 Kings 10:6-8](#); [1 Kings 23](#); [1 Kings 11:1-11](#); [1 Kings 12:1-15](#))

Oh, for the glory days of David. Life was not nearly as easy back then, but it was far more rewarding. How can I ever forget carrying the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, and bringing it to David in the wilderness during Absalom's rebellion? True, of course, the son of Jesse on occasion strayed from the path of righteousness, but then he tearfully accepted Nathan's rebuke. However, it appears my words of warning to Solomon are falling on deaf ears. Dear God, I prayed for the king when his half brother tried to keep him from the throne. Now, let me intensify my efforts lest a far more deadly enemy, his own carnal nature, drive him from it. ([1 Kings 1:8](#); [2 Samuel 6:15](#); [2 Samuel 11-12](#); [2 Samuel 15:24-29](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Zadok

- God rewards the faithfulness of his servants. As a reward for his faithfulness, God promised that Zadok's descendants would serve as priests in the millennial Temple ([Ezekiel 44:15](#); [Ezekiel 48:11](#)).

Key Verse

"The Levitical priests of the family of Zadok continued to minister faithfully in the Temple when Israel abandoned me for idols. These men will serve as my ministers. They will stand in my presence and offer the fat and blood of the sacrifices, says the Sovereign LORD" ([Ezekiel 44:15](#)).