

**Sunday – April 16, 2017**

## **Preparation**

We continue this week reading through the Book of 1 Kings. Pay special attention to Solomon's reign as he begins as a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ in His millennial reign, but transforms into a picture of the anti-christ as he directly disobeys God's commands from Deuteronomy 7, and is infiltrated by "other" gods and idols. In Deuteronomy 7:1 we read of a list of nations of which God directly commands that, when He delivers them into the hands of Israel, they are to be "utterly destroyed" (Deuteronomy 7:2). The reason for God's seemingly drastic dealings with these people is found in Deuteronomy 7:4, "For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly." As we read through 1 Kings, we come to chapter 11:1-2 and read, "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love." The result of such is found in verse 4, "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father." Many lessons can be taken away from this account, but know for sure that God does not waste His words. He authored exactly what He did in Deuteronomy 7 because He knew exactly what the result would be if not followed, hence Solomon. We should definitely make special note of this principle.

Throughout this week's reading, we will read of change after change and some of the results of each. As we experience in today's world, we will see that some of their changes will be not-so-good while others will be positive in nature, but all changes will be unstoppable; change will be, as it always is, inevitable.

As we read of the various kings enthroned, take note of the type leader each king was and the result of the people under his leadership; as the leader goes, so goes the people. By the end of this week's reading we will meet some well-known individuals: Elijah, the prophet of God; Ahab, a wicked king in Israel; Jezebel, a queen in Israel with a bad reputation (to say the least). All of these (plus others) brought changes that affected many, if not all, which can be used to change us, and to show us if we are being conformed to this world or transformed according to the will of God. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by

the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” This verse (Romans 12:2) lets us understand that God desires change, even designed it, so that change would take place, and made a way for change to happen.

In preparation for this week’s devotion in the word, let’s consider our reaction to change; are we more often rebellious or gracious in receiving the inevitable? Can we see how much (or little) we have changed since our relationship with Christ began? Remember, Jesus loves us just as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us just as we are. He wants to transform our mind to be more like His by renewing it, which of course, means change. While He remains the same yesterday, today and forever (Malachi 3:6 “For I am the LORD, I change not...” Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”), we must change because of our yesterdays, todays, and for a blessed for-ever in and with Christ our Lord, King and Saviour. While He is perfect, holy and righteous from the beginning, we are far from perfect, holy or righteous, from the beginning; we must change. Let us become gracious in accepting the changes that God allows to come into our lives regardless of the source of the changes.

**Monday – April 17, 2017**

**TODAY'S READING: 1 Kings 4 - 6**

**OVERVIEW:**

Solomon's key men; the kings of the earth come to hear Solomon; the preparation for building the Temple; the specifics in building the Temple.

**HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:**

Solomon is reigning over all Israel and chapter 4 and verse 25 lets us know it is a time of peace. God confirms His granting of wisdom and understanding to Solomon, and by the end of chapter four, the kings of the earth are coming to listen to Solomon. This is a great picture of the millennial reign of Christ as He sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem during a time of great peace as the kings of the earth come and worship before Him. However, we also see a crack in Solomon's character as king. Chapter 4 and verse 26 states the vast number of horses Solomon has acquired. It doesn't seem like that big of a deal, does it? The key is found in Deut. 17:16 where God specifically tells the future kings of Israel not to multiply horses to themselves. Horses represent power and strength in an army, something to trust other than God (Psalm 20:7). In good times, we, too, must watch for the small things that begin to bring us down.

Solomon does understand the opportunity before him. Because of the victories by his father (David), he has the opportunity to live in peace and build the temple of God. We, too, have an opportunity before us because of the victory won by our Father. I Cor. 6:19 tells us that each one of us as a believer in Christ is the temple of God. The question is, how are we doing building God's temple? Do we prepare with the same passion Solomon did, or do we simply take it for granted? Will we be remembered for the temple (our lives) we built unto the Lord?

At times it can seem monotonous reading through the specific details of the temple. Always remember, God had a plan for that building. It wasn't Solomon's responsibility to figure it all out, but rather to simply follow God's plan. The same is true in our lives. I Corinthians 3 tells us the kind of materials God wants us to use to build the temple of our lives and work.

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through SOLOMON as the kings during the millennial kingdom of the earth come before Him to seek His wisdom. – I Kings 4:34 (Phil. 2:9-11 – Christ will one day rule the world as Israel's king in His millennial reign, and every knee will bow before Him.)

**Tuesday – April 18, 2017**

**TODAY'S READING: 1 Kings 7-8**

**OVERVIEW:**

Building Solomon's house; the temple is furnished; the dedication of the temple.

**HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:**

The temple was an unbelievably magnificent structure. The details that God provides in chapters 5-7 help us understand how incredible it must have been. However, there is another crack in the character of Solomon revealed in 7:1. Notice how God grabs our attention with the very first word – “But”. While Solomon did oversee an awesome work for God, and he loves the Lord, he also built himself quite a nice place. In fact, it took almost twice as long to build his own house as God's house! We think, “Why would Solomon do such a thing?” don't we? We must remember we offer our service to God, and even want to do great things for Him, yet in the midst of it all, we still make sure to take care of ourselves. May the Lord help us examine ourselves daily – especially when things are going well.

Chapter 8 is one of the most glorious chapters in the Bible. It is hard for us to imagine the spectacle of that day. The nation is at peace, their king is sought by world leaders because of his wisdom, and now the house of the Lord is finished. Then to witness the glory of the Lord filling the temple so that even the priests could not minister – it would have been awe inspiring. As we read Solomon's prayer to the Lord we can understand Jesus' passion in Matthew 21:12-13. Here were His people under the control of a foreign power, and instead of being broken and seeking God in the temple, as 1 Kings 8:33-34 states they should, they are using the temple for personal gain. The question we should ask ourselves living in Laodicea is, “Are we broken before God, or do we have a form of godliness with no power from God?” The good news is, God does respond to a broken and contrite heart, and just as He filled Solomon's temple, He can fill our lives on a daily basis. The choice is ours.

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As THE GLORY OF GOD filling His temple. – 1 Kings 8:10-11 (John 1:14; Isa. 40:5; Matt. 16:27-7:2)

**TODAY'S READING: I KINGS 9-11**

**OVERVIEW:**

God speaks to Solomon; the Queen of Sheba comes to Solomon; Solomon's kingdom increases in wealth; Solomon's heart is turned away; God's judgment upon Solomon.

**HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:**

Chapter 9 begins with God speaking to Solomon a second time. It has now been 20 years since God first spoke to Solomon, and God reestablishes the path of blessing and the path of defeat. God emphasizes in verse 4 walking in integrity of heart and uprightness, and keeping His statutes and judgments. God does not expect perfection (David certainly wasn't), but He is always seeking a true heart. As a believer, we all have the same choice as Solomon. Galatians 5 describes it as either walking in the Spirit or walking in the flesh. The Spirit produces true spiritual fruit, while the flesh produces vanity. If it wasn't so difficult, it would seem like an easy choice.

Chapter 10 begins with the Queen of Sheba coming to prove Solomon with hard questions. She has heard of his fame, but can't believe it can be true. She quizzes him on the things most important to her heart, and she is blown away by his wisdom and his kingdom. Doctrinally, this pictures the Lord Jesus Christ reigning in Jerusalem as the people of the earth come unto Him. Devotionally, isn't it good to know that God is not afraid of hard questions? Also, in 10:4-5 she is amazed at his wisdom, the house of the Lord, and everything about his kingdom. We, too, can have the wisdom of God (the Bible) put on display in our life, and as it changes us, it should have an impact on those around us. Once again, though in the midst of greatness, another crack is shown. Chapter 10 and verse 14 states the weight of gold to come to Solomon in one year is six hundred threescore and six talents (666)! Remember Deut. 17:17 – the kings of Israel are not to greatly multiply gold unto themselves. Deut. 17:16 commands them not to multiply horses or go to Egypt to get horses. Chapter 10, verses 26 and 28 show the slippery slope Solomon was on.

We have seen the flaws in Solomon and now they will come full bore. The three things God specifically mentions in Deut. 17:16-17 are the very things to which Solomon yields. In the midst of the most blessed time in Israel's history and with their most glorious king on the throne, Solomon allows his heart to be turned

away. Remember when it was just horses and gold? No big deal, right? Now it's a thousand women and building altars to false gods. Proverbs 4:23 says we must guard our heart, but not just from the "big" stuff, but the little things as well. This also should remind us that we cannot sit back and rest on our past victories, but everyday engage in the spiritual battle by dying to ourselves. Sadly, there doesn't seem to be a Nathan that was willing to confront Solomon. Do you have a Nathan in your life? Someone that is a friend, but will also challenge your life. Are YOU that kind of friend?

Because of Solomon's disobedience, God raises up men to be his adversaries. One of these men will eventually lead ten of the tribes in rebellion against Solomon's son.

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through SOLOMON ruling in Jerusalem as the leaders of the world seek Him and His wisdom. – I Kings 10:1-6 (Phil. 2:9:11).

**TODAY'S READING: I KINGS 12-15**

**OVERVIEW:**

Rehoboam becomes king; the kingdom is divided; Jeroboam is made king of Israel and institutes false worship; the prophet of God rebukes Jeroboam; God judges Jeroboam's house; the temple looted under Rehoboam's reign; the reigns of Abijam and Asa in Judah; the reign of Nadab and Baasha in Israel.

**HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:**

Rehoboam, Solomon's son, takes the throne after Solomon's death. He has the opportunity to unify the people, but instead chooses foolish counsel over wise counsel. Ten tribes rebel and become known as Israel. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin stay loyal to Rehoboam, and they are called Judah. Jeroboam is made king of Israel (the ten tribes). In 11:38, God promised to bless Jeroboam if he walked after God. However, instead of trusting God, Jeroboam trusts his own heart. He establishes a false system of worship and actually brings back the golden calf.

God sends a prophet to rebuke Jeroboam for this idolatry. In one of the more bizarre stories in the Bible, the prophet, on his way home, is deceived by an older prophet and has supper in the old prophet's home. God chastises the young prophet for not obeying His Word, and takes the life of the young prophet. As we have seen throughout our study, God says what He means, and means what He says!

God also judges Jeroboam and takes the life of his child. Isn't it interesting though, how he first tries to use God's prophet in the midst of crisis, but nothing ever really changes in Jeroboam's heart. Rehoboam, reigning in Judah, is no better. He builds the false gods and the false places of worship. The price is still being paid for Solomon's departure from the Word of God. Our sin does not just affect us. It can have an impact far into the future and to other generations. This is also seen in the life of Jeroboam and his other son, Nadab. Nadab is killed by Baasha, so Baasha can become king. Baasha also killed all the house of Jeroboam. The price of sin is high.

Abijam is Rehoboam's son and he is evil like his father. Asa, Abijam's son, does what is right in the eyes of God. We must not forget that sin is an individual choice. In spite of my past, my circumstances, my family – I can choose to follow God. There is never an excuse.

## **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

In the PROPHECY OF JOSIAH. Another child shall come that shall judge the false gods and false worship of this world. – I Kings 13:2 (II Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 18:1-2, 10,21).

## TODAY'S READING: I KINGS 16-19

### OVERVIEW:

The corruption of the early kings of Israel; Elijah prophesies the drought; Elijah is fed miraculously; The widow obeys God's Word; The widow's son is raised from the dead; Elijah confronts Ahab; Elijah takes on the prophets of Baal; The Lord reveals Himself as the Lord; Elijah flees Jezebel; Elijah hears the still small voice of God; Elijah puts his mantle on Elisha.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The pattern for the kings of Israel was one of apostasy. Each one turned from God's way and the Lord brought judgment on each. Although it was a steady line of sinful kings, the crescendo was reached with Ahab. Ahab takes as his wife the infamous Jezebel and begins a reign that somehow is more wicked than all the kings before him (16:33). That is an amazing statement considering the statements made about the other kings in 16:7,13,19,25-26! In the midst of Ahab's wicked reign God raises up a prophet named Elijah. Elijah prophesies to Ahab that it will not rain until Elijah calls for it. God then provides food and drink for His prophet in two ways. First, by using ravens to bring bread and flesh to Elijah while he drank from the brook Cherith. Second, from a poor widow and her son.

The story of the widow preparing Elijah's food before she prepared, her own is one of the favorite stories pulled out of context by money-hungry televangelist. They say, you, too, must give to God's man first (i.e. them), and then God will bless you. They twist the scripture and abuse it for their own profit. The key is not what she did, but why she did it. Notice in their conversation in 17:10-16, the key is verse 14 when Elijah states this is the Word of God – "for thus saith the Lord God of Israel". The lesson is she obeyed God's word despite her circumstances. What we often do is disobey God's Word and use our circumstances as an excuse. We may not treat our spouse the way in which God tells us, but that is somehow our spouses fault (their actions) rather than ours. We can justify murmuring because we don't like or agree with something that is happening at the church. We walk in the flesh because we're just so busy! The widow obeyed despite her circumstances, and so should we! Then things get worse – her son dies! God reveals she is not a super-saint – she questions God's prophet – but in her honesty with God, He meets her need. What we many times fail to do is get honest with God. We want to take our frustrations to people who have no

business hearing them. God says, "Bring them to Me and I will meet your need!"

In the third year of the drought Elijah goes to confront Ahab. The meeting is set up by one of Ahab's governors, Obadiah. God's testimony about Obadiah is he fears the Lord greatly. We would probably assume it impossible to fear God and be one of Ahab's governors but that is what God said. As Ahab and Elijah meet, Ahab tries to lay the blame on Elijah. Isn't it amazing how the world, and many times believers walking in the flesh, want to blame people who are simply obeying God for their problems? It's not new. What is about to follow is the classic showdown between Elijah, calling upon the name of the Lord, and the prophets of Baal. Most of us know the story of how God honors Elijah's offering and reveals He is the Lord and Baal is nothing. However, before that great victory and revival could take place Elijah had to confront Ahab. We must be ready to deal with the things God wants us to deal with before He will move with revival in our lives.

From the mountain top experience to fleeing for his life, Elijah is being put through a myriad of emotions. Jezebel wants to kill him for killing her prophets. Elijah flees and starts to feel a little sorry for himself (19:4). The good news is, he's talking to God about it. God reveals He still has a plan for Elijah and shows him the key is not the "big stuff" – 19:11 – but rather in hearing God's voice and obeying -19:12. God also reminds Elijah that there are 7,000 in Israel that are true to Him. Isn't that just like us? We get thinking we're the only ones doing right and obeying God, and God has to remind us, we're not alone!

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As THE FIRE OF GOD consuming the sacrifice. – I Kings 18:38 (Heb. 12:29).

**Saturday – April 22, 2017**

## **Reflection**

This week's reading has taken us from one end of Israel's glory to the next. We began the week in Solomon's "glory days", as he was literally following in his father's footsteps by walking in the ways of the Lord. God's covenant with Solomon was found in 1 Kings 9:4-5 "And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel." This is the positive aspect of the covenant based on the previous works and words of Solomon. However, continuing through the discourse, verses 6 and 7 reveal the negative aspect to the covenant between God and Solomon: "But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people." Unfortunately, Solomon chose the negative side to the covenant, and as we read throughout the rest of the week, God fulfilled His end of the deal. The reason is stated in 1 Kings 9:9, "Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil."

That being said, by way of Reflection, we should note God's longsuffering Spirit and dealings with Israel. Psalm 86:15 tells us, "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." Then, in 2 Peter 3:9, we read, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God proved Himself longsuffering through the fact that He chose to never "make a full end" (Jeremiah 5:18) to the nation as a whole. If we learned nothing else through our reading this week, let this be a principle that rings true to all of us. How many times has God proved Himself longsuffering to us through our lives. How many times have we deserved death and judgment, yet He chose to provide grace and mercy. Perhaps, as we read in the weeks ahead, we'll take note of God's longsuffering Spirit with the nation, and therefore, be reminded of His treatment of us. For truly

we, Romans 3:23, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) In closing, let us join in praising God and “give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.” (1 Chronicles 16:34)

### **SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:**

**1 Kings 6:7** “And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.”

**1 Kings 8:27** “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”

**1 Kings 11:1** “But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;”

**1 Kings 13:19** “So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.”

**1 Kings 18:17** “And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?”