

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-5-12 PM NOTES
1 KINGS
#13 in Series, "The Glory of God in the Old Testament"

I. The Reign of Solomon (Chapter 1-11)

A. Solomon's Wisdom (Chapter 1-3)

1 Kings 3:9 (ESV) "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

"Solomon's own words indicate that in asking for wisdom he did not mean *spiritual* wisdom—that insight into Divine things which comes only of regeneration and sanctification and a close fellowship with God, that wisdom of which Paul speaks in the New Testament. No; in *that* kind of wisdom Solomon falls considerably behind his father, David. The wisdom Solomon sought—and with which he became supernaturally endowed—was administrative discernment, sagacious [wise or shrewd] judgment, intellectual grasp; aptitude for the acquisition of knowledge, a practical wisdom in the directing of affairs. In *this* kind of wisdom, he excelled even the renowned philosophers of his day."

—J. Sidlow Baxter

B. Solomon's Wealth (Chapter 4-10)

1. Domestic Prosperity (Chapter 4)

2. Religious Achievement (Chapter 5-8)

"The importance of the temple of Solomon, which we have been led to regard as one of the wonders of the ancient world, consisted not in its size, but in the elaborate, costly, and highly decorative character of its whole interior and furniture, and also in the number, extent, grandeur, and substantial masonry of its surrounding courts, chambers, walls, and towers."

—Dr. John Kitto

Colossians 3:23 (HCSB) "Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men."

3. Political Stability (Chapter 9-10)

C. Solomon's Wickedness (Chapter 11)

"In the brain of the wisest of men always resides the corner of the fool."

—Aristotle

Proverbs 18:22a (NKJV) "He who finds a wife finds a good thing..."

II. The Nation Divided (Chapter 12-22)

Corvée—A policy of conscripting men or women for forced labor

1 Kings 12:13-14 (ESV) “¹³ And the king answered the people harshly, and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him, ¹⁴ he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, ‘My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’”

A. The Revolt of the 10 Tribes (Chapter 12)

B. The Reign of the Early Kings in Israel and Judah (Chapter 13-16)

C. The Reforms of Elijah (Chapter 17-19)

1. Elijah and the Famine (Chapter 17)

2. Elijah and the Fight (Chapter 18)

James 5:17-18 (NIV) “¹⁷ Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”

3. Elijah and the Flight (Chapter 19)

D. The Ruthlessness of Ahab and Jezebel (Chapter 20-22)

III. Three Lessons From 1 Kings

A. Spiritual Wisdom Is More Important Than Governing or Leading Wisdom

Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NIV) “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.”

B. Turning Away From God and His Word Results in a Downward Spiral Away From God and His Blessings

C. Even in Dark Times, God Has His Elijahs

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-5-12 PM
1 KINGS
#13 in Series, “The Glory of God in the Old Testament”

In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Kings was not divided into two parts (1 & 2 Kings). The reason our Bibles have the book in two parts is because when the Old Testament was translated into the Greek language in about 132 BC (called the Septuagint), the Greek language required about one third more space because it is so much more precise than the Hebrew. Kings (along with Samuel and Chronicles) was too long to go on one scroll so there was the first scroll of Kings and the second scroll of Kings. Even though we no longer have the Scriptures on a scroll, the two book format has continued. I share that to show you that there is really no break between 1 & 2 Kings. 1 Kings is a very important book in understanding the history of Israel. It records what was called “the disruption”, which was the splitting of the nation into the 10 northern tribes sometimes called Ephraim (the largest tribe) but most often called Israel, and the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin that were referred to as Judah. This divided kingdom continued until the Northern kingdom was defeated and much of the population was taken into exile by Assyria in 722 BC and Judah was defeated and most of the population was taken captive and deported in phases by the Babylonians by 586 BC. The book is called “Kings” because the subjects of the book are primarily the kings of Israel and Judah.

1 Kings picks up where 2 Samuel left off. King David is nearing death. He actually seems to have aged prematurely. He was just 70 and life spans by this time were similar to those of today. Perhaps all of the family turmoil he had been through that we looked at in 2 Samuel had taken its toll. The turmoil was not over. God’s choice to succeed David was not his oldest living son but one of his youngest sons, Solomon. We don’t know Solomon’s exact age, but it was likely under 20. David had promised Solomon’s Mother, Bathsheba some time earlier that her son would be the next king. David’s oldest living son, Adonijah, saw in his father’s physical weakness an opportunity to take the throne [Read 1:5-7]. The godly prophet Nathan heard of this conspiracy to take the throne that God had given to Solomon, and went to Bathsheba. Nathan and Bathsheba worked out a plan to both inform David of this conspiracy and to give David counsel in what to do [Read 1:15-18; 24-25]. David in his weakened state goes into action and makes it clear to the nation that his choice to succeed him is Solomon. Solomon, David’s young son became the king in his father’s place. The whole nation looked to and accepted Solomon as their king.

I. The Reign of Solomon (Chapter 1-11)

Solomon’s reign marks the most affluent era of Jewish history. At its height, Solomon’s kingdom extended from the Euphrates River to the north and east, to the Mediterranean in the west to the border of Egypt in the south. Much like his father David, Solomon’s reign did not end well.

A. Solomon’s Wisdom (Chapter 1-3)

[Read 2:10-12] Solomon began his reign by carrying out justice against David’s oldest living son (Adonijah) who plotted again to take the throne from Solomon by seeking to marry David’s youngest wife which would be seen as a claim on the throne. There was also the carrying out of justice on the head of David’s military, Joab, who had conspired with Adonijah to take the throne. In addition, Solomon had Shimei executed because he had cursed King David when he was fleeing Jerusalem when his son Absalom had rebelled. Shimei had violated the conditions of having his life spared. These executions were not for vengeance or to remove potential rivals; they were the carrying out of justice which human government is charged to do by God.

Let’s examine an incident in Solomon’s life that explains his success. Before the temple was built, Gibeon was a place where sacrifices and offerings were offered to the Lord. Solomon seemed to do everything with extravagance and that included offerings to God [Read 1 Kings 3:5-9] Listen to verse 9

in the ESV: **1 Kings 3:9 (ESV)** “Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” What maturity this young king had! Even though he is under 21 years of age, he is humble and realizes that he is not capable of leading this great nation. In hindsight, we could wish that he had asked for spiritual wisdom also, but that is not what he asked for. Here is a good summary of the kind of wisdom Solomon asked for and received. “Solomon’s own words indicate that in asking for wisdom he did not mean *spiritual* wisdom – that insight into Divine things which comes only of regeneration and sanctification and a close fellowship with God, that wisdom of which Paul speaks in the New Testament. No; in *that* kind of wisdom Solomon falls considerably behind his father, David. The wisdom Solomon sought – and with which he became supernaturally endowed – was administrative discernment, sagacious [wise or shrewd] judgment, intellectual grasp; aptitude for the acquisition of knowledge, a practical wisdom in the directing of affairs. In *this* kind of wisdom, he excelled even the renowned philosophers of his day” [J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, page 99]. While Solomon was given wisdom to govern the nation, he lacked the wisdom to govern his own personal life. How did this wisdom that God gave to Solomon work its way out? We see it in Solomon’s international trade and the peace and prosperity of the nation under his leadership [Read 4:24-25]. Solomon was wise in his ability to govern, to discern opportunities and to collect knowledge [Read 4:29-30].

B. Solomon’s Wealth (Chapter 4-10)

It is likely that no other nation has experienced the wealth and opulence and extravagance of Israel under Solomon. Even though there was great material prosperity under Solomon, all was not well. I wonder if that same thing will be said about 21st Century America several hundreds of years from now?

1. Domestic Prosperity (Chapter 4)

In the first part of this chapter, we see Solomon’s “cabinet” and his organizations relating to the tribes of Israel. Three words give us a good description of these early days of Solomon’s reign – prosperity, plenty, and peace.

2. Religious Achievement (Chapter 5-8)

The main thing that occupies our attention in this section is the building and dedication of the temple. Remember from 2 Samuel that David had done much of the work before he died to make this project possible. He had the plans and most of the building materials collected. There are some misconceptions as to the size of the temple. When we see the number of workers involved and the time involved and the materials involved, we think of it being this massive edifice [Read 5:13-17]. In reality, the temple building itself was small, but very extravagant. Depending on what they were using as a cubit, the temple itself was only about 120 feet X 60 feet. The size often disappoints people, but remember the purpose of the temple. Unlike our modern churches that are built to accommodate large crowds, the worshippers didn’t even go into the temple. The focus of the temple was on the manifest presence of God that was there. The people didn’t worship in the temple, but before the temple where in the Holy of Holies the manifest presence of God dwelt. The priests of the tribe of Levi were the ones who ministered and worshipped within the temple. One Bible scholar summarized the greatness of the temple this way: “The importance of the temple of Solomon, which we have been led to regard as one of the wonders of the ancient world, consisted not in its size, but in the elaborate, costly, and highly decorative character of its whole interior and furniture, and also in the number, extent, grandeur, and substantial masonry of its surrounding courts, chambers, walls, and towers” [Dr. John Kitto quoted in J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, Pages 91-92]. It has been estimated that if the building were constructed today, the cost would be not in the millions, but over a billion. The reason is that the temple was made of cut stone with each one fitting perfectly with the stones around it. The stones on the inside were overlaid with wood which was overlaid with gold, and embellished with precious stones. Let me point out something that I never thought about until I was preparing this study. Most of the elaborateness and opulence was inside the temple. Yet no one but the priests saw the inside of the temple. Why not just use fake jewels and gold colored paint on the wood? The temple was not built primarily for man but for God. They spared no cost even though the vast majority of the people would never see inside. They sacrificed to build it with the best because it was

an offering to God. What if we approached our work and ministry like that. “I am offering this to God and I want it to be the best whether anyone else ever sees it or hears it or even is aware of it.” **Colossians 3:23 (HCSB)** “Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men”.

One of the most exciting things in the book of 1 Kings is when the temple was dedicated [Read 8:10-11]. It would be well worth your time to study Solomon’s dedication prayer for the temple in 1 Kings 8:22-53 (a really long public prayer).

3. Political Stability (Chapter 9-10)

In chapter 9, God appears to Solomon again, but this time gives him a warning [Read 9:2-7]. Because he lacked spiritual wisdom, Solomon did not heed God’s warning and the book of Ecclesiastes shows us the consequences. The period covered in chapters 9 & 10 were outwardly stable times, but there were some destructive seeds being sown.

We have seen Solomon’s wisdom and wealth. Now things begin to deteriorate.

C. Solomon’s Wickedness (Chapter 11)

As we read this chapter, we see the wisest of men become the greatest of fools [Read 11:1-6]. Aristotle said, “In the brain of the wisest of men always resides the corner of the fool”. He could have been describing Solomon. The destructive seeds that Solomon had sown earlier had now begun to sprout. This is the same man who wrote in **Proverbs 18:22a (NKJV)** “*He who finds a wife finds a good thing...*” Solomon personifies that familiar phrase, “Too much of a good thing”. Seven hundred wives is 699 too many! Solomon’s heart had turned from God when he began to make compromises and turn from spiritual wisdom and commands. Solomon’s heart was captured by that which God had prohibited. In the remainder of Chapter 11, we see things begin to unravel in the nation of Israel. If you want to know what Solomon was personally going through during this time, I encourage you to read the book of Ecclesiastes. The often repeated phrase by Solomon is, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity”. This king with so much promise, so much potential, so much material prosperity, becomes a disillusioned, cynical, miserable, empty old man. In 11:43, Solomon died. But the consequences of his disobedience are just beginning.

II. The Nation Divided (Chapter 12-22)

One of those destructive seeds that Solomon had sown was the implementation of what is called “corvee” (pronounced cor-vey). In his lust to expand the wealth and splendor of Israel, Solomon had instituted this policy that involved forced servitude of men and women (mostly non-Jews, but it included some Jews) into what could only be called “slave labor camps”. The people were conscripted for a set period of time and not for life, but the people hated this forced labor in addition to all the taxes. When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king. Rehoboam was confronted by a man named Jeroboam (who had a bad history with Solomon) who asked Rehoboam to ease the burden on the people. Rehoboam was not a very bright man! He rejected the counsel of the older men and took the counsel of his younger contemporaries. Here was his answer to these people who had legitimate complaints: **1 Kings 12:13-14 (ESV)** “¹³ And the king answered the people harshly, and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him, ¹⁴ he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, ‘My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’” The predictable result was rebellion.

A. The Revolt of the 10 Tribes (Chapter 12)

The 10 Northern tribes rebelled and made Jeroboam their king. A civil war with massive casualties loomed on the horizon. God in His mercy spoke through a prophet named Shemaiah in 1 Kings 12:23-24 [Read]. The Northern Kingdom had a sorry beginning and it went downhill from there. Jeroboam led them into idolatry and until the Northern Kingdom was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 BC, there was not a single godly king!

B. The Reign of the Early Kings in Israel and Judah (Chapter 13-16)

Over the period covered by the book of 1 Kings, there were 8 kings over Israel from four dynasties (families) and 4 kings over Judah (all from the lineage of David). All of Israel’s kings were evil. Two of the Kings of Judah were evil and two were good. The constant direction of Israel was away from the Lord

and the overall pattern of Judah was a much slower slide away from the Lord; there were some periods of revival under Asa and Jehoshaphat.

C. The Reforms of Elijah (Chapter 17-22)

Elijah's life could be described as a beautiful flower growing in a sewer. Though there were other prophets mentioned in 1 Kings, Elijah was the most prominent. He bursts on the scene during the reign of Israel's most wicked king – Ahab. The name Elijah means “Jehovah is my God”. He was aptly named. The ministry of the Old Testament prophet was not so much foretelling the future (though there was some of that); their ministry was primarily forth-telling God's Word and its application to the sins of the nation. The thing that sets Israel's King Ahab apart from the other evil kings of Israel was his wife. Her name was Jezebel. She was the daughter of a foreign king and was an avid worshipper of Baal. It seems that while Ahab ruled over Israel, Jezebel ruled over Ahab. He was so henpecked that he jumped out of bed and crowed every morning! We see three major events in Elijah's ministry designed to bring the Northern Kingdom back to God.

1. Elijah and the Famine (Chapter 17)

[Read 17:1] That was not a popular message and God led him to leave immediately. We see a pattern in Elijah's life from 1 Kings 17:2, 5a [Read]. He was a man who obeyed God. As he went into hiding, God supernaturally protected and provided for him. As he prophesied, there was a drought and resulting famine in the land of Israel.

2. Elijah and the Fight (Chapter 18)

I love the holy boldness of Elijah! [Read 18:17-19] Most know the story. Elijah offers a challenge to this wicked king and the power behind the throne – his wife Jezebel. What is happening is much like what happened in Egypt with the plagues that were aimed at the different Egyptian gods. Baal and Asherah were Canaanite gods that had to do with nature, weather, and fertility. The famine in the land had doubtlessly already caused the idolaters of Israel to doubt their power. The nation is described in 1 Kings 18:21 [Read]. The contest dealt with who could send fire to consume the sacrifice. Baal was also considered the god of fire. What could be fairer than to ask the God of fire to send fire? In a somewhat comical way, the prophets of Baal went through all kinds of rituals and incantations, but to no avail because the sacrifice lay there unconsumed. When it was Elijah's turn he had water poured on the sacrifice [Read 18:33-35]. Elijah then prayed a simple prayer of faith. He reveals his motive in 18:37 [Read]. God sent the fire [Read 18:38]. The people shouted praise to God and then in the power of God, Elijah, with the help of the people killed all 850 false prophets.

Showing that only Jehovah had control over the weather, Elijah then told Ahab it was going to rain. Elijah prayed, and the Lord sent rain. We see this mighty prophet and his powerful prayers and see him as a man who is not in the same league with us. However, we are told in **James 5:17-18 (NIV)** “¹⁷ Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”

3. Elijah and the Flight (Chapter 19)

In this chapter we see this mighty man of God in his human frailty. He had killed 850 prophets of Baal and then we see him running away in fear from the threats of one woman – Jezebel! God meets with Elijah, gives him rest and deals with his discouragement and sends him on his way with a mission to anoint the next king and a prophet who would succeed Elijah. I believe that his discouragement was because he was expecting either the death or repentance of the king and the queen and neither happened.

D. The Ruthlessness of Ahab and Jezebel (Chapter 20-22)

In this section we see the account of Jezebel seizing the vineyard of a poor man named Naboth and giving it to a whining Ahab. It was this passage that served as the text of one of the most published and recorded sermons ever preached – “Payday Someday” by Dr. R. G. Lee of Bellevue Baptist Church.

CONCLUSION

Allow me to conclude this book with a summary of some things we learn from it.

1. Spiritual wisdom is more important than governing or leading wisdom. Solomon had governing and leading wisdom, but he lacked spiritual wisdom. Take some time in the next few days to read the book of

Ecclesiastes. You will find that Solomon was an affluent, successful, esteemed and yet absolutely miserable man. It was as though God used Solomon as an object lesson to all generations after him to show that fulfilling all sensual desires, fulfilling all material desires, and fulfilling all desires to be honored and esteemed leaves us empty when we have left our love for God. God gave Solomon more of the things that we so often desire and give our lives for than any man before or after him possessed and yet his summary was, **Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NIV)** “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.”

2. Turning away from God and His Word results in a downward spiral away from God and His true blessings. Apart from repentance and a supernatural revival the end result of that downward spiral is destruction. The hope for our nation is not the President who will be elected later this year. Our nation is on a downward spiral away from God that will result in our destruction apart from a supernatural God sent revival.

3. Even in dark times, God has His Elijahs. In our dark times may we be like this man of God who lived in obedience and earnest fervent prayer. (3363)