

June Answers

- 1) [June 1] Construction of the temple. The building of the temple is the story of a friendship between a **Jew** and a **Gentile**: Solomon and Hiram. They formed a **partnership** of mutual benefit, and the citizens of both their nations labored side-by-side to build the temple. Solomon proudly claimed God as his own, “the LORD **my** God,” and declared Him to be “**greater** than all gods.” Hiram echoed this truth: “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who **made** heaven and earth.” Even if he was only being polite, Hiram took notice of how God had blessed Israel. This is what God always wanted Israel to be: a shining **light** of holiness and godliness to the surrounding nations. Oh that our lives would be a beacon in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation! Solomon displayed the wisdom God had given him as construction began. He drafted **three** times the number of workers needed for the project and arranged their schedules so they didn’t have to be away from home for more than a **month** at a time. This showed his concern for the welfare of his workers and the importance he placed on **family** life. It also reminds us that the strength of a **nation** depends on the strength of its families. The builders constructed the temple in reverent **silence** (“neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the house”), and they used only the finest materials (the gold overlay in the Most Holy Place was around 2 mm thick!). This teaches us the importance of honoring God with our best.

- 2) [June 2] Construction of the temple. In front of the temple were two bronze pillars about 34½ feet high, 18 feet in circumference, and 3 inches thick. They were called Jachin and Boaz. Jachin meant “God will **establish**,” and Boaz meant “In God is **strength**.” They stood at the doors of the temple to **remind** the people that God had promised to establish David’s dynasty, and that God had the power to perform what He had promised (cf. Rom 4:21). The craftsmen who labored on the temple, particularly Hiram, put an immense amount of **creativity** and **detail** into their work. A simple tank might have sufficed for the water needs of the priests, but Hiram crafted a beautiful bronze basin so large they called it “the **Sea**” (1 Kgs 7:23; Jer 52:17). Did it stand on a plain platform? No—it was supported by twelve **oxen**, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. This teaches us that we should put our whole **heart** and might into our service for God. He is worthy of the most beautiful, majestic, detailed work that our skills and talents can achieve. Indeed, Solomon built a temple so wondrous that when it was gone, people **wept** when they remembered its glory (Ezra 3:12). Kings and Chronicles both make a point of saying that Solomon completed **all** the work that was required to build the temple. Are we diligent to **finish** the tasks God has given us, or do we find ourselves starting well and then never following through?

- 3) [June 3] Dedication of the temple. The priests moved the **ark** into the temple, and when they came out of the holy place, the **cloud** of God’s presence filled the temple, and His glory was so great that the priests could not stand to minister (1 Kgs 8:11). This teaches us that when we’re faithful to obey God and follow His will, His **presence** will be with us. Solomon was overcome with **gratitude** when he saw God inhabit the temple. He praised God before the people, pointing out that God had been faithful to keep His promise. How wonderful to know that we can always count on God to **keep** His word! Solomon then knelt and spread out his hands toward heaven in prayer. He acknowledged: “There is no God like you” (1 Kgs 8:23). God keeps the covenant of love with all who continue wholeheartedly in His ways (cf. Deut 7:7–9). This reminds us that all God does is motivated by divine mercy and **love**. Solomon continued by asking God to shower His love and grace on Israel, even if one day they **rebelled** against Him. His prayer was grounded in texts like **Leviticus** 26 and **Deuteronomy** 27–28, where Moses told Israel that God would richly bless them for obedience, but would **exile** them for rebellion. Yet even then, if they would repent with all their **mind** and all their **heart**, God would hear them in the land of their enemies and forgive! What a great God we serve!

- 4) [June 4] God's approval of Solomon's temple and his dedicatory prayer. When Solomon finished praying (1 Kgs 8:56–61), God sent **fire** down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and sacrifices, and His **glory** filled the temple. The people bowed down with their faces to the ground and worshipped and gave praise to God. This teaches us that **humility** is the appropriate response when we are in God's presence, and that praise is proclaiming the **truth** about God's character (2 Chr 7:3). Solomon and the people celebrated a dedication festival and observed the Feast of **Tabernacles**. When it was over, they went home joyful and glad of heart. This shows us that worshipping God is a **blessing**, and that He is delighted when we find our **happiness** and satisfaction in Him. Solomon spent the next thirteen years building his palace. When he was finished, God appeared to him a **second** time and told him that He had heard his prayer and would grant his request. But God also warned Solomon that disobedience would bring disaster: **exile** from the land and destruction of the **temple**. This teaches us that we have the power to bring blessing or ruin on those under our authority. We have a solemn obligation to walk before God in integrity and uprightness of heart (1 Kgs 9:4).
- 5) [June 5] The power, the wealth and the wisdom of Solomon. Even **Jesus** would later refer to "Solomon in all his glory" (Matt 6:29). Solomon ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates River to the border of Egypt. They paid **tribute** to him and served him all the days of his life. He became so wealthy that silver was as plentiful as **stone** and cedars were as common as **sycamores**. His knowledge and wisdom became legendary, and his fame spread across the world. Kings sought his presence and longed to hear the wisdom God had given him. The queen of **Sheba**, not believing the fantastic reports of Solomon's fame, came to test him with difficult questions. "Solomon answered **all** her questions; there was **nothing** hidden from the king that he could not explain to her" (1 Kgs 10:3). She marveled at Solomon's wisdom, and she envied his servants, for they had the privilege of standing before him and **hearing** him every day. We also have the privilege of hearing such wisdom on a daily basis, for Solomon's wisdom came from **God**. We are blessed to have God's complete revelation in written form, and we can read and study it anytime we want. How wonderful to have such knowledge and understanding!
- 6) [June 6] The wise sayings and proverbs of Solomon. A proverb is a short statement that expresses a time-tested **truth**. Solomon's proverbs reflect his long years of **experience** and his keen **insight** into human behavior, and they continue to inspire and instruct to this day. But more than that, his proverbs and wise sayings were **inspired** by the Holy Spirit. The author of Hebrews asked, "Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as **sons**?" (Heb 12:5), and then he quoted Proverbs 3:11–12. This means we should read Proverbs as though it was a personal **letter** from God. When Solomon says, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching," the voice we're hearing is God's. What a marvelous **privilege**! God is sharing with us the same wisdom that made Solomon the greatest king of his day! Today's reading urges us to listen to God's voice and obey His instruction. God told us to seek for wisdom like **riches** and to treasure His commands in our hearts. His wisdom will give us discernment for living. It will guard us from the wicked, it will protect us from the **adulteress**, and it will enable us to live righteously. The **quest** for wisdom is the grand calling of our lives!
- 7) [June 7] The wise sayings and proverbs of Solomon. As Solomon counseled his own son, he remembered the teaching of his father David: "He taught me and said to me, 'Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live'" (Prov 4:4). This teaches us that a love of wisdom is passed on to the next generation mainly through the **personal** attention that a **parent** gives their child. We need to take **time** each day to impress on our children that there are two paths before them: the way of wisdom and the way of wickedness. We must channel their God-given desire for

happiness and success into a pursuit of that which brings true satisfaction and fulfillment: **wisdom**. Much of what Solomon taught his son had to do with the “**strange** woman” (cf. Prov 5:1–23; 6:20–35), that is, the woman who is not your own (she belongs to someone else). Solomon knew, of course, that his son would be attracted to beautiful women, and he did not condemn the sexual urge itself. Instead, he encouraged his son: “**Rejoice** in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with **delight**; be **intoxicated** always in her love” (Prov 5:18–19). This teaches us that being wise is more than merely **denying** ourselves forbidden pleasure. Rather, it is actively finding **joy** in the many good things that God has given us. The question is this: will we **feast** on what God has provided or will we **chase** after what He has forbidden?

- 8) [June 8] The wise sayings and proverbs of Solomon. Solomon’s story of the seduction of the simple young man teaches us what to **do** and what to **avoid** in order to save ourselves from the “strange woman.” First, we must **keep** God’s words and **treasure** his commands (Prov 7:1–5). Next, we should **know** the streets and alleys that lead to her door and **stay away** from them. We should never think that we’re a **match** for her, “for **many** a victim has she laid low” (Prov 7:26). Instead, we must listen to Lady Wisdom (Prov 8:5, 10). She invites us to **live** with her and **learn** her ways. Yet from across the way will always come the shrill cry of Dame Folly: “Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant!” (Prov 9:17). The choice is ours: will we cling to **wisdom** and live, or turn aside to **folly** and perish?
- 9) [June 9] The wise sayings and proverbs of Solomon. Many proverbs challenge us to think about what we **say** to others. For example, “When words are **many**, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent” (Prov 10:19). This teaches us that words are like **sheep**: the more there are, the more likely it is that some will go astray. If we’re wise, we will learn to hold our tongues. Holding our tongues means self-**restraint**. It means less talking and more **listening**. It means thinking before we speak and not **blurting** out the first thing that pops into our head. It means resisting the urge to always have the best story or the best joke. It means considering others as more important than ourselves (cf. Phil 2:3). If we bridle our tongues, our words can be like “choice **silver**” (Prov 10:20). They can bring wisdom, encouragement and hope. Truly, “the lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse” (Prov 10:32).
- 10) [June 10] The wise sayings and proverbs of Solomon. One of the themes that is repeated throughout the book of Proverbs is the importance of **disciplining** children: “Whoever spares the rod **hates** his son, but he who **loves** him is diligent to discipline him” (Prov 13:24). Solomon linked *love* with “discipline,” and *hate* with “sparing the rod.” By this definition, many parents *hate* their children. What a sobering thought! This teaches us that a loving parent cares deeply about developing godly **character** in their children. A loving parent understands that negative behavior patterns that start **small** will have devastating long-term consequences. A loving parent realizes that although it takes hard **work** and diligence to discipline a child, it is vital to their future success. When we think about this proverb, it should remind us of Eli and his sons. He **scolded** his sons, but he did not discipline them or remove them from service (1 Sam 2:22–36). If we coddle our children and excuse their sin, we are setting the stage for their **destruction**.
- 11) [June 11] The wise sayings and proverbs of Solomon. A recurring theme in Proverbs is the importance of being **teachable**: “He who neglects discipline despises himself, But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding” (Prov 15:32 NASB). This shows us that being teachable means receiving criticism and correction **graciously**. How hard that is to do! Our first reaction is to **justify** our behavior and **defend** our actions. Yet when we do that—when we ignore reproof and reject discipline—we are really despising ourselves. A teachable person welcomes instruction. A teachable

person is willing to humble themselves and say, “I was **wrong**, please forgive me.” A teachable person responds to criticism with **gratitude**. They say, “Thank you for caring enough to share that with me. I will make it a matter of prayer.” When we swallow our pride and receive God’s rebuke, we have His smile and His approval. Truly, “He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof Will dwell among the wise” (Prov 15:31 NASB). That’s exactly where we all want to be!

- 12) [June 12] The wise sayings and proverbs of Solomon. Solomon had a lot to say about various types of people. He talked about the fool, the simple, the wise, the scorner—and he talked about the **sluggard**. Solomon said, “The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it **back** to his mouth” (Prov 19:24). Our first reaction is to think, ‘How ridiculous! I’m nothing like that!’ But after further reflection, we realize that this caricature has some uncomfortable similarities to our own weaknesses. Do we **start** a project with great enthusiasm, only to toss it aside when we lose interest? Do we **begin** a new diet with determination, only to end up falling back into our old eating habits? Solomon’s proverb makes a convicting point: those who lack the diligence to follow through will end up **starving** right in front of table full of opportunity.
- 13) [June 13] The wise sayings and proverbs of Solomon. Some of Solomon’s proverbs address the benefits and burdens of **borrowing**: “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the **slave** of the lender” (Prov 22:7). At first glance this seems to mean that we should never borrow money, but this proverb wasn’t meant to be the last word on borrowing. Jesus said, “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to **borrow** from you” (Matt 5:42 NIV). This means that both lending and borrowing are **permissible**. The point of Solomon’s proverb is that we should carefully consider our **ability** to repay the amount we wish to borrow. A loan we can handle is **enabling**; a loan we can’t handle is **enslaving**. Since borrowing puts us in a vulnerable position, we should only borrow from individuals and institutions who will not take **advantage** of us. We should also make sure we’re borrowing for a good reason, for the risk is too great to borrow money on a whim.
- 14) [June 14] The sayings of the wise. The eighth saying of the wise says, “Don’t wear yourself out trying to get **rich**. Be wise enough to know when to quit. In the blink of an eye wealth **disappears**, for it will sprout wings and fly away like an **eagle**” (Prov 23:4–5 NLT). This proverb reminds us how quickly money can disappear—it’s here today and gone tomorrow. We could labor our entire lives to build a great fortune, and in one **moment** (e.g., the Crash of 1929), it could all be gone. Even if we manage to keep our wealth during this life, it will be **over** all too soon. God said to the rich man, “Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, **whose** will they be?” (Luke 12:20). Rather than laboring and toiling to get more money, we should be seeking first the **Kingdom** of God. If we’re faithful in the **little** things of this present life, God will honor us with true wealth in the life which is to come (Matt 25:21).
- 15) [June 15] The last of Solomon’s proverbs. Solomon dedicated many of his proverbs to a description of the person he called “a **fool**” (Prov 26:1, 3–12). He warned us that we should be careful how we speak to fools. We need to know when answering a fool according to his folly would **lower** us to his level, and when answering a fool according to his folly would **keep** him from being wise in his own eyes! (2 Cor 11:17–21). Why should we try to keep a fool from becoming wise in his own eyes? Because God said, “Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more **hope** for a fool than for him” (Prov 26:12). How then should fools be handled? “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a **rod** for the back of fools” (Prov 26:3). Clearly, the only thing that will separate a fool from his folly is the rod of **discipline**. How is it that people become fools? Solomon told us this earlier: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a **child**, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him” (Prov 22:15). We all come into this world as fools! That’s why it’s so important to discipline our

children and rebuke them for their folly. What happens if we don't keep our children from their foolishness? They grow up to become a **shame** and a **reproach**. Honor is not fitting for them (Prov 26:1) and wisdom cannot instruct or guide them (Prov 26:7, 9). They learn nothing from their mistakes—they only repeat their folly (Prov 26:11). How tragic to see an **adult** who is nothing more than a foolish child who has grown up!

- 16) [June 16] The sayings of Agur and the words of King Lemuel. Agur was a keen **observer** of the world and its ways, and he delighted in pondering the many fascinating aspects of God's creation. We should appreciate his **humble** attitude (Prov 30:2). He teaches us that those who know much are aware of *how **little** they truly know*. Agur's sayings end with a call to humility: "If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your **hand** on your mouth. For pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces strife" (Prov 30:32–33). King Lemuel shared the advice his **mother** gave him about "wine, women and song." After hearing Solomon expound on the dangers of strange women and strong drink, it's interesting to hear a woman agree with him on both points. 'Kings,' she said, 'should be concerned with giving **justice** to their people, not with wine and strong drink.' This teaches us that we must put the welfare of those under our authority **before** our own wants and desires. Proverbs concludes with an **acrostic** poem that paints an inspiring picture of the **noble** wife. She is a woman of **character**, wisdom, and compassion. She is **thrifty**, industrious, self-sacrificing, **generous**, thoughtful, hard-working, and strong. She is a loving wife and mother, and she is praised by her husband and her children. She stands as a **guide** to men (this is the kind of woman you should marry) and a **beacon** for women (this is the kind of woman you should strive to be). She is a stirring reminder that true greatness is found only through the **fear** of the LORD!
- 17) [June 17] Of the more than **1,000** songs written by Solomon, God chose to share with us a song that celebrates the **physical** intimacy of marriage. It begins without an introduction, but various clues throughout the text give us an idea of the background of the song. Solomon frequently visited the various parts of his kingdom. One day, as he was inspecting some vineyards in the north, his royal entourage came upon a beautiful peasant girl who was tending the vines. Embarrassed, she ran from them, but Solomon could not forget her. Later, disguised as a shepherd, he returned to the vineyards and won her love. Then he revealed his true identity and asked her to return to Jerusalem with him. Solomon and his beloved were being married in the palace as the song begins. The song describes their meeting, their engagement, their wedding, their wedding night, and the growth of their marriage after the wedding. This song teaches us that God intended the love between a man and a woman to be a **thrilling** and wonderful experience. God **created** sex and intimacy, and they are good and holy when enjoyed within the **boundaries** of marriage. This means that a husband and wife honor God when they love and enjoy each other **physically**. Sex, when celebrated as God intended, is an act of **obedience** and **worship**. It also gives us a taste of how wonderful **fellowship** with God can be (and will be). Consider Song of Solomon 1:15–16; 4:1–7; 5:10–16. The many descriptions of **beauty** throughout the song emphasize how important physical **appearance** is to marital intimacy. Are we exercising **self-control** and working **hard** to keep our bodies looking good for our spouses?
- 18) [June 18] As Solomon's song ends, the girl reflects on the days when she was younger and under the care of her brothers. They wondered how to help prepare her for marriage, and they decided that if she kept her **virginity**, standing firm like a **wall** against sexual temptation, they would praise her. But if she was **promiscuous** and given over to immorality, they would take steps to stop her (Song 8:8–9). In Song of Songs 8:10, she testifies that she kept her virginity and thus found favor in Solomon's eyes. This teaches us the importance of moral **purity** before marriage. If we honor God's boundaries for **sex**, we will enjoy the fruit of that commitment in a **loving, giving** relationship. A certain phrase

is repeated throughout the Song: “I adjure you that you not **stir up** or **awaken** love until it pleases” (Song 8:4). People are often in a hurry to develop intimate relationships based on the **feelings** of the moment, but feelings aren’t enough to support a lasting relationship. This verse warns us not to stir up the passion of **love** before we know with certainty the relationship is worthy of lifelong **commitment**.

- 19) [June 19] Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, turned away from God in his old age. How could this happen? “For when Solomon was old his **wives** turned away his heart after other **gods**” (1 Kgs 11:4; cf. Deut 17:17; Neh 13:23–27). This teaches us that the person we **marry** will affect our eternal **destiny**. Such a decision should be made with much **prayer** and the **counsel** of godly friends (2 Cor 6:14). Solomon’s apostasy prompts us to ask: What will happen when the wisest man who ever lived decides to see if meaning and fulfillment can be found in a life “under the sun”? What will happen when a man who is thoroughly versed in the Scriptures and has spent many years fearing God decides to try a Godless approach to life and living? If anyone was ideally suited for such an experiment, it was Solomon. His brilliant mind, fantastic wealth and international power gave him a unique ability to sample everything life could offer. Solomon filled his mind with wisdom, indulged in every kind of pleasure, built great buildings and gardens and parks, amassed fantastic wealth, and reveled in the finest music, art and literature of his day. He took for himself everything that his eyes desired, and when he reached the end of his life, he left us this conclusion: “**Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!**” The word in Hebrew is **hebel**, and its nuances are “futile,” “meaningless,” “empty,” “transient,” and “useless.” Solomon discovered that nothing apart from **God** can give lasting happiness and fulfillment. This teaches us that if we try to find meaning in our **accomplishments** rather than in God, we will never be **satisfied**. Everything we achieve or possess will only leave us **craving** something more.
- 20) [June 20] More of Solomon’s reflections. Mankind’s failure to find satisfaction in life “**under the sun**” is actually a gift of **love**, for if men could find meaning apart from God, what hope would there be for their souls? God made sure that true happiness and fulfillment are **found** only in Him, and God **calls** everyone to come and find contentment in His love. Solomon observed that many who work hard are deprived of the **benefits** of their labor, while others receive the benefits but are unable to find **contentment** in their wealth. “This also is vanity and a striving after wind” (Ecc 4:16). Yet Solomon discovered something that he described as “the **gift** of God”: the ability to receive the fruit of your labor *and* to **enjoy** that fruit in peace and happiness. This teaches us that God is the one who gives us the ability to find satisfaction in our work. If we put God **first** and labor **faithfully** where He puts us, God will help us find contentment in our work. It also shows us that within the context of a right relationship with God, there is great value in even the most **ordinary** tasks of life. When our hearts are united with the source of all meaning and value, then our personal efforts and endeavors also have **meaning** and value!
- 21) [June 21] Last of Solomon’s reflections. Many people say, “I don’t want to serve God! God doesn’t let you have any **fun!**” But God said, “Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the **impulses** of your heart and the **desires** of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to **judgment** for all these things” (Ecc 11:9 NASB). God knows that a joyful life is a **balanced** life, and He wants us to enjoy our liberty **responsibly**, for that is the only way to lasting happiness and success. Solomon charged us to “**remember** also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (Ecc 12:1). Those who live a full life cannot avoid **old** age, and Solomon painted a striking picture of what it’s like to grow old. The body begins to shut down, and even the simplest things become difficult (cf. Ecc 12:3 on eating). This reality gives a serious significance to our daily decisions. We need to be living **wisely** now so that

we're prepared for the days which lie ahead. All this points to a consistent theme throughout Ecclesiastes: those who live "under the sun" must look "**beyond** the sun" to find lasting happiness and peace. It is only when we live in a right relationship with God that we affirm what Solomon said is the end of the matter: "**Fear** God and **keep** his commandments, for this is the whole **duty** of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecc 12:13–14).

- 22) [June 22] The division of the kingdom. Solomon was dead, and his son, **Rehoboam**, went to **Shechem** to be declared king over Israel. His right to rule over Judah was unquestioned, but his right to govern the northern tribes was far from certain. The harsh **policies** enacted during Solomon's final years had created resentment among the people, and they called for **Jeroboam**, a known enemy of the crown, to be their spokesman. From Rehoboam's point of view, this was not an encouraging sign. However, he showed himself to be his father's son by seeking the **advice** of his father's counselors (cf. Prov 11:14). Their wise advice was spot on, but his younger advisers, the friends he had grown up with, persuaded him that appeasement was a mistake. 'It's no accident that Jeroboam is their spokesman!' they said. 'Your best bet is to stand firm and show no weakness!' That made sense to Rehoboam, and he rejected the counsel of the older men. Disaster soon followed, and only a divine intervention prevented a bloody civil war. This story teaches us that men may plot and plan, but **God** is in control. When God says a thing will come to pass, it will. Our response should be to **listen** to the word of the Lord (1 Kgs 12:24). Jeroboam lost no time in strengthening his position in the north. He built up Shechem and Penuel, but it didn't give him much peace of mind. He was convinced that the temple in Jerusalem would prove his undoing. Rather than trusting God to keep His promise to be with him and build him a sure house, Jeroboam made two golden **calves** and set them up as the gods of Israel. The people quickly joined in his idolatry, and this terrible sin became a stumbling block for **all** the future kings of Israel. Jeroboam's sin grieved God's heart, and He sent a prophet to rebuke Jeroboam and curse his altar. Rather than repent, Jeroboam tried to seize the prophet, and only God's mercy allowed his hand to be restored. If Jeroboam had any lingering doubts about how serious God was, they were laid to rest when God's judgment fell on the very prophet who had rebuked him. When God speaks, He is to be obeyed. Good **intentions** cannot excuse disobedience. Yet Jeroboam remained hardened (1 Kgs 13:33), and it ended up costing him the life of his son and the destruction of his dynasty. How sad that he was more afraid of losing his kingdom than he was of losing God!
- 23) [June 23] The reign of Rehoboam and his son Abijah. Rehoboam remained faithful to God for **three** years after Solomon's death, but when his rule "was established and he was **strong**, he abandoned the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him" (2 Chr 12:1). This teaches us that strength and prosperity can often lead to **pride**. It also shows us how **quickly** a peaceful and wealthy kingdom can be undone by sin. Just **five** years after Solomon died, the temple and palace were ransacked by **Shishak** of Egypt. God told Rehoboam, "You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak" (2 Chr 12:5). But Rehoboam did something his own father would not do—he **humbled** himself and confessed his sin. When he did, God had mercy on him and did not destroy Judah. This teaches us the importance of **repentance**, for there is always grace for those who humble themselves under God's mighty hand (1 Pet 5:6). Rehoboam's son **Abijah** repeated his father's mistake. He started well, and God gave him victory over his rival Jeroboam, but after he became powerful (2 Chr 13:21), he forsook God and "walked in all the sins that his father did before him" (1 Kgs 15:3). How tragic that we so often put our trust in what we have been **given** rather than in God, the great Giver.
- 24) [June 24] The reign of Asa. Asa's early years were marked by religious **reform**. He removed the foreign altars, tore down the sacred pillars and told the people of Judah to obey God. God rewarded

Asa's reforms with ten years of **peace**: "He had no war in those years, for the Lord gave him peace" (2 Chr 14:6b). This reminds us of the proverb: "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his **enemies** to be at peace with him" (Prov 16:7). Asa used this time to build up Judah's defenses, but nothing he did prepared him for Zerah's million-man army. Asa knew he had no hope of defeating such a foe, and he called out to God, "O Lord, You are our God; let not **man** prevail against You" (2 Chr 14:11b). God honored Asa's request and routed the Ethiopians. So many fell that they could not recover, and the people carried away great plunder. This teaches us that no battle is too great for God. When we put our trust in God and obey His word, He is faithful to give us **victory** over the enemy. After the battle, God sent Azariah to **encourage** Asa to continue his religious reforms: "The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you **seek** him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. Be **strong** and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded" (2 Chr 15:2, 7 NIV). Asa took courage when he heard these words, and he led Judah in a national **revival**. Asa was so committed to following God that he removed Maacah, his **grandmother**, from being the 'Queen-Mother' of Judah. Yet later in his reign, Asa leaned on his own **understanding**, bought off the Syrians rather than **trusting** in God, and when he was rebuked, he **harden** his heart. What a tragic end to a godly man!

- 25) [June 25] The death of Asa, and the reigns of Jehoshaphat and Ahab. How disappointing it was to read that Asa spent the last years of his life preparing his **tomb** instead of his heart (2 Chr 16:12, 14). What a tragic end to a such a godly man! Thankfully, Jehoshaphat loved God and followed His commands. He even ordered the **Law** to be taught throughout the cities of Judah. This teaches us that when we love God, we want to **share** His Word with others. God blessed Jehoshaphat and made him wealthy and powerful, but he did not become **proud**. Instead, he recognized that God was the true source of his success. We would do well to follow his example of humility. While Jehoshaphat worshipped God in the south, Ahab sought other gods in the north. Not content with Jeroboam's golden calves, he married **Jezebel** and brought her Baals to Samaria. Baal was the god of **rain** and bountiful harvests, and we can imagine Ahab's surprise when Elijah told him there would be no rain until he gave the word. God was out to show an idolatrous Israel that He was the one true God of heaven! Elijah often comes across as **larger** than life, but James said that he was just like **us** (Jam 5:16–17). He is a stirring example of the great power that comes when a righteous person prays in **harmony** with God's will. Elijah watched as the Kerith brook slowly dried up, but he didn't leave until God told him to go to Zarephath. Am we willing to **remain** where God has placed us even if our circumstances are slowly getting worse and worse?
- 26) [June 26] Elijah's showdown with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. The drought had caused a famine, and Samaria was in bad shape. Ahab was out with Obadiah desperately looking for some way to save his horses and mules. Obadiah is a fascinating character. He never performed a **miracle** like Elijah did, but he was just as committed to serving God. Elijah's ministry was **public** and confrontational; Obadiah's ministry was **private** and behind-the-scenes. This teaches us that people can have very **different** ministries and still be faithful in doing what God wants them to do. Indeed, Obadiah demonstrated his **faith** by telling Ahab to meet Elijah. He literally staked his life on the word of God's man! The miracle on Mount Carmel only provoked Jezebel to more evil, but it seemed to have a **positive** effect on Ahab. When Ben-Hadad of Syria besieged Samaria, God sent a prophet (Elijah was not alone after all!?) to Ahab and assured him of victory. Amazingly, Ahab actually believed God, and he took a terrible **risk** in leading a pitiful group of youngsters out against Syria's huge army. Wicked Ahab stepped out in **faith**, and God gave him a great victory. No story in the Old Testament displays God's mercy and grace quite like this!
- 27) [June 27] Ahab's second battle with Ben-Hadad of Syria. Ahab led his troops into battle against Ben-Hadad at **God's** command (1 Kgs 20:22, 28, 42). When he arrived in the plain near Aphek, his army

looked “like two little flocks of **goats**” in comparison to the Syrian forces (1 Kgs 20:27). Ahab camped there and waited for **seven** days. That was plenty of time for him to become filled with fear and doubt, yet he stayed and fought by **faith**! But like **Saul**, he refused to **fully** carry out God’s command (cf. 1 Sam 15). Once again, Ahab teaches us that partial obedience is **disobedience**. Naboth refused to sell his vineyard to Ahab out of obedience to God’s **law** (cf. Num 36:7–9; Naboth was likely from the tribe of Issachar while Ahab was from the tribe of Manasseh). This may have been what prompted Jezebel to use the law as a weapon against Naboth *and* his **sons** (cf. Lev 24:10–16; 2 Kgs 9:26). When Ahab heard what Jezebel had done, he **approved** of her wickedness by taking **advantage** of her actions. This teaches us that when we knowingly **allow** someone under our authority to do wrong and get away with it, we become an **accessory** after the fact to their sin (1 Kgs 21:19). God said to Elijah, “Do you see how Ahab has **humbled** himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his **son’s** days I will bring disaster upon his house” (1 Kgs 21:29). Ahab was the **only** king in Israel (northern kingdom) who humbled himself before God. Don’t tell me grace and mercy are not in the OT! Did God judge Ahab’s sons for Ahab’s sin? Ahab’s sons **followed** his ungodly example, and by joining their father in hatred toward God, they brought God’s judgment down on themselves (cf. Exod 20:5–6).

28) [June 28] Ahab’s death and Jehoshaphat’s victory over Moab. Ahab thought he could cheat death by **disguising** himself, but God’s word by Micaiah came to pass. A certain man drew his bow at **random** and struck Ahab between his scale armor and his breastplate. When God is out to get someone, there is no escape! Jehoshaphat nearly died as well, but God had **mercy** on him and spared his life. Let’s think about this. When Jehoshaphat made a **military** alliance with Ahab, God said: “Should you **help** the wicked and **love** those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD” (2 Chr 19:1–3). When Jehoshaphat made a **business** partnership with Ahaziah, God said: “Because you have **allied** yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works” (2 Chr 20:35–37). This teaches us not to be unequally **yoked** with unbelievers (cf. 2 Cor 6:14–16; see also 2 Kgs 3:1–7; 2 Chr 18:1; 21:6). Jehoshaphat did some foolish things, but there was, as God said, “some **good** in him,” and he instituted judicial **reforms** throughout his kingdom. He urged his judges to be impartial and to “let the **fear** of the Lord be upon you” (2 Chr 19:7). This is good advice, and we would do well to have the same attitude in our dealings with others. Not long afterwards, Moab and Ammon made war against Judah. This teaches us that we can expect **opposition** from the enemy when we encourage people to fear the LORD. Jehoshaphat did the right thing by turning to God for help, and God said, “Do not be **afraid** and do not be **dismayed** at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but **God’s**” (2 Chr 20:15). Yet God added: “Tomorrow **go** down against them” (2 Chr 20:16). This teaches us that God expects us to **act** on our faith. The question is not whether God will fight on our behalf, but whether we are willing to **obey** God and face our fears.

29) [June 29] When Ahaziah was injured, he sent messengers to Baal-Zebub to ask whether he would recover. In response, God asked him a question: “Is it because there is no **God** in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?” (2 Kgs 1:3). This teaches us that God wants everyone, even **sinners**, to **come** to Him in times of trouble. Indeed, God often uses **misfortune** to get our attention and call us to repentance. God proved Himself to Ahaziah, desiring his **repentance**, but Ahaziah **hardened** his heart and refused to repent (2 Kgs 1:16). When Elijah gave Elisha permission to remain behind, he was **testing** Elisha’s **commitment** to himself and to his **calling** as Elijah’s successor (cf. Gen 22; John 21:15–25). Note that in each place where Elijah offered Elisha a chance to turn back, God validated Elisha’s ministry with a miracle: crossing the **Jordan** on dry land, healing the waters of **Jericho**, and rebuking the youth of **Bethel**. This story teaches us that God’s power is not tied to a particular **era** or limited to a certain **person**. God is always with those who are with him (cf. Josh 1:5–6).

30) [June 30] Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, was married to Ahab's daughter **Athaliah**, and so his decision to kill his brothers and lead Judah into idolatry comes as no surprise. God immediately brought judgment on Jehoram: **Edom** revolted, and a coalition of Philistines and Arabs invaded Judah (2 Chr 21:16–17). Edom was **delighted** by the sacking of Jerusalem, and they **gloated** over Judah's misfortune (Obad 1:10–14). Obadiah denounced Edom for their **complicity** in the invasion, and warned them that they would soon be "cut off from the mountain of Esau by **slaughter**" (Obad 1:9). He also predicted the final victory and vindication of Israel in the "**day** of the LORD" (Obad 1:15, 17). The prophet **Joel** later said, "It shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be **saved**" (Joel 2:32), and his statement was based on Obadiah's prophecy: "But on Mount Zion there will those who **escape**" (Obad 1:17). **Peter** gladly proclaimed this verse to the Jews in Jerusalem at **Pentecost** (cf. Acts 2:21). Jesus Christ is the name given among men by which we are saved (Acts 4:12), and thus Obadiah has an indirect reference to the **gospel**! The story of Naaman teaches us that God is not impressed by our willingness to do **great** things in His name. Instead, what God finds impressive is our obedience in the **small** things and our willingness to **follow** Him even when He leads us in directions that don't make **sense** (Luke 16:10).