

2 Chronicles 8-9 • The Glorious Reign of Solomon

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We are in the Book of 2 Chronicles, so I'd like you to turn there, if you would, please, and the eighth chapter. We have been dealing with the reign of Solomon. And Solomon, of course, came after the reign of David. And the reign of David in Israel was such a wonderful season.

He had his issues, and there were things that came up that were very challenging. But David's heart was a heart toward God. We have to remember what that means. When God said about David, he is, a man after My own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22), obviously that didn't mean he was a man without mistakes. We have to be careful not to try to impose that, because David was a man who was very fallible. Dealt with – he was a very passionate man, which is what got him into trouble a lot of times– his passion for various things, such as women. I'm not trying to be crude or weird. That's the reality. When he saw Bathsheba, his passion overwhelmed him and even overwhelmed his better sense of right and wrong morality at that point.

He did what he should not have done. And yet, when David was confronted, he repented. And that is one of the things that lent itself to make David a man after God's own heart. Not the only thing, by any means, but one of the things. And I love that about David. He was a man who repented of his sin.

I wish I was that quick sometimes to repent. But sometimes we make excuses. We try to justify ourselves. We try to explain it away. It's really not that bad. Or, I've got an excuse. I've got a reason. It's their fault. It's your fault. Lord, it's the woman you gave me. That's not me necessarily saying that. That's Adam—quoting Adam. I don't think I've blamed my wife lately for anything, but I wouldn't put it past me. The gene is there.

But David was a man who quickly repented. We come to the reign of Solomon and Solomon's reign, if I had to come up with one word for Solomon's reign, it would be glorious. From the standpoint that God enabled this man to have so much wisdom and so much wealth, that the Temple that he built, the palace that he built for himself, the way he ran the country was really glorious.

We are going to see here in these verses that things like gold and silver became commonplace (in David or) in Solomon's kingdom. It was a time of great prosperity, but one of the things we have learned about prosperity from our study of God's Word is that there are great dangers that go along with prosperity.

Of course, the great danger is that we start thinking we don't have to, maybe, stick as closely as we otherwise might to the Word of God. Things are going so good. Obviously God is pleased with me, or whatever the case might be, and we begin to wander. The Book of Chronicles doesn't tell us about Solomon's wanderings.

All it gives— we have to go to Kings to read those— all it tells us is how the symptoms and the environment was, the stage was set for that sort of thing to happen. You might remember that back in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses actually addressed the issue of one day Israel having a king. And the Lord through Moses laid down some stipulations related to how the king should conduct himself as the king of Israel.

And let me remind you of these by putting them up on the screen for you from Deuteronomy chapter 17. It goes like this:

Deuteronomy 17:15-17 (ESV)

...you may indeed set a king over you, whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

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Solomon did all these things. It is really crazy in light of the fact that he was the wisest man on the face of the earth. But I don't care how wise you are. If you get

to the place where you think you're smarter than God, you will come unraveled. And, even those of us who don't begin to have the wisdom of Solomon can still think that we are smarter than God and think that somehow I can do this and it is going to be okay. Solomon knew the Word of God. He knew what it said. He knew what it said about Don't go to Egypt to get horses. Don't amass great quantities of silver and gold. Don't have many wives.

He knew that he knew those things, but there is something about human nature that somehow just takes over in situations like that. And we convince ourselves it is going to be okay. It's going to be all right. Don't worry about it. And what that is basically doing now, Solomon was violating the Word of God.

You and I have not only the Word of God, we have the conviction of the Holy Spirit. You understand, don't you, that there's basically 3 ways that God speaks to people. We are all born with an innate conscience, and that conscience is a right and wrong meter that is hardwired into every one of us.

And I believe it is a leftover, if you will, from our being created in the image of God, and that conscience is there. If nothing else is there, if you have never read the Word of God or anything else, the conscience is there to guide you. Now the problem with the conscience is that it can get messed up. Paul in the New Testament talks about people having their consciences "*seared as with a hot iron*" (1 Timothy 4:2 NIV). Meaning like how you would feel the flesh of an animal that just had been branded.

Some of you from the farm might have ever been involved, perhaps, in branding of some kind. Maybe you have had a really bad burn yourself. And as that grows or heals, rather, it forms this very hard crust where the skin cells have been burned away. Paul says that can happen to a person's conscience.

A conscience is a great thing to have, but it is not perfect, right? We can be taught to ignore our conscience. We can be taught to have a different whole idea related to our conscience. There is something else that we have that, once we get saved, now we have the Word of God. We have the Scriptures to help us to understand also a sense of morality.

Solomon had that as well. Then as believers in Jesus, we have a third option to keep us on a course. And that is, of course, the Holy Spirit living within us. We have that conviction process that the Holy Spirit will impose upon us when we have gotten off course. And the thing about those three things, and they are wonderful each in their own way, all of them can be resisted or, and or neglected or ignored.

We can ignore our conscience, we can ignore the Word of God, and we can ignore the conviction of the Holy Spirit. That is called grieving the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). We can all do that. You know what? I've done it many times. I have chosen not to listen, not to respond. And the danger about not responding to the Holy Spirit is that it gets harder to respond to Him the next time. And pretty soon it's almost impossible to hear His voice.

One thing I love about David is that when he was confronted with his sin, he broke, he responded rather than holding it in... and I'm... whatever. Solomon on the other hand— and again, we don't read about it here in Chronicles, but elsewhere we read that— Solomon strayed from the Lord toward the end of his life. And what was the cause? All the things we saw up on the screen there in Deuteronomy chapter 17. All the things that he knew and knowingly violated because of whatever, pride or—and we know that some of it was love. The Bible tells us that Solomon, held fast to his wives in love. (1 Kings 11:2)

Solomon was a man of peace. Part of the peace process with other nations was to marry the daughter of whatever king that nation had. It was a political move on his part. And this would happen— this was not uncommon— where a princess would go over to a neighboring country and marry someone in that country of high nobility, and possibly the king, in order to establish or cement peaceful relations between these two countries. Solomon did that 700 times. It says he had 700 wives of noble birth (1 Kings 11:3). And these were, again, political marriages.

From a political standpoint, I suppose you could say he was perpetuating peace. But from a moral standpoint, Solomon was actively and knowingly violating the Word of God. Oh, and by the way, he added 300 concubines onto that list of 700 wives. He had 1,000 women. Those women eventually coming from neighboring countries of pagan origin, eventually began to complain to Solomon about the fact that, there in Israel, there was no place for them to worship their gods.

And I can imagine they probably talked to him about it over and over, and when you got a thousand ladies chiming in your ears... I can, some of us guys, one is enough, right? In fact, more than enough sometimes for us to get off the dime and do what we're, what we either should do or whatever she's encouraging us to do. Imagine that times one thousand, right? Women, actively pursuing Solomon to give them a place to worship.

But eventually he was just broken down. Solomon, across the Kidron valley there from Jerusalem, began to build temples for his wives. Places for them to

worship their pagan gods. And that's how it started. Doesn't the Bible say something about a drip, drip, drip— you know— of water or something like that (Proverbs 27:15), how it just eventually just overcomes you. But anyway, the point is, he built those pagan temples, and then after a period of time, they wore him down further, and he went to those pagan temples, and then after a while, he began to worship at those pagan temples.

We are going to see as we get into chapter 8 here, that some of these things coming unraveled a little bit. Chapter 8 begins this way; in verse 1, it says: *“At the end of twenty years. in which Solomon had built the house of the LORD and his own house, ² Solomon rebuilt the cities that Hiram had given him, and settled the people of Israel in them.” (ESV)*

Stop there for just a moment. It sounds like king Hiram —and that's Hiram from Damascus— it sounds like Hiram just gave him some cities. That is not exactly what happened. Solomon first gave those cities to Hiram. By the way, we are talking about Galilee. This is the area where Jesus grew up.

Solomon ruled over those cities up there in that area of Galilee, and because Hiram had provided him with wood for building not only the Temple but his own palace, and craftsmen and workers. And they floated the logs down the waterway, and they worked alongside him doing these things. Solomon, as part of the payment for the things that Hiram had done, Solomon said, Here are these cities up in Galilee, and they are yours.

And the Bible tells us in 1 Kings that Hiram went to see these wonderful cities that Solomon had given him. And he was totally unimpressed and even wrote a, or sent a messenger back to Solomon and said, My brother, what is it you have given me here? And he was just, and he never did anything with them.

I forget how much he paid. It was something like 120 talents of gold. I forget. Don't quote me on that, but eventually Solomon realized that Hiram wasn't doing anything with these cities. And so he bought them back, because Solomon, amidst all of his other issues, faults, and whatever, he was a builder. He was a man who had great vision, and he could take something that you and I might look at and go, Blah, (which is what Hiram did when he saw those cities in Galilee), Solomon looked at those cities and said, no, we can build those up. We can make those into something really special.

And so he, —and he had the resources to do it as well. He practically had unlimited wealth— he began to build up those cities up there in Galilee and they

became part of that area that Jews lived in. The whole story of this thing is (yeah) it was 120 talents of gold.

Let me put this up really quick on the screen. I already told you the story, but that's where it's found. 1 Kings, chapter 9 It tells us:

1 Kings 9:11-14 (NIV)

King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold that he wanted. But when Hiram went from Tyre to see the towns that Solomon had given him, he was not pleased with them. 'What kind of towns are these you have given me, my brother?' he asked. And he called them the Land of Kabul, a name they have to this day. Now Hiram had sent to the king 120 talents of gold.

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Interestingly enough, the Jews continued to have a very negative attitude toward Galilee. Do you remember that? You remember when they started talking about Jesus? There's a prophet. He's here. He's in Jerusalem. Really? Where is he from? He's from Galilee. They went, Huh? They said, can anything good come out of Nazareth (John 1:46) and Galilee? It was considered to be Kabul, like Hiram said here. And it tells us at the end of that passage that Hiram had paid 120 talents of gold.

Anyway, now they are back in Jewish hands. Solomon has built them up, and it says in verse 3: *"And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah and took it. ⁴ He built Tadmor in the wilderness and all the store cities that he built in Hamath. ⁵ He also built Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities with walls, gates, and bars, ⁶ and Baaloth, and all the store cities that Solomon had and all the cities for his chariots and the cities for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion."*

The store cities, these outlying cities, he would basically build them up, and they would be places to store stuff: military hardware, horses, chariots, food,

water, in case of emergency. This is Solomon building up the government, the system of taking care of the people, that is what is going on here.

And you'll notice that it says here in verse 6, that there were cities for chariots and cities for horsemen. Interestingly enough, archeologists in the city of Megiddo have uncovered—unearthed—horse stalls, huge, lots of horse stalls, which they believe date back to the time of Solomon. That was one of the store cities that he built up.

You can still see some of what Solomon built visible today, if that isn't amazing enough. It says in verse 7 that: *“All the people who were left of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of Israel, ⁸from their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel had not destroyed—these Solomon drafted as forced labor, and so they are to this day. ⁹But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves for his work; they were soldiers and his officers, the commanders of his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁰And (we're told that) these were the chief officers of King Solomon, 250, who exercised authority over the people.”*

Solomon had a built-in labor force, and that was basically all the Canaanites that were left in the land that should have been destroyed when Israel came into the land, but who weren't. Solomon conscripted them to forced labor.

Verse 11: *“Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, ‘My wife shall not live in the house of David king of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy.’”*

Now this is an interesting statement because we don't have any record of the Ark of the Covenant ever coming into David's house. And we don't know for sure that it even did, but it is possible that when David brought the ark into Jerusalem, —and he's the one who did that,— it could be that he pitched a tent just adjacent to his home, because we know that he did put it in a tent, and it is very possible then that this was considered all one residence, if you will. And Solomon, who married this Egyptian princess, feels that it would be wrong. This is while he is still thinking, he is not completely whacked out yet. He believes that it is wrong to take this pagan princess and house her in a home that was so close to the Ark of the Covenant. And so he builds her own palace. Simple option, I suppose, if you have all the money in the world.

But it goes on to say, *“¹² Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built before the vestibule.”* And that altar,

you will remember— vestibule means porch— and this is the porch of the temple. Do you remember that we saw last week, Solomon built another altar because while they were dedicating the temple and sacrificing animals, there were way too many to sacrifice on the altar of sacrifice that was just out from the steps of the temple. And so he built another altar, and he is still using it. And that is really all this is saying.

Verse 13: *“...as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual feasts— the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths. ¹⁴ According to the ruling of David his father, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites for their offices of praise and ministry before the priests as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers in their divisions at each gate, for so David the man of God had commanded. ¹⁵ And they did not turn aside from what the king had commanded the priests and Levites concerning any matter and concerning the treasuries.”*

He is following his father's design at this time. *“¹⁶ Thus was accomplished all the work of Solomon from the day the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid until it was finished. So the house of the LORD was completed.*

¹⁷ Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the shore of the sea (And that is referring, by the way, to the shore of the Red Sea), in the land of Edom.

¹⁸ And Hiram sent to him by the hand of his servants ships and servants familiar with the sea, and they went to Ophir together with the servants of Solomon and brought from there 450 talents of gold and brought it to King Solomon.”

By the way, 450 talents of gold is 17 tons of gold. The Israelites never did become a seafaring people. The Phoenician people who lived on the coast, Tyre and Sidon, they were a seafaring people. They were very boat-worthy. They knew what they were doing on the water. Because Solomon had a good relationship with Hiram, he, together with Hiram, got in boats and went to places where they could get gold and which it says here was a place called Ophir. And there they came back with 17 tons.

And we are going to find here that every year, tons of gold were brought into Solomon's kingdom. Every year. When we think about, or even use the term, filthy rich, that really doesn't begin to describe Solomon's kingdom. It was way beyond that. It was opulence beyond anything that we could know.

Chapter 9. *“Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions, having a very great retinue*

and camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. ² And Solomon answered all her questions. There was nothing hidden from Solomon that he could not explain to her."

Isn't that amazing? You can well imagine that a man like this with so much wisdom, so much wealth, so much land— there was never more land in Israel than during the time of Solomon— word gets around. And traders who are moving in and through and around the known world at that time are bringing word with them about this incredible king in Israel.

The Bible says here that a woman who was queen of an area called Sheba, which we believe to be in Arabia, and we believe that her trek to go see Solomon was somewhere around 1,200 miles, which back in those days was a long time, considering the fact that there are no Best Westerns along the way. Traveling was a very challenging thing to do in those days, and it was very dangerous because of bandits and so forth.

You will notice that it says here in these verses that she brought a huge retinue. In other words, she had a huge group of people that came with her, and it says— did you see in there that it said— they brought much gold? The fact of the matter is they will give us an amount later on. It was in the tonnage.

That is how much they brought. You can imagine a big group of people like that might be a target for bandits along the way. Anyway, it was a very challenging thing to do. And yet she made the trip. Why? Because she heard there was a wise man in Israel, and she had questions. She had questions about life, and who of us doesn't have questions about life?

And she wanted answers. Being of nobility, she probably had wise men in her own court, and they couldn't answer the questions that were put to her, presumably. And she is willing to make this 1,200 mile trek to go see this king.

Let me ask you a question. Do you think you might have done that, had you heard that there was a king like that, and you're living in a world unlike our own that doesn't have instant communication with all parts of the world. No satellite video, and so forth. You want to go talk to somebody over there? You got to go over there. And here's the question. Would you have made that trip if you had the resources to be able to make it? Or to try to at least?

The reason I'm asking that question is because the effort of this woman is actually something that Jesus referenced during his public ministry. He talked

about her. In fact, he said this. Let me put this on the screen. It's in Matthew chapter 12. He said:

Matthew 12:42 (ESV)

The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

The queen of the South (and he's speaking of the queen of Sheba) *will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, (Why?) for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.*

And what Jesus is basically saying to the people of Israel, and particularly the religious leaders, is that here's this woman who came 1,200 miles in all the difficulty and danger that traveling involved back in those days, and she was willing to make that effort for a man like Solomon.

And guess what? There's one who is greater than Solomon who is here now. He's speaking of Himself, and you guys aren't even lifting a finger to come listen. And if you do come to listen, it's only to try to find something to criticize or to use against me so that you can arrest me and put me through your kangaroo court and condemn me and kill me.

And He says, you know what, the queen of the South is the one who is going to be your judge. And she will rise up, and she will speak of the effort that she went to go from what He calls, "*the ends of the earth,*" which I'm sure 1,200 miles back in those days was the ends of the earth, with travel being what it was. Can you imagine doing a 1,200 mile trip on a camel? Lord, help us all. 200 miles is tough in a car.

It says in verse 3 that: "*When the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, and their clothing. (in other words, how they were clothed and so forth) his cupbearers and their clothing. (She noticed everything) and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more breath in her*" (which is to say, it took her breath away). The queen of Sheba, we're told, earlier, had all of her questions answered. She was amazed, but she didn't just hear wisdom. She saw wisdom.

Do you remember what the Bible tells us about wisdom? "*Wisdom is proved right (justified) by all her children*" (Luke 7:35), right? And what that means is,

you don't just hear it, you see it. In other words, your offspring, the things that come from you also show wisdom, just as much as your words do. And that is what it says here that the queen of Sheba looked at all these things, and she took note of all of the things going on.

And, she sees even all the organization. She sees that there is this master administration going on in his kingdom down to his cupbearers and what they were wearing, and his servants and what they were wearing. She was so impressed by everything. It says she even took note of the food that was on his table.

And you might say, What exactly does that mean? What it refers to, basically, is the amount. We actually have to go to Kings to find out, but let me put it on the screen for you. Check this out from 1 Kings chapter 4. It says:

1 Kings 4:22-23 (ESV)

Solomon's provision for one day was 30 cors of fine flour and sixty cors of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture fed cattle, a hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl.

Solomon's provision for one day was 30 cors of fine flour (Now, a cor, and you multiply it by 30 here comes to about 1,500 gallons. If you were to take fine flour and put it in a gallon container to make bread and things like that, 1500 gallons a day. And then it goes on to say,) *and 60 cors of meal*, (which is ground up, not quite to the point of flour, but ground up like wheat or barley or whatever. Now you double the number I just gave you.) *10 fat oxen and 20 pasture fed cattle, a hundred sheep besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl.*

That's one day. One day. Can you imagine she is taking all of this in. The queen of Sheba was quite a lady. She was an observer, and she is watching all this, and it is like, Goodness, Gracious.

Verse 5: *"And she said to the king, 'The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, ⁶ but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, half the greatness of your wisdom was not told me; you surpass the report that I heard. ⁷ Happy are your wives! Happy are these your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!*

⁸ *Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne as king for the LORD your God! Because your God loved Israel and*

would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness. (And then check this out. And then it says) ⁹ then she gave the king 120 talents of gold.”

That's 9,000 pounds. They carried that 1,200 miles. They carried 9,000 pounds of gold. That is a big group of people, by the way. And lots and lots of donkeys and mules, camels loaded down. It says that she also brought “*a very great quantity of spices, and precious stones.*”

In fact, “*There were no spices such as those that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. Moreover, (you ready?) the servants of Hiram and the servants of Solomon, who brought gold from Ophir, (which we read about here a little bit ago. They did that shipping thing together.) brought algum wood and precious stones.* ¹¹ *And the king made from the algum wood supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, lyres also and harps for the singers. There never was seen the like of them before in the land of Judah.*

¹² *And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked, besides what she had brought to the King. So she turned and went back to her own land with her servants.”*

And then in the last verses of the chapter, it begins to talk about Solomon's wealth. It says: “¹³ *Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold.*” Interesting number, is it not, in light of the rest of what we know about the Bible. But that comes to 25 tons of gold annually. 25 tons of gold annually. “¹⁴ *besides that which the explorers and merchants brought, And all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land brought gold and silver to Solomon.*”

Every time a king or some nobleman came to Solomon to have an audience with him, he would bring gifts, and they would bring gold, and they would bring other things.

And what do you give to the man who has everything? What do you give to a guy who amasses 25 tons of gold per year? It's like, I'm going to bring him something special. Like what, he can buy anything he wants. Do you have any of those people on your Christmas list? We hate them all, I know.

Verse 15 says, “*King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold; 600 shekels of beaten gold went into each shield.*” And that's about seven and a half pounds of gold. If you got gold to burn, why not put it in a shield? These shields

would not have been used for war because gold is a very soft metal, and it is not really very good for stopping a spear, sword, or something sharp.

They had a lot of sharp things back then. This is like, We'll make these shields for parades. How about, or maybe just to look nice. Maybe they're just for decoration. And then it says that he went on also and *“made 300 shields of beaten gold; 300 shekels of gold went into each shield.”*

And again, that's just about 4 pounds. I don't know. *“And the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.”* What is the House of the Forest of Lebanon? That's Solomon's palace, but it wasn't in Lebanon. It was made out of the wood from the forest of Lebanon. They called it the House of the Forest of Lebanon, but it was in Jerusalem.

So that's just what he called his house. It's like the English, the British, they named their houses or their estates or whatever. His palace was... that's what it was called.

Verse 17: *“The king also made a great ivory throne and overlaid it with pure gold.”* Isn't this the extent of opulence?

If I could get a throne of just ivory, I'd be happy; but you're sitting around looking at this thing going, I don't know, there's something just not right. Well what else do we have? We've got a lot of gold and more coming all the time. Let's overlay it with gold. How do you know the thing is ivory?

It's got gold on top. I don't get this, check out this throne that he had built ^{“18} *the throne had six steps and a footstool of gold, which were attached to the throne, and on each side of the seat were armrests and two lions standing beside the armrests.”* Not seated, not sitting. I've looked at lots of drawings.

It's really funny. If you ever look this stuff up, I'll do this once in a while on the internet. I'll just Google, Solomon's throne, and look at the illustrations. And, in not one of them were the lions standing. They were all seated. And I'm thinking, didn't you read the text?

It says they were standing. Hey, if I was the king, and I wanted to strike a little fear in somebody, I would have lions standing. Like they're about to... you don't want them sitting, licking their paws or something like that, whatever. Anyway, so they're standing.

And then it says, “¹⁹ While twelve lions stood there, one on each end of a step on the six steps, nothing like it was ever made for any kingdom.” if you're going to, you imagine coming into the palace, and you walk into Solomon's throne room, and you get in there, and there are all these lions go standing on the steps leading up to his ivory throne covered in gold.

And you're going to go up there and ask him what? Can we have a dollar or two, something? I don't know. Imagine nothing like it. And I imagine people came just to see some of that stuff. “²⁰ All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold. (Of course they were.) And all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon (which is his palace) were of pure gold. Silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. ²¹ For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram. Once every three years the ships of Tarshish used to come back bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.”

We need a few of those around the kingdom because you can't ever have enough apes and peacocks around the palace. There is something about having exotic animals that just sounds very opulent, doesn't it? And so, when you think about people coming to worship, you don't think about apes running around, do you? I don't either, but Solomon had apes.

“²² Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. ²³ And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. ²⁴ Every one of them brought his present (because he needed them so badly) articles of silver and of gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules. so much year by year. And Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots.

(And by the way, that's probably the stalls that I was referring to in the store city of Megiddo.) ²⁵ And Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots, and 12,000 horsemen,, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. ²⁶ And he ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. ²⁷ And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone.

(And if you've ever been to Jerusalem, they have a lot of stone. That gives you a little sense of how much silver there was) And he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah (and your Bible just may say low lands, which is what that means). ²⁸ And horses were imported for Solomon from Egypt. (Again, that was the taboo. God said, don't do that) and from all lands.”

Chapter 9 ends this way: *“²⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?*

By the way, those books no longer exist. It's too bad. I wish they did, but they were lost.

“³⁰ Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. ³¹ And Solomon slept with his fathers (which is a euphemism for dying just as his fathers had died,) and was buried in the city of David his father, and Rehoboam his son reigned in Jerusalem in his place.

We end here tonight with the life of Solomon, the man who had great wisdom from God and yet failed to apply it in his own life. And you and I are in a wonderful place where we have the wisdom of God that is given to us in the Word of God. And we can do just like Solomon. We can fail to apply it in our lives if we choose to. Interesting thing about God, isn't it?

The most powerful being in the universe, and He does not force himself on us. Sometimes I wish He did. Sometimes I wish that God wouldn't give me any choice in the matter. But then again, He would then be violating the very essence of how He made me and you, which is after His own image and in His own likeness.

When the Bible says we were made in the image of God, it doesn't mean we look like God. It means that He gave us the freedom to set our own course and to choose our own destiny within the confines of what we have to choose. And we can even say no to God. And when you think about that, it sounds incredible.

In fact, it even sounds ridiculous, that you and I who are dust could actually look to God and say to Him, no. The answer is no. And yet we do it every day. We have that choice before us every single day. But the beautiful thing too, is that we can also say, Yes. Yes, Lord, which is really the only answer that we should be giving to him if He is truly Lord.

But boy, do we have a hard time coming to that place sometimes, don't we? Oh, we kick and scream and fight against the things of the Lord and make a fuss and make all kinds of noise.

And what is the best for us? We resist. We resist, rather than just saying, yes, Lord. I struggle just like you do in certain areas of my life that are very challenging to let go of and to surrender. Boy, every time we sing a song like we did tonight where we sing, I surrender, I never take that for granted.

You know what I mean? I never sing that lightly, is what I mean. I never sing that in a sense of saying, oh yes, Lord, I surrender. I sing it more as a prayer. Lord, help me to surrender my life more to You every day because I know there are areas that I've retained just for me. I know that.

I do that to my own undoing. I retain those areas to my own undoing. And the Lord is gracious in my life to bring me to a place of having to face those. And that's not fun. It's very challenging and very fearful to face areas that we just don't want to let go of. But what the Lord has been showing me throughout the course of my life, and even somewhat recently, is that facing those issues and surrendering those issues, or not surrendering those issues as the case may be, is a matter of faith versus unbelief.

And the Lord has been showing me areas in my life where there exists unbelief in my heart. And that is very possible for a believer. And that's why we retain areas unto our ourselves, because of our lack of faith, our lack of trust. If we completely trusted God with all of our heart, we would give him all of those areas gladly.

We would say, yeah, Lord. Yeah. Oh, exactly. Yeah. Take it yours. I mean, by all means take it, but we don't do that. Do we hold back certain areas, whether they are areas of pleasure or areas of fear or areas of desire or whatever they may be. We hold them back and we retain them for ourselves so that we might enjoy them for ourselves or control them.

Sometimes it is an issue of control. And God is so patient, —blows me away how patient He is— to speak to us over a period of time and say, my child, I love you so much. But you have held on to this area with a death grip, and you need to surrender it to Me. If there is ever going to be a modicum of joy in your life, you must surrender this area to Me.

Oh, mercy. I think we all know how difficult that is sometimes, whether we are surrendering our marriage or our business or our future or our plans, our desires, you name it. Our fears. Wow.

Just because God allows us to resist Him, doesn't mean it is a good idea.