1:2 This cure for hypothermia seems to leave somewhat to be desired in moral terms. Even if we want to do the best for someone, that genuine motivation shouldn’t lead us to cross moral boundaries; for we may lead others into sin by doing so. There are many such incidents recorded in Biblical history which are left open-ended, as it were, for us to reflect upon as to whether they were sin or not. This is intentional; to provoke our thought and introspection.

1:6 David hadn’t disciplined his son because he wanted to please him- and it resulted in this awful betrayal. The parental role isn’t to please their children, but to raise them to be God’s children.

1:15 There’s something very tragic in this scene; Bathsheba, the one time beautiful woman whom David had risked his salvation to sleep with, comes in and finds a younger woman sexually stimulating David. The sins of youth seem so far away from old men on their deathbeds, but then they like all of us suffer the consequence of our sins. David’s calling of Bathsheba to come to him (:28) recalls how he had called her to come sleep with him many years before.

1:31 *Let my lord king David live forever*- This is an example of using language without literally believing the truth of the words; for Bathsheba has just pointed out that David is going to die (:21). The language of demon possession in the New Testament and other non-scientific usages of language in the Bible must be considered in this light.

1:42 *You are a worthy man, and bring good news*- We too can assume that the message carried by a person must be good and true because we perceive them to be a good person. Yet they are only ‘good’ in our eyes, in our experience and perception of them. The messages we receive from others must somehow be separated by us from our perception of them as a person, and in our context, compared against God’s revealed word before we accept them as true.

1:48 *My eyes even seeing it*- The promise of 2 Sam. 7:16 about David’s great son being established on his throne referred to Christ reigning on David’s throne at His return to earth, when David would be resurrected to see it. But in his old age, David seems to have lost focus upon Christ and become obsessed with the idea of having God’s promises fulfilled in this life, and he came to see Solomon as the fulfilment of the promises more than Christ. No matter how long we have been in Christ, we must be aware that we can always let our focus upon Him slip, and seek for the fulfilment of the Kingdom promises in this life rather than their main, intended fulfilment in the future Kingdom.

2:8,9 David graciously overlooked Shimei's cursing, promising him that he would not die because of it (2 Sam. 16:10,11; 19:23). But he didn't keep up that level of grace to the end: here he asks Solomon to ensure that Shimei was killed for that incident. And one wonders whether it was Shimei’s words which so broke David’s heart that he later wrote the words of Ps. 109:16-18 wishing cursing upon Shimei. We too must struggle to keep up the level of grace we may show to a person, to the end of our lives. Forgiveness in this sense isn’t a one time act, but an ever continuing process we engage in.

2:2 *Show yourself a man*- David here redefines manliness as obedience to God’s law; he entirely subverts the stereotype of ‘manliness’.

2:7 *Let them be of those who eat at your table*- To eat at the king’s table was a sign of acceptance and special favour; and all believers are invited to eat at Christ’s table at the breaking of bread. To refuse or ignore the invitation is to turn down a great honour.

2:24 *Who has made me a house, as He promised*- The promise to David was that he would have a son who on account of his obedience would be given an eternal kingdom / house. The main fulfilment was to be in Messiah, the Son of God. But Solomon too quickly assumed the promise was to him and that his success in establishing his own kingdom was a fulfilment of that promise; and he overlooked the conditions. He does the same in :45 when he pronounces that “king Solomon shall be blessed”, again ignoring the conditions attached to the promised blessings. We too can do the same- overlooking, skimming over, the conditions of immortality, and assuming any present blessing is a sign we are ultimately acceptable with God.

2:28 The legal codes of the surrounding nations held that certain physical, sacred places could be entered and provide even murderers with freedom from judgment. The Torah allows this in some cases, but not in the case of deliberate murder. Thus when Joab grabs the horns of the altar, thinking he therefore couldn’t be slain for his sin, he is dragged away and slain. This would’ve read strangely to many of the surrounding peoples. Hammurabi’s laws had a sliding scale of punishment according to the social status of the person who had been harmed by misbehaviour – if a rich man struck out the eye of a ‘commoner’, he had to pay less compensation than if he did so to a person of higher status. The Torah reflects the immense value placed by God upon the human person; for such distinctions are totally absent in it. We are to likewise perceive the value and meaning of persons, and treat them accordingly.

2:45 See on :24.

3:3 It seems that Solomon loved God insofar as this was a living out of parental expectations; David is spoken of by both Solomon and the record as Solomon’s “father” hundreds of times. Yet God will work in our lives so that our love of Him is purely of our own account, rather than the living out of parental or others’ expectations.

3:12 *I have already given you*- God may have prepared great things potentially for us, which are only ‘released’ by our prayer for them. Solomon asked God for a wise heart- but he was told that God had already given him this. The process of educating Solomon in wisdom would have started long before; but it was released, as it were, by Solomon’s specific prayer.

3:26 Solomon immediately demonstrated his wisdom by the way he judged between the two prostitutes who came to him. They lived in the same house, and had given birth at the same time. The whole situation spoke of the kind of shameless prostitution which the Mosaic Law demanded should be punished by death. But the way of Divine wisdom in this case was not to automatically apply Divine law in condemning sinners. Instead, by cutting to the conscience within those women, and appealing to it, they were led to at least the possibility of repentance, transformation, salvation. Solomon’s wisdom was given him in order to know how to guide God’s great people. The way of wisdom is therefore sometimes not to press a point when someone’s in the wrong. We see this in all levels of relationships. There are weak points in relationships, fissure lines, which when pressed or brought under tension will cause earthquakes and destruction. It’s best not to press on them; and yet if they are ignored, then the quality of relationship suffers and descends into interacting only over ‘safe’ matters. So what are we to do? By not raising the obvious issue- you’re prostitutes and must be put to death- Solomon showed grace, but he showed it in such a way that those women surely couldn’t have felt the same again; rather like the woman taken in adultery. The very fact she was not condemned by the One who could condemn her- meant that she went away indeed vowing to “sin no more”.

4:20 The promises of the future Kingdom were fulfilled to a limited extent at this time; Israel were multiplied as the sand on the sea shore (2 Sam. 17:11), they possessed the gates of their enemies (Dt. 17:2; 18:6)- all in antitype of how we, Abraham's future seed would also receive the promised blessings in their mortal experience, as well as in the eternal blessedness of the future Kingdom.

4:25 Rabshakeh promised the Jews an Assyrian Kingdom where everyone sat under their own vine and fig tree- consciously parodying Micah’s contemporary prophecies of God’s future Kingdom (Is. 36:16 cp. Mic. 4:4). The Assyrian Kingdom was being presented as a parody of Solomon’s, which was the Kingdom of God (2 Chron. 9:8). Our surrounding world comprises “the kingdoms of this world” (Rev. 11:15); it is a fake kingdom of God. We have a choice between God’s Kingdom and that of this world, although to unspiritual eyes, this world with its promises of a wonderful life here and now can appear a replica of *God’s* Kingdom.

4:29 *According to the sand which is on the seashore*- The same term is used in :20 to describe the number of the Israelites. Solomon was given wisdom in order to assist them. We should search for wisdom in order to be of spiritual assistance to others, to God’s glory. Bible study is of no value unless we harness it to the service of God’s people. Our search for knowledge in every aspect of life must be because we seek to turn it into wisdom.

5:4 *Adversary* – Heb. ‘satan’. The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament uses the Greek word diabolos to translate the Hebrew ‘satan’. Hence Devil and Satan are effectively parallel in meaning. Thus we read in the Septuagint of David being an adversary [Heb. Satan, Gk. diabolos] in 1 Sam. 29:4; the sons of Zeruiah (2 Sam. 19:22), Hadad, Rezon and other opponents to Solomon (1 Kings 5:4; 11:14,23,25). We face a simple choice – if we believe that every reference to ‘Satan’ or ‘Devil’ refers to an evil cosmic being, then we have to assume that these people weren’t people at all, and that even good men like David were evil. The far more natural reading of these passages is surely that ‘satan’ is simply a word meaning ‘adversary’, and can be applied to people [good and bad], and even God Himself – it carries no pejorative, sinister meaning as a word. The idea is sometimes used to describe our greatest adversary, i.e. our own sin, and at times for whole systems or empires.

5:12 The practical result of wisdom was peace between persons, and this should be the practical outcome of translating all our knowledge of God into practical wisdom.

6:7 We are represented by these stones of the temple (1 Pet. 2:5); we are being quarried and shaped now by the hand of God in our lives, and will be assembled into the temple at Christ’s return. It will be too late then for corners to be knocked off; the shaping process is going on now. Stones need shaping so that they fit nicely with the other stones, in order to be a useful part of the entire house. Spiritual isolation isn’t therefore what God intends; the shaping process involves us in inter-personal relationships and getting along with others, rather than walking away every time there is awkward conflict.

6:12 God saw the need to remind Solomon that he was still required to be obedient; the promises about him were always conditional upon this. Solomon was tempted to reason that because of his works and his outstanding effort in building the temple, he was thereby excused from practical obedience in other areas of his life. We too can face the same temptation; to serve God in one area of our lives and think that this excuses us from submitting our entire lives to His word.

6:13 Thanks to Solomon's prayer, and if he had been obedient, all Israel would have been blessed and experienced Yahweh dwelling amongst them. Our obedience or disobedience really can affect third parties.

6:19 *Inner sanctuary*- Translated in some Bibles as “oracle”, the Hebrew word thus translated also means ‘the word’, and can be interpreted as meaning ‘the speaking place’. God speaks to us today in His word; as we read His word and respond to it, we are in the most holy place, as God speaks to us and we respond- whether we read on the bus, hear it on our headphones or read in bed at night. Daily Bible reading is therefore so important in our personal relationship with God.

6:38 *He was seven years in building it*- Perhaps prophetic of God’s 7000 year plan to build a spiritual temple for Him to dwell in. Throughout the temple there was the theme of God’s glory- the cherubim motif was throughout the building (:29). Our entire purpose both now and eternally is to give glory to God and not to ourselves.

7:1 Solomon spent nearly twice as long building his own house as he did God’s house (6:38). He liked building (Ecc. 2:4); he served God in ways convenient to him, rather than taking up a cross and going against his own natural desires. See on 9:1.

7:12 *Like as the inner court of the house of Yahweh*- Solomon was maybe unconsciously playing God, creating a throne for himself in similar and more glorious style to God’s throne room in the temple.

7:23 Sometimes the Bible is very vague. There are times when the Spirit uses very approximate numbers rather than exact ("about the space of four hundred and fifty years", Acts 13:20 cp. 1 Kings 6:1). The reference to "seventy" in Judges 9:56 also doesn't seem exact. Seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11) becomes "seven years" (1 Kings 2:11); three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9) becomes "three months" (2 Kings 24:8). And here 1 Kings 7:23 gives the circumference of the laver as “thirty cubits”, although it was ten cubits broad. Taking ‘pi’ to be 3.14, it is apparent that the circumference would have been 31.4 cubits; but the Spirit says, summing up, “thirty”. Surely this is to show that God is God, not man, and as such He’s not on the back foot, writing under the fear of criticism. His word is not contradictory, but on the other hand, God has more spiritual culture than to sink down to the level of a man who wanted to foresee all criticism in writing something which could stand all petty criticism. He has a spiritual culture much higher than this. And this is the answer to many of the petty objections about ‘Bible contradictions’ which are raised by cynics.

7:25 The sea or laver was a washing place in which the priests and sacrifices had to be washed before approaching God. It speaks of baptism under the new covenant, and is alluded to in Tit. 3:5, which speaks of our being saved by faith through the laver or bath of regeneration. Water baptism is part of the process of regeneration, the required expression of our faith in God’s salvation, and is therefore vital for all who would come to God in this age.

7:50 *The hinges... of gold*- Gold wasn’t the most suitable material for many of the utensils. But it represents faith (1 Pet. 1:7). The life of faith means that we may do things which appear to have a very weak human basis, and yet this is how God loves to work- through the human weakness of decisions taken and work done in faith.

8:5 *Sacrificing sheep and cattle, that could not be counted nor numbered*- Solomon hadn’t learnt the lesson his father David did after his sin with Bathsheba- that God doesn’t really want multitudes of animal sacrifices, but rather the sacrifice of a broken heart and true internal spirituality (Ps. 50:8-15; 51:16,17; Is. 1:11; Jer. 7:22; Am. 5:25). We must be aware that organized religion so easily leads us to think that the externalities of religious devotion are all important; whereas it is internal spirituality which God seeks above all, and any organized religious system we are part of should be merely an assistance towards that, rather than an end in itself.

8:17 *It was with the heart of David*- In the Hebrew Bible, the idea of being "with" someone means to "be in one's consciousness, whether of knowledge, memory or purpose". Thus Job speaks of how what God plans to do to him is "with God", i.e. in His purpose (Job 23:14); David is spoken of as having the idea about building a temple "with" him (here and 2 Chron. 6:7)- and see too Num. 14:24; 1 Kings 11:11; 1 Chron. 28:12; Job 10:13; 15:9; 23:10; 27:11; Ps. 50:11; 73:23. When we read of Jesus being "with" God from the beginning (Jn. 1:1-3), the Western mind can assume this means sitting literally together with Him. But Jesus didn’t physically pre-exist His birth. It is this refusal to read the Bible within its own Hebraic context which has led to so much misunderstanding, and adopting of doctrines and positions which simply don't stand up to closer Biblical scrutiny.

8:18 Whether God did in fact say exactly this to David is open to question, because it would contradict God’s own reasoning about why He didn’t want a temple, and the fact the promises to David were mainly about the spiritual temple to be built by God’s Son Jesus (Lk. 1:31-35). David assumed this is what God meant; and Solomon now repeats it as if it is the very word of God. This kind of error so often occurs.

8:22 Such public, ostentatious prayer is surely not in the spirit of Christ, who commanded us to pray secretly (Mt. 6:6).

8:29,30 *Listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place*- Solomon had the wrong idea that the existence of the temple somehow made prayer more noticeable by God. One of the reasons for the destruction of the temple was to bring God’s people into direct, prayerful contact with Him in their exile in the Gentile world. God likewise takes away the props of our religion in order to bring us directly to Him.

8:39 *Hear in heaven Your dwelling place*- We are invited to see God as having a “throne” (2 Chron. 9:8; Ps. 11:4; Is. 6:1; 66:1). Such language is hard to apply to an undefined essence which exists somewhere in heavenly realms, but is rather appropriate to a personal God having a specific location. We can better understand the idea of ‘God manifestation’ in personal human beings if we understand Him as being Himself personal. It also provides focus to our prayers, as it did for Solomon here.

8:49 *Hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven... and maintain their cause*- This is legal language, implying that our situations on earth are acted out within the Heavenly throne room, where God is both judge and the one who advocates for us to Himself, maintaining our case and supporting our supplication. We need never feel, therefore, that the complexities of our situations on earth are unnoticed. They are known and analyzed better than we know ourselves, in Heaven itself.

8:58 *He may incline our hearts to Him*- We're wrong to think that God passionlessly waits for us to repent or pray to Him, and then He will forgive or act for us. He loves us, simply so; and with all love's manipulation of circumstances, seeks to pour out His love upon us. Thus repentance itself is a gift which God gives and is not totally upon human initiative (see too Dt. 4:29-31; 30:1-10).

9:1 *Solomon’s desire which he was pleased to do*- See on 7:1. Solomon’s building work was what he naturally desired to do, he built for his personal “pleasure” (:19); he didn’t understand that true service of God requires us to go against the grain of our natural desires.

9:3 God didn’t ideally want to have a physical temple, in the same way as He didn’t want Israel to have a system of human kings. But He made concessions to human weakness, as He does today, so eager is He for fellowship with us.

9:4 Notice all the time God uses the word “if” in this communication. There are times in our lives when like Solomon we need to be reminded that whatever successes we have had in spiritual life, our eternal future is always conditional upon our enduring to the end (Mt. 10:22). The sense of the eternity we might miss should in some form be ever in our consciousness.

9:7 *I cut off Israel*- A whole nation would suffer as the result of Solomon’s disobedience; our sins really can affect third parties, and this is the very sinfulness of sin.

9:22 *Of the children of Israel Solomon made no bondservants*- But he did later, and the people complained bitterly about the harshness he showed them (12:4). He began by being inhumane to unbelievers, and then came to treat God’s people with the same hardness he showed people in the world; and we can take a lesson from this.

10:4-8 The Queen of Sheba *saw* Solomon's wisdom through seeing the "sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their clothing". It was through her observation of Solomon's people that she perceived and understood his wisdom. The nations will likewise learn the knowledge of Christ through observing the example of natural Israel and ourselves; as they should in this life too. People tend not to believe mere words until they see them lived out in practice before their eyes.

10:9 Because of God's enthusiasm for human response to His ways, the exalted language in which He describes believers, even in their weakness, is an essay in His humility. Thus God "delighted" in Solomon- translating a Hebrew word meaning literally 'to bend down to'. It's used about men in love (Gen. 34:19; Dt. 21:14; 25:7), and about Jonathan's deferential attitude to David (1 Sam. 19:2). If God is humble, so should we be.

10:14 *Six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold*- The connection with 666 as the number of the man of sin (Rev. 13:18), and the similarities between Babylon’s merchandise in Rev. 17 and 18 and that which came to Solomon, all indicates that all was not spiritually well with Solomon. His kingdom was on one hand God’s Kingdom, and yet it was also a kingdom of sin. This is ever our temptation- not atheism, but a serving of sin under the impression of serving God.

10:29 Solomon’s love of horses was not right for the king of Israel (Dt. 17:16). He began by being a middleman, bringing horses out of Egypt and selling them on to other nations. But he ended up being addicted to them. We should choose not to have involvement with sinful things, because it’s likely that the more we deal with them, the more likely it is we will ourselves start to use them.

11:2,3 The following passages all make the same connection between marriage out of the covenant, and adopting idolatry: Ex. 34:12-16; Dt. 7:2-9; Jud. 3:6,7; Mal. 2:11; 2 Cor. 6:14. Dt. 7:4 dogmatically predicts that a Gentile man will definitely turn away the heart of his Hebrew son-in-law… So certain is it that marriage to Gentiles leads to accepting their idols that Ezra 9:1,2 reasons that Israel hadn't separated from idols because they had married Gentiles. Marriage to unbelievers is very serious.

11:6 Anything less than following Yahweh with all our heart is seen as doing evil in His eyes. We see here the logic of total devotion to Him.

11:13 The extent of grace explains many apparent contradictions and paradoxes throughout God's relationships with men- e.g. God repeatedly said that He would leave David with “one tribe”. But actually by grace He gave David and Judah two and a half tribes.

11:14 1 Kings 11 mentions that God raised up ‘adversaries’ to Solomon (see too :23,25). The Hebrew word ‘satan’ used here means simply an adversary. God didn’t stir up a supernatural person or an angel to be a Satan/adversary to Solomon; He stirred up ordinary men. The original word ‘satan’ has no negative connotation in itself. Mt. 16:22,23 speaks of Peter as a ‘satan’ to Jesus. Note that God is in control of these ‘satans’. He raised them up and put them down; ‘satan’ doesn’t refer to anyone in radical opposition to God.

11:28 The final comment upon Jeroboam is that he was not as God’s servant David (14:7-9). And yet he was set up with that potential possibility. Consider how he was a young “man of valour” as was David (1 Sam. 16:18; 17:58); a ruler over all (as David, 1 Sam. 18:5); taken by God to reign over Israel (:37) as was David (2 Sam. 7:8); would have a house built (:38) as David (2 Sam. 7:11); and compare :40 with 1 Sam. 19:2,10. We are set up with great potentials; our lives are sometimes potentially guided to be similar to those of Biblical characters. But we have to make the right decisions and choices in order to realize that potential.

11:29 The division within Israel was the greatest tragedy to come upon God’s people, just as it is today (Is. 7:17). The way the new garment of Ahijah was torn up to symbolize the division, reflects the utter waste. For an outer cloak was a garment a man could wear for life; to have a new one was something significant. The Lord’s coat being unrent at His death may therefore be a reflection of how His death brought about unity amongst His people (Jn. 11:52; 17:21,22). Before Him, there, we simply cannot be divided amongst ourselves.

12:7 We see here the paradox of servant leadership- if Rehoboam had been a servant of his people, then he would have ruled over them. In all ways, the Lord is our pattern. He was a servant of all, and so should we be. His servanthood dominated His consciousness. He said that He came not [so much as] to be ministered unto, but so as to minister, with the end that He gave His life for others (Mk. 10:45). This is what makes Him Lord of all- because He was servant of all.

12:15 There are times when God has influenced men not to respond to the evidently wise words of other men, in order to fulfil His purpose (see too 2 Chron. 25:20).

12:21 The Lord Jesus framed His parable about Satan's kingdom rising up and being divided against itself (Mk. 3:23-26) in the very language of the Kingdom of Israel being "divided" against itself by Jeroboam's 'rising up' (see too 13:6)- as if Israel's Kingdom was Satan's kingdom. Dividing against our brethren makes us Satan’s Kingdom rather than God’s.

12:24 *So they listened to the word of Yahweh*- It requires quite some humility to change our plans when we have already set up a plan of action which involves mobilizing others.

12:26 ‘Said in his heart’ is a common Biblical phrase (e.g. Gen. 17:17; 1 Sam. 27:1;Esther 6:6). The focus of the Bible is upon our spiritual mindedness, rather than upon any cosmic conflict between God and a supposed Satan figure. The arena for spiritual conflict is ultimately within the human heart.

13:6 The prayer of the man of God caused Jeroboam’s hand to be healed. The prayers of someone else can affect the fortunes of another in a way which would not happen if they just prayed for themselves. What stronger motivation could we have to pray earnestly for each other?

13:18 These two prophets both loved God’s word and showed themselves faithful to Him at a time when God’s people had gone badly astray. But the point of the history is to show that this alone isn’t enough; we must not make assumptions about what God’s word is, nor must we assume that because we love His word therefore our gut feelings and natural desires are thereby justified and we can do as we wish.

13:21 When we read God’s word, we hear His voice from His very mouth. We hear "the mouth of God". Jeremiah spoke "from the mouth of the Lord" (2 Chron. 36:12). His word brings Him that near to us, if we will perceive it for what it is. Thus "Scripture" is put for "God" (Rom. 9:17; Gal. 3:8) and vice versa (Mt. 19;4,5). When we speak and preach God's word, we are relaying God's voice to men, and should make appropriate effort to deport ourselves as the ministers of His word and voice.

14:14 *Even now-* This reflects how God’s words are as good as done as soon as they are uttered, so certain are they of fulfilment. This is the way to understand those passages which appear to teach that both Jesus and ourselves existed physically before our birth. God doesn't completely express Himself in our terms and language (although of course to some degree He does). There is a degree to which God is God, and He expresses Himself as He is. We must bring ourselves to accept His perspective. Indeed, faith is the ability to believe that what God has said will actually happen physically, and that therefore we can live as if we see that future physical event as actually having happened. In other words, faith is about adopting God's time-less perspective.

14:15 As Pharaoh’s heart was plagued (Ex. 9:14), so was Israel’s (1 Kings 8:38); as Egypt was a reed, so were Israel (1 Kings 14:15). The language of the world is thus applied to God’s people because this is how they thought and acted. Apostate Israel are spoken of as the pagan world; and therefore at the day of judgment the rejected of the new Israel will be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32); assigned their portion “with the unbelievers” (Lk. 12:46).

14:31 *His mother’s name was Naamah the Ammonitess*- This is repeated twice (:21). The emphasis is on the fact that Solomon’s marriage to a Gentile unbeliever resulted in unbelieving children.

15:11 Asa is recorded as serving God just as well as David, when actually this wasn't the case; but God counted him as righteous. The incomplete faith of men like Baruch was counted as full faith by later inspiration (Jud. 4:8,9 cp. Heb. 11:32). Sometimes the purges of idolatry by the kings is described in undoubtedly exaggerated language- such was God's joy that at least something was being done? Or because, again, He imputed righteousness to those who had some faith in Him?

15:14 *The high places were not taken away: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect with Yahweh all his days*- God appears prepared to overlook some failures because our conscience is still right with Him. And yet, despite the significance of conscience, we will be judged at the last day according to God’s word rather than our own conscience as it were jumping out of us and standing there as the yardstick for our judgment. Asa and Jehoshaphat removed the high places, but in a sense they didn't (1 Kings 15:14 cp. 2 Chron. 14:5; 17:6 cp. 20:33). We read of how the land was purged of Baal, Sodomites etc.; but in a very short time, we read of another purge being necessary. Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah all made major purges within a space of 80 years. Jeremiah therefore condemns the Jews who lived at the time of Josiah's reformation for not knowing God in their hearts.

15:15,18 Asa gathered the gold and silver vessels back into the temple- and then went and used them to make a political treaty. He apparently treated them as God's riches, but then in reality he used them as his own. Many a believer has this very same tendency.

16:2 We can make others stumble from the path to His salvation. Baasha made other people sin and thus provoke God to anger; his own sin and that of the people are described in identical language, to portray how he influenced them. We have far more spiritual influence upon others than we might think.

16:25 *Dealt wickedly above all who were before him*- The same is stated about his son, Ahab (:30). The weaknesses of the fathers tend to be repeated by the children, even worse. Sin tends towards a downwards spiral, people become morally worse and worse without the influence of God’s word.

16:31 Ahab's marriage to a Gentile was far worse than all the sins of Jeroboam; the idolatry, the perversion, the making of Israel sin; these were "a light thing" compared to the evil of marriage out of the faith. That perspective on marriage to unbelievers needs to be shared by us today. And further, those who married the daughters of Ahab were led astray by them (2 Kings 8:18,27).

17:1 *There shall not be dew*- Elijah was motivated in this by the way Gideon asked that there should only be dew upon the ground (or perhaps even upon the whole land of Israel) according to his word of faithful prayer (Jud. 6:37-39). It is quite possible that we, too, may be given certain prompts in life by reason of particular experiences repeating those of a Biblical character.   David also prayed just the same things (2 Sam.1:21). When it comes to prayer, there is a positive pattern of influence and example both amongst us as believers and from our absorbing the spirit of Biblical examples.

*But according to* my *word*- His faith was based upon being attune to the will of God and His ways of working with His people, to the extent that he knew that because God’s word abided in him, he could ask what he wanted and it would be heard, because he asked according to God's will (Jn. 15:7). But when the time comes for rain, we read that "the word of Yahweh [not Elijah's word] came to Elijah... saying... I will send rain on the earth" (18:1). God’s word reveals His will, and therefore the more in touch we are with His will the more we will be able to confidently ask for things in prayer.

17:6 *Ravens*- These were unclean animals, and yet God made Elijah depend upon them and the unclean food. He was trying to teach Elijah not to trust in legalistic obedience.

17:9 God had sought to gently teach Elijah his need for others when He told Elijah to go to the widow woman in Zarephath who would “sustain you”; it worked out that Elijah sustained her. And he must have reflected upon this. God’s intention was that spiritually, his experience with that woman would sustain him. Our efforts to sustain others lead to our being sustained.

17:12 *A handful of flour in a pitcher*- The idea is of a handful of meal in a very large container; it’s an eloquent picture of her poverty, and how she was down to the last little bit of flour in a large container that was once full. And the Lord through Elijah demanded this of her, that He might save her. God can be demanding, but we don’t have the same right to be upon others. She had to first feed God’s representative, and after feed herself and her son (:13)- rather than give God the leftovers after she had firstly taken what *she* needed.

17:21 *Three times-*  Perhaps the way that the first six prayers of Elijah for rain went unanswered and his need to pray three times for the child to resurrect, were all part of God teaching Elijah that no matter how close we are to Him, we have no right to expect automatic answers to prayer, even if they are according to God’s will.

17:22 The woman’s son was resurrected because God heard Elijah’s faithful prayer; Heb. 11:35 alludes to this incident by saying that through faith- in this case, the faith of Elijah, a third party- women received their dead raised to life. Our prayers really can make a huge difference in the lives of others.

18:4 God tried to correct Elijah’s despising of the other prophets of the Lord. Elijah was in a cave, and was also fed bread and water- just as the other prophets were. And yet Elijah didn’t see, or didn’t want to see, that connection- after having been reminded of this experience of the other prophets, he claims that he alone was a true prophet of Yahweh (:22)- he wrongly believed that all other valid prophets had been slain (19:10). But the record shows how that during Elijah’s lifetime there were other prophets of Yahweh active in His service (20:13,35). And yet the lesson is that God still works through the conceited, the spiritually superior, those who despise their brethren. God didn’t give up on Elijah because he was like this, and neither should we give up in our relationship with such brethren.

18:8 *Go, tell your lord*- Elijah didn’t have too positive a view of anyone apart from himself- and that included faithful Obadiah. Obadiah repeatedly calls Elijah “my Lord” and describes himself as “your servant”; but Elijah responds to this by calling Obadiah the servant of Ahab- he tells him to go and tell “your Lord”, i.e. Ahab. Elijah is insisting that he and Obadiah have nothing in common- Obadiah serves Ahab, and he is nothing to do with Elijah. ‘Obadiah’ means ‘servant of Yahweh’- the name surely reflects very faithful parents to have called him that at the time of the Baal cult. But Elijah insists that Obadiah is really a servant of Ahab, not of Yahweh. The fact Elijah was hidden by God meant that he was forced into fellowship with the prophets of Yahweh whom Obadiah hid in a cave (:4). Elijah was thus intended to see a link between Obadiah and God, and himself and the other prophets of Yahweh. But Elijah’s pride didn’t let himself make the connection, just as ours often doesn’t. For he continued doubtful of Obadiah’s sincerity, and still insisted that he alone remained a faithful prophet of Yahweh- even though Obadiah had hidden one hundred other prophets from Jezebel’s persecution. Those one hundred prophets were presumably part of the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And maybe they weren’t that strong- they are set up as representative of those who will only be saved by grace, not their works (Rom. 11:4-6). But, by implication, Elijah, for all his love of Israel, did not look upon them through the eyes of grace. Elijah insisted that he alone was “left”; yet God says that He has “left” Himself the 7,000 (19:18). The preservation of the people of God, or ‘the truth’ is done by God Himself; yet the likes of Elijah consider that it is they who ‘preserve the truth’. Again, Elijah had to learn that we are all saved by grace. God will leave for and to Himself His people, without requiring the help of man. Elijah struggled with this issue of accepting others and not thinking he was the only one who could do the job right up to the end of his ministry; for he ascends to Heaven clutching his mantle, the sign of his prophetic ministry. It seems he took it with him because he felt that not even Elisha was really fit to do the job and take his place; but perhaps in what were possibly the last seconds of his mortal life, he learnt his lesson and let go of it, allowing it to fall to the earth to let another man take it up.

18:15 Elijah assured Obadiah that he was really telling him the truth, because Yahweh of Hosts (Angels) is real, and he stood before those Angels. A sense of Angelic presence and observation will likewise inspire us to transparent lives (1 Cor. 11:10; 1 Tim. 5:21).

18:21 The inertia of indecision is a huge problem. Your own example of making clear choices, doing what is right before God rather than what is wise and smart in human eyes, will reveal a sense of clarity about you which will become inspirational to your brethren. Yours will not be one of those many lives that is paralyzed by constantly postponing the choices, by indecision, like Israel on Carmel, hopping backwards and forwards between two opinions. When Elijah demands that the people chose which lord they will serve- Baal [=’lord’] or Yahweh, he is really getting to the very crux of spirituality- for truly, there can be no halting between the two opinions of serving Baal and serving Yahweh. Jesus based His words of Lk. 16:13 on those of Elijah here- we can’t serve two masters. Note that although on one hand the Lord Jesus Himself quotes Elijah’s ‘truth’ approvingly, there is evidence galore that at the very same time, Elijah’s attitudes were far from Christ-like

18:26-29 The idea of prophets was well known in the world around ancient Israel. The idea of a prophet was that a person was caught up in some kind of ecstasy, transported into some ‘other’ world, leaving behind their humanity. The true prophets were different. Their inspiration was about being attuned to the mind of God, they remained very much in the flesh and in the world, and the subjects of their prophecy related to very real, human things- injustice, a guy building an extension on his house without paying the labourers. Not flashing lights and ethereal coasting through space. The pagan prophets (e.g. the prophets of Baal here) worked themselves into a frenzy in order to reach a state of depersonalization and loss of consciousness, in the hope that then they would be filled with Divine consciousness. True prophets were absolutely different; the inspiration process required them to be fully in touch with their own consciousness and personality, and it was exactly through their humanity that the personality of God came through in the inspired words they spoke and wrote. This is why at times the prophets give God’s word but then interrupt, as it were, in full consciousness, to plead or even protest (e.g. Am. 7:2). Whereas the false prophets aimed to lose consciousness in order to receive something from God’s consciousness, the true prophets received heightened sensitivity and conscience / consciousness in order to receive God’s word and to know His mind. The message which the true prophets received wasn’t some vague abstraction or personal transport into an unreal world. What they received from God was the sense that this world and its fate are very dear to its creator. It was because the true prophets entered into the mind of God, that this issued in the experience of words. The false prophets tended to experience something happening; whereas the true prophets experienced the thoughts of God, which issued in words. Their experience had form, but no content. The Pentecostal ‘Holy Spirit’ experiences appear to be the form of ecstasy claimed by the false prophets. Receipt of God’s true revelation involved dialogue with God, even disagreement with Him for a moment, response, pleading, speech and counterspeech. It wasn’t a case of merely passively hearing a voice and writing it down.

18:27 *To the toilet*- This kind of mockery and crudeness is surely not how the Father and Son would have us act. We aren’t to mock false beliefs in this way. Yet Elijah did this whilst at the same time deeply believing the fire would come down, and bringing it down by his faith. Elijah’s mocking attitude is also shown by the way in which he demands they find him four barrels of water- on the top of a mountain, after a major three and a half year drought (:33). Presumably they took the water from the sea at the bottom of the mountain- and thus Elijah’s sacrifice would be offered with salt. He was strictly obedient to the requirements for sacrifice- yet amidst an abusive, self-justifying mindset. The very possession of truth can take our attention away from our need for self-examination and right attitudes towards others. In this lies one of our most subtle temptations.

18:36 Elijah “prayed in his prayer” (James 5:17 Gk.)- there was a deep prayer going on within his prayer, words and feelings within words- the prayer of the very inner soul. This was how much he sought their repentance. The James passage sets Elijah up as a pattern for our prayer for our wayward brethren. He really is our pattern here. He clearly saw prayer as requiring much effort; and the way he prays at the time of the evening sacrifice on Horeb suggests that he saw prayer as a sacrifice.

18:37 *Answer me*- Elijah appears utterly certain that God will answer by a bolt of fire, without having asked Him first. He asks God to “answer me” without specifically requesting for fire to be sent down; he brings the situation before God and asks Him to ‘answer’ that situation. Prayer is often answered in ways we do not perceive, or by an answer which will only much later be revealed. Elijah's prayer here will only be finally answered when Elijah comes in the last days (Mal. 4:6).

*You have turned their heart back*- God appeals for people to respond by pointing out that in prospect, He has already forgiven them. Thus Elijah wanted Israel to know that God had already in prospect turned their hearts back to Him (see too Is. 44:22). We preach the cross of Christ, and that through that forgiveness has been enabled for all men; but they need to respond by repentance in order to access it. God has potentially enabled their conversion (see Jn. 1:7). Hence the tragedy of human lack of response; so much has been enabled, the world has been reconciled, but all this is in vain if they will not respond.

18:40-44 Believe that you really will receive; avoid the temptation of asking for things as a child asks for birthday presents, with the vague hope that something might turn up. Remember how Elijah heard, by faith, the noise of rain even before he had formally prayed for it, and when there was no hint of rain.

19:10 "I, even I only am left" was Elijah's cry to God as he realized the depth of Israel's apostasy. But this was interpreted by God as a prayer for God to condemn Israel (Rom. 11:2,3). God read what was in Elijah's heart, and counted this as his prayer.

19:11,13 The Angel tells Elijah to actually go and stand before the Lord and learn what it really meant; so he had to literally stand before the Angel as He passed by. Yet Elijah hid his face; he was no longer so happy to be before the Lord once he realized the humility and breaking in pieces of a proud man’s spirit that it really implies.  So (:13) he wrapped his face [in Hebrew, the words for ‘face’ and ‘before’ are the same] in his mantle and “stood” in the cave mouth before the Angel. Too ashamed to really stand before the Lord, Elijah therefore wrapped his face. Earlier, he had been so keen to use this phrase of himself (17:1; 18:15); he had prided himself on the fact that he stood before the Lord. But now he hid his face, an idiom often used by God for withholding fellowship. The fact we too are God’s covenant people can initially be a source of pride to us as we do our theological gladiatorship with others. But the implications are so far deeper; and through Angelic work in our lives, we too are brought to see this. The word for “mantle” is translated “glory” in Zech. 11:3; Elijah wrapped his presence in his own glory, rather than face up to the implications of God’s glory. A desire for our own glory prevents us perceiving God’s glory. Only at the very end does Elijah cast away his mantle (2 Kings 2:13), his human strength, allowing himself to merge with God’s glory. He should have cast away his mantle earlier, when he stood before the still small voice on Horeb. The question of :13 “Why are you still here, Elijah?” may imply that Elijah should have allowed himself to be carried away by the cherubim, he should have surrendered himself to the progress of God’s glory, rather than so obsessively insist upon his own personal rightness and the wrongness of others. And this was why God’s ultimate response to Elijah’s attitude on Horeb was to dismiss him from his prophetic ministry and instate Elisha as his successor (:16). Elijah seems to have finally learnt his lesson, for he calls Elisha to the ministry by ‘passing by’ Elisha as in a theophany, taking off his mantle and throwing it upon Elisha (:19). He realized that he had hidden behind that mantle, using it to resist participating in the selfless association with God’s glory [rather than his own] to which he was called. But he got there in the end; hence the enormous significance of Elijah giving up his mantle when he finally ascends to Heaven in the cherubim chariot (2 Kings 2:13).

19:16 The call of God comes to us right in the midst of ordinary, mundane life. Christ called men in just the same way. This was what was and is so unusual and startling about the ministry of the Lord. His love sought men out, He didn’t wait for them to come to Him; and He does the same today in calling us to live as Him, often unexpectedly and in the midst of life’s repetitive course. Other examples in 2 Kings 9:1-13,18; Jud. 6:1; 1 Sam. 9:10; 11:5; Am. 7:14.

19:18 There is such a thing as feeling lonely when we needn’t. Elijah is an example of this; he felt that he was “left alone” faithful in Israel- even though there were another 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (Rom. 11:3). The Hebrew could mean that God reserved 7,000 of Elijah’s brothers and sisters who potentially would not bow the knee to Baal. Yet Elijah didn’t want to see the potential of his brethren. He set himself in a league above them, like the Psalmist, saying in his haste that all men are liars (Ps. 116:11).

19:20 Elisha bade farewell to his family before following Elijah, and Elijah allowed him to do this- but the Lord Jesus was more demanding (Lk. 9:59-61).

20:28 Sometimes God gives victory to unspiritual people because He wishes to justify Himself or teach others a lesson through that victory. The fact God uses us doesn’t necessarily mean we are therefore acceptable with Him.

20:40 *So your judgment shall be; you yourself have decided it*- Right now, men are justified by their words before the court of Heaven- for 'justify' means to pronounce righteous, and this pronouncement / justification is therefore given even now.

21:4 *Sullen and angry*- As in 20:43. Living with a bad conscience before God, endlessly seeking our own pleasure, doesn’t bring happiness but rather depression and anger (1 Tim. 6:9,10).

21:21 *I will bring evil on you*- We expect this to be prefaced by a “Thus says Yahweh”- but Elijah was so close to God he assumed he was speaking directly from Him. And yet Elijah doesn’t repeat what God had told him to say in :19. Was he too familiar with God? Assuming he knew God’s will and words? But Elijah improved- in 2 Kings 1:6 he says that what he says is the word of Yahweh, and he repeats verbatim what he was told to say. We too know God’s word. We know the Bible text well. But this can lead to a wrong assumption that we speak for God; that we must be right in all our attitudes and positions we adopt on issues.

21:29 *Before Me*- Yet Elijah also lived a life “before Yahweh” (17:1); it’s as if God was trying to get Elijah to see that he wasn’t the only person in God’s presence. Spiritual elitism is so wrong, and God works hard to bring people out of it.

22:15 *Go up and prosper*- Like the prophet Nathan in 2 Sam. 7:3, Micaiah initially said what he knew his audience wanted to hear. We who know God’s word are tempted likewise; human nature has a strong ability to sense what our audience wants to hear, and to say it. This is where speaking according to God’s word is at times counter-instinctive.

22:20 God deceived prophets to speak things in His Name which were actually false (see too Ez. 14:9). He chose Israel's delusions by making their idols answer them (Is. 66:3,4). Jeremiah feared God had deceived him (Jer. 20:7)- showing he knew such a thing was possible. God is constantly pushing people up an upward spiral of spirituality, or further down a downward spiral of unspirituality whereby He makes those who don’t love His truth to believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:10,11).

22:22 Here the Angels present their various plans of how to slay Ahab. God says to the one whose plan He accepts that he must go out and "prevail" or 'struggle' to operationalize a command from God which they know is His will to perform. And we have to do likewise, not least in the preaching of the Gospel, both obeying and prevailing. We shouldn’t think that God is unaware of our situations on earth. The Angels discuss their plans for us in the court of Heaven, coming up with various possibilities of how to act in our lives, discussing them with God. We will take over the roles of the Angels in administering God’s future Kingdom (Lk. 20:35,36; Heb. 2:5). Their knowledge and power isn’t total; they still have to go through a process of working out how to operationalize God’s will, coming up with differing suggestions.

22:32 Jehoshaphat nearly lost his life because of his alliance with Ahab. Even though Ahab was nominally one of God’s people, he had no respect for Yahweh’s word (:8). We have to chose our friendships and associations carefully even amongst those who are numbered amongst the body of believers.

22:49 Jehoshaphat had learnt the lesson about not working together with the family of Ahab (:32). Sometimes God repeats situations in our lives so that we learn the lesson and have practice in it; this is why it’s clear that our life situations tend to repeat, under God’s providential hand. See on 2 Kings 3:7.