

THE RICH KING'S FOUR WIVES

Once upon a time there was a rich king who had four wives. He loved the fourth wife the most and adorned her with rich robes and treated her to the finest delicacies. He gave her nothing but the best.

He also loved the third wife very much and was always showing her off to neighboring kingdoms. However, he feared that one day she would leave him for another man.

He also loved his second wife. She was his confidante and was always kind, considerate, and patient with him. Whenever the king faced a problem, he could confide in her, and she would help him get through the difficult times.

The king's first wife was a very loyal partner and had made great contributions in maintaining his wealth and kingdom. However, he did not love the first wife. Although she loved him deeply, he hardly took notice of her!

One day the king fell ill and knew his time was short. He thought of his luxurious life and wondered, "I now have four wives with me, but when I die, I'll be all alone."

Thus, he asked the fourth wife, "I have loved you the most, endowed you with the finest clothing and showered great care over you. Now that I'm dying, will you follow me and keep me company?"

"No way!" replied the fourth wife, and she walked away without another word. Her answer cut like a sharp knife right into his heart.

"The sad king then asked the third wife, "I have loved you all my life. Now that I'm dying, will you follow me and keep me company?"

"No!" she replied. "Life is too good! When you die, I'll remarry!"

His heart turned cold. He then asked the second wife, "I have always turned to you for help, and you've always been there for me. When I die, will you follow me and keep me company?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't help this time!" replied the second wife. "At the very most, I can only walk with you to your grace." Her answer struck him like a bolt of lightning. The king was devastated.

Then a voice called out: "I'll go with you. I'll follow you no matter where you go."

The king looked up and saw his first wife. She was very skinny as she suffered from malnutrition and neglect. Greatly grieved, he said, "I should have taken much better care of you when I had the chance!"

In truth, we all have the four wives in our lives:

- Our fourth wife is our **body**. No matter how much time and effort we lavish in making it look good, it will leave us when we die.
- Our third wife is our **possessions, status, and wealth**. When we die, these will go to others.
- Our second wife is our **family and friends**. No matter how much they have been there for us, they can't go with us past the grave.
- Our first wife is our **soul**. We often neglect it in pursuit of wealth, power, and pleasures of the world. However, our soul is the only thing that will follow us wherever we go. Cultivate, strengthen, and cherish it now, for it is the only part of us that will follow us to the throne of God and continue with us throughout eternity.

VENGEANCE

Many Christians are like the woman who had been bitten by a dog and was advised by her physician to write her last wishes, as she might succumb to hydrophobia. She spent so long with pencil and paper that the doctor finally remarked something about how long the will would be. "Will!" she snorted. "I'm writing a list of the people I'm going to bite!"

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

THAT WHICH WE SHOULD FEAR THE MOST

Text: _____

- I. The _____ of the Lost Soul
 - A. The _____ to _____
 - B. The _____ to _____
 - C. The _____ to _____
- II. The _____ of the Lost Soul
 - A. _____ of the _____
 - B. _____ of the _____
 - C. _____ of the _____
- III. The _____ of the Lost Soul
 - A. _____
 - _____
 - _____

WISDOM AND DEFEAT

Text: _____

- I. Begins with _____
 - A. The _____
 - B. The _____
 - C. The _____
- II. Turns into _____
 - A. _____ of Division
 - B. _____ of Division
 - C. _____ of Division
- III. Ends in _____
 - A. The _____ of Ungodliness
 - B. The _____ of Ungodliness
 - C. The _____ of Ungodliness

Kid's View—"Love is like an avalanche where you have to run for your life." (John—age 9)

DADDY, HAVE I EVER SEEN ONE?

I heard the story once about a family of church members discussing the importance of "going to church." You see, the father did not always attend with the rest of the family and this caused the wife and mother considerable consternation. The little boy was begging to "stay home with daddy," but the mother was insistent that he go with her, and was urging the father to get ready to go also. The conversation was beginning "to stir the ire" of both parents. Picking up on the reluctance of his father to go, the little boy spoke up, "Why do we have to go to church anyway?"

The father, unhappily arising out of his seat "to get ready to go" in order to please his wife, responded to his son with a raised voice, "Because we're Christians, that's why!" Catching the father by surprise, the little boy inquired of his father, "What is a Christian?" The father, still out of humor, replied to his son, "A Christian is one who believes in Christ and always does what is right." The little boy thought for a few seconds, looked at his father and asked, "Daddy, have I ever seen one?"

First of all, "going to church" should not be an issue that has to be decided anew from week to week. The decision once made by an individual to be a Christian should settle the matter once for all... **YES, I AM GOING TO ATTEND THE ASSEMBLY FO THE CHURCH** (note Hebrews 10:25)! And I am going to really try to be a genuine Christian in attitude, word, and deed! Within a Christian family, the husband and family should "take the lead" as head of his household, in putting Christ first (consider Ephesians 5:22-24; I Peter 3:5-7; Matthew 6:33, etc.). The wife and mother should cooperate fully with him in this, that the children might learn from them that Christ and His cause is to have **NUMBER ONE** priority!

-Maxie Boren

Years ago, because of a shortage of maids in England, the minister's wife advertised for a manservant. The next morning a nicely dressed young man came to the front door. "Can you start the breakfast by seven o'clock?" asked the minister. "I guess so," answered the man.

"Can you polish all the silver, wash all the dishes, do the laundry, take care of the lawn, wash windows, iron clothes, and keep the house neat and tidy?"

"Say preacher," said the young fellow rather meekly, "I came here to see about getting married but if its going to be as much work as all that, you can count me out right now."

THE BOOK OF ROYAL HISTORY

I and II Kings record the days of Israel that culminated in much evil and eventually in division. The two books that once were one begin with the death of king David and the anointing of Solomon, his son, to be the new king of Israel, and close with the demise of Judah and the carrying away to Babylon. Between the two events, obviously there was much disharmony among the people and between them and God.

These books of history, continued from the accounts of Samuel, in that, though God had not intended for there to be a monarchical system set in place over Israel, because they demanded it God allowed it. Israel had gained extraordinary power and prestige under the rules of Saul and David and that would continue to some degree under Solomon, the only difference being that while Saul and David focused on the need of expanding outside of the borders of Palestine, Solomon would then turn inward and expand within the borders of Palestine. To do so Solomon initiated a vast building project that spanned several decades. "Although best known for the Temple which he built, Solomon built and enlarged many other structures in Jerusalem and elsewhere. He spent thirteen years on his palace and administrative complex (I Kings 7:1-12). Solomon expanded the Jerusalem fortifications and built fortresses in strategic parts of the country." However, wherein these building projects were intended with the right purposes, Solomon's enthusiasm for building his vast empire proved to be a reason for the eventual split of the nation.

In order to build as he did, Solomon procured labor from anywhere he so desired, and though each worker was only made to spend one month out of each quarter each year away from home, the concept of forced labor took its toll on his reign in later years. In addition to that was the great expense that mounted from all of the material and labor. It has been estimated that the temple alone, by today's standard and exchange, would have cost many, many billions of dollars. And wherein Israel, in addition to its internal wealth, received tribute money from states subject to them, the debts accrued from all of the work were difficult for Solomon to pay and drastic steps had to be taken in order to pay down what was owed. It was all of the hardships Solomon placed upon the people in order to accomplish what was done that lead to the terrible events of I Kings 12.

After Solomon died his son Rehoboam was to be anointed as the succeeding king of the nation. Prior to his ordination, Rehoboam was called upon by a representative group of the people and counseled him to ease the yoke of service placed upon them by his father and they would loyally serve him all the days of his reign. However, forsaking theirs' and his father's counselors' advice, and accepting the advice of his peers to place heavier burden upon the people, Rehoboam increased the chastisement of the nation. The result of this was that the northern ten tribes revolted and made Jeroboam, one of their representatives, their king, forming a separate nation from henceforth referred to as Israel. Then remaining two tribes of the southern region of Palestine, Judah and Benjamin, remained under the control of Rehoboam and were henceforth known as Judah. With the nation dividing, the unified Israel led by the direction of God and bound for blessings, now, is no more.

The remainder of I Kings and all of II Kings records the history of the two individual nations and the actions of their kings. The northern kingdom of Israel, who under the reign of Jeroboam rejected God's prescribed worship, had a total of nineteen kings before their demise and departure into Assyrian bondage in 721 B.C., none of which are described by the scriptures as good. The southern kingdom of Israel had a total of twenty kings before their demise and departure into Babylon in 606 B.C., only three of which the Bible described as good.

Though the author of I and II Kings are not claimed in scripture, Jewish tradition ascribes their writings to Jeremiah the prophet. And while this cannot be certain, it likewise is not easily proven wrong. However, what is proven true is the authenticity of the two books. The inspired writers and speakers of the first century appealed to these books as authoritative by virtue of the fact that they quoted from them and made reference to them (Matthew 12:42; Luke 4:25ff; Matthew 5:17; Romans 11:4; etc.). Ultimately, it is known that God authored the books by inspiration and that information is enough.

Christ, as He is pictured in every other Old Testament book, is seen in I and II Kings as the "King of kings." Of all the kings written of in these books (40 in all), God exercises His power over them all and through the distinguished seed-line, never broken, He sent forth Christ to be the King over and above all kings past, present and future.

Though books of history, which turn many people off, I and II Kings, in addition to all Biblical history, are documents that aid one's understanding of the overall picture of the scriptures, and give additional proof to the truth of the Bible, Old and New. Given these facts, I and II Kings should hold a special place in the Christian's heart for what they provide in knowledge.

-Andy Brewer