

The Bible Banner

September 2026



Which Kingdom?

While serving as a missionary in Laos, a certain man discovered an illustration of the kingdom of God. Before the colonialists imposed national boundaries, the kings of Laos and Vietnam reached an agreement on taxation in the border areas. Those who ate short-grain rice, built their houses on stilts, and decorated them with Indian-style serpents were considered Laotians. On the other hand, those who ate long-grain rice, built their houses on the ground, and decorated them with Chinese-style dragons were considered Vietnamese. The exact location of a person's home was not what determined his or her nationality. Instead, each person belonged to the kingdom whose cultural values he or she exhibited. So it is with us, we live in the world, but as part of God's kingdom, we are to live according to His kingdom's standards and values. *"For our conversation [Greek--our citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:" Philipians 3:20*



Brussel Sprout Stir Fry

(Serve over cooked brown rice)

- 3 onions, cut in half-rings
- 1/2 cup coconut oil
- 8 Tbsp toasted sesame seeds
- 1 (16 oz/454 grams) bag frozen Brussels sprouts (cut them in half)
- 1 Tbsp each: garlic powder, onion powder, ground coriander
- 1 scant Tbsp salt
- 1/2 Tbsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp tumeric
- 2 Tbsp dried basil

Dry toast sesame seeds in a skillet on the stovetop until slightly browned. Set aside. Sauté the onion ring halves in a skillet with the coconut oil until the onions are lightly browned/see-through. Add the Brussels sprout halves and cook until warmed thoroughly. Add water if necessary. Then briefly (two minutes or so) add in the seasonings and sesame seeds. Remove from heat. Serve warm over brown rice.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

**"Peace isn't the
absence of
problems—it's
the presence of
Jesus."**

Based on John 16:33

Profitable Traditions--Cultivate Spiritual Growth

Make a Spiritual Growth Timeline -- 1 Samuel 7:12 says, *"Then Samuel took a stone, and set it..., and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us."* Take time to reflect on how God has lead in your life. Lay it out like a timeline. Determine 10 or more things that have made a positive spiritual difference in your life.



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Out of the House of Bondage

Editor's Note and Study to Show Thyself Approved

It is amazing to me how much science backs the word of God. Recently, I found an endorsement for religion in a 3cm-thick book on PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) written by a man who, among other things, used to work for the Pentagon. After defining religious commitment as *"putting belief into practice or action"* he shared that, *"The impact of religious commitment on physical and mental health has been demonstrated to be overwhelmingly positive. The religiously committed are more satisfied with life and marriage, are mentally and physically healthier, live longer, are less stressed, and are less likely to commit suicide or abuse drugs."*

Citing a certain study, he also stated, *"The preponderance [greatest amount] of evidence suggests that religion is associated with mental health benefits. Furthermore, the best religious predictors of mental health are not religious questionnaire responses (religious attitudes), but real-life religious behavior... Behavior predicts behavior."* In other words, behavior such as forgiving, taking time for church, prayer, reading the Bible, and helping others, etc., has been shown to help mental health, while a person just saying they are religious does not necessarily improve mental health. The science of religion in action being a blessing matches James 1:22,25 *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves... But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."*



The Children of Israel leaving Egypt

God's law, as fulfilled by Jesus, is the perfect law of liberty (Matthew 5:17). The blessing of God's law is not just a New Testament concept, because Exodus 20 begins by saying, *"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* Exodus 20:1-3 Just as obedience to God's word brought the Israelites out of the house of bondage in Egypt, today, love for God causes obedience to His law, and obedience to His law (His character revealed), claiming salvation through faith in Jesus, brings freedom from the bondage of the world. (John 14:15, John 8:32, and Romans 6:23) In short, the truths in God's commandments are for our happiness. Let's take a brief look at how this pertains to each commandment. For the sake of space, we've left a few commandments for you to investigate on your own.

#1, 2--*"Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."* Exodus 20:3-6 While some false gods claim the title or description of beneficent (kind), only one is truly unselfish in that He gave what He prized most, His only begotten son, to save you. Like a mirage the supposed "good" of many false gods disappears when you get close. One of the most subtle forms of idolatry is self-love, self-worship, and idolatry of self. But the promised good of self-idolatry is only a mirage. Indeed it has been said *"self-idolatry...lies at the foundation of all sin."* {Gospel Workers, pg. 114} Self-idolatry leads us into bondage. When everything in our life revolves around "how I look" or "what I get to do" or "what's in it for me?" we become lonely because putting ourselves first pushes other people away. Furthermore, when people see that we do not care about them, they stop trusting us, which removes support systems for hard times. Selfishness brings constant worry because focusing only on our own gain creates a persistent fear of losing control or being exposed. And then there is guilt and emptiness, because acting purely out of self-interest often brings a sense of regret and low life satisfaction. However, God's law brings us out of the bondage of self-idolatry because, *"Where love to God is practiced, natural self-idolatry will not exist."* {Signs of the Times, July 16, 1894 par. 7}

3-- *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."* Exodus 20:7 Many Christians consider this to be a prohibition against using God's name in swearing, and that is not wrong. But it also applies to taking God's name, for example, in calling ourselves Christ-ian and not acting like a Christian. For example, Proverbs 30:9 speaks against the action of those who are *"poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."* Isaiah 4:1 reiterates the negative idea of actions not matching the name taken. He foretold, *"And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach."* Those who take the name Christian and yet want to be half in the world and half Christian are still in the house of bondage. Like the women described by the prophet Isaiah, perhaps their clothing doesn't match that of Christian or what they put into their mouths is not fitting for a Christian. Or perhaps they are not behaving in a way that Christ could approve. They will spend their life trying not to get caught by the Christians in their worldly ways and trying not to be caught by worldlings doing Christian things. Living a double life is a heavy yoke, I know, because I've been there. God's answer for happiness is *"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."* 2 Timothy 2:19

#4-- *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."* Exodus 20:8-11 The fourth commandment is perhaps one of the most obvious ways that God leads His people out of bondage. Exodus 5:5 tells us, *"And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest [Hebrew--shaw-bath] from their burdens."* Like Pharaoh, Satan is happy for people to work themselves to death seven days a week. But God says, Take the seventh-day Sabbath off to spend time with me.

#5-- *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."* Exodus 20:12
For your own personal investigation.

#6 *"Thou shalt not kill."* Exodus 20:13 Killing has it's own natural penalty. Genesis 9:6 declares *"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."* After killing Abel, *"Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear...I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me."* Genesis 4:13,14 Those who kill can never really feel safe themselves. They are in bondage to fear and guilt. God's *"Thou shalt not kill"* law brings us out of the house of bondage into a happier existence.

#7-- *"Thou shalt not commit adultery."* Exodus 24:14 The New Testament reiterates, *"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."* 1 Corinthians 6:18 Even if a person doesn't get an STD (sexually transmitted disease), sexual immorality always comes with a penalty, yet for many, the penalty is easily forgotten.

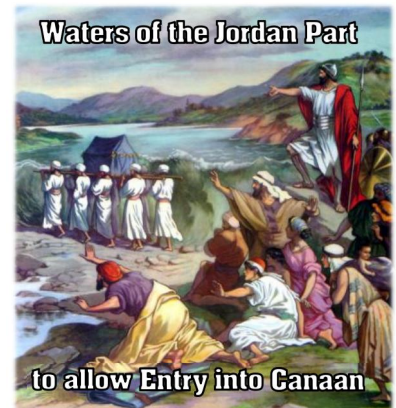
David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba shows the bondage even a king is brought into when he commits adultery. His story also proves the truth of James 2:10, *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"* because, for David, one sin led to another. When Bathsheba learned she was pregnant, David was in bondage, fearing his evil deed might be exposed. This eventually led him to command that Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, be killed in battle (2 Samuel 11:15). We also find that an adulterous relationship caused Samson to sin *"against his own body."* First, he lost his rational mind (in telling Delilah the secret of his strength after she had already betrayed him numerous times). Then he lost his strength, his eyes, and also his freedom. Samson was put in bondage for the rest of his life (Judges 16). All this grief Samson could have avoided by simply following God's 10 commandment plan for bringing His people out of bondage.

#8,9-- *"Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."* Exodus 20:15,16 For your own personal investigation.

#10-- *"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."* Exodus 20:17 Deuteronomy 5:21 helps us better understand the less frequently used word covet. It says, *"Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife..."* Desiring what rightfully belongs to someone else and being grouchy when you can't have it is coveting. But there is even more to it. When Jesus lists the commandments in Mark 10:19, He also lists and further defines coveting as *"Defraud not."* Simply put, to defraud means to cheat, but Webster's

Dictionary has a quite few other definitions of interest. *"1. To deprive of right, either by obtaining something by deception or artifice, or by taking something wrongfully without the knowledge or consent of the owner; to cheat...The man who by deception obtains a price for a commodity above its value, defrauds the purchaser. 2. To withhold wrongfully from another what is due to him. Defraud not the hireling of his wages. 3. To prevent one wrongfully from obtaining what he may justly claim..."* An example of defrauding comes from a certain tourist to Russia who tells how he came into bondage of guilt after defrauding a man by bartering so low a price for a coat that the Russian man was literally in tears. Meanwhile, the tourist had possessed plenty of money in his pocket and could have easily paid a higher price. Later, the tourist learned the man probably needed money to feed his children that day and had sold the coat for just a few "dollars" over what he had paid for it. For years, the tourist felt enormous guilt for defrauding the man, but there was no way to find him again and make restitution. How much better it would have been to follow God's rules for coming out of bondage from the start.

However, freedom doesn't always feel like freedom. Indeed, just as Pharaoh made life harder for the Israelites as they were coming out of bondage (Exodus 5:20-23), so Satan does all he can to discourage Christians who are trying to do what is right by following God's commandments. Perhaps you have no money for groceries this week, or maybe your credit card number was stolen, maybe your car seems always to be broken, or painful health problems seem to be your lot, or maybe friends have turned against you. Whatever your current problem, now is the time to trust and have faith that though sometimes it seems the immediate battle is lost, in the end, "the waters will part" and God's way will prove to be a blessing. By faith, we may recognize that the character of God (as depicted in His law) is still ultimately the way out of bondage and the pathway to freedom, happiness, and eternal life. For it is written, *"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."* Rev. 22:14





Four Reasons "It's Not My Cup of Tea"

A health segment from swiftrunnerministries.com

Recently, I came across the journal entry of John Wesley (the founder of the Methodist movement) after he quit the habit of drinking England's customary black tea. Wesley's journal entry reads, *"Sunday, July 6 (London).--After talking largely with both the men and women leaders, we agreed it would prevent great expense, as well of health as of time and of money, if the poorer people of our society could be persuaded to leave off drinking of tea. We resolved ourselves to begin and set the example. I expected some difficulty in breaking off a custom of six-and-twenty years' standing. And, accordingly, the three first days my head ached more or less all day long, and I was half asleep from morning till night. The third day, on Wednesday, in the afternoon, my memory failed almost entirely. In the evening I sought my remedy in prayer. On Thursday morning my headache was gone. My memory was as strong as ever. And I have found no inconvenience, but a sensible benefit in several respects, from that very day to this."*

Wesley here promotes three key reasons to quit drinking black tea: to promote financial health,* to promote physical health, and to improve time management. But there is one more primary reason to quit caffeine and tea, and that is mental health. Because of caffeine side effects, this is even recognized by those who deal with anxiety/PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). In a section entitled, *"Reducing Caffeine, Nicotine, and Other Anxiety Producing Drugs*, one such recommendation for PTSD sufferers states, *"Even the caffeine in two cups of coffee can be enough to trigger intense anxiety symptoms. You might, therefore, consider reducing or eliminating caffeine...Caffeine is also found in tea, chocolate, certain soft drinks and various nonprescription medications and weight control aids."*

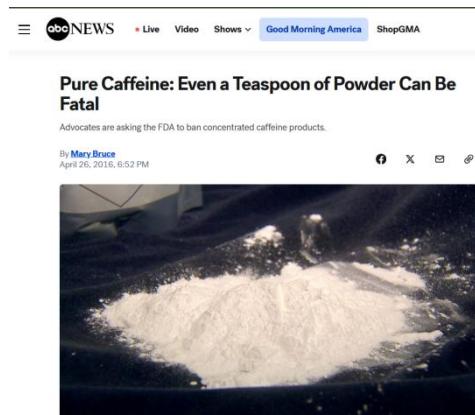
James Lane, associate research professor of psychiatry at Duke Health found caffeine elevated stress hormones including cortisol and adrenaline (which not good for health in the long term). *"Moderate caffeine consumption makes a person react like he or she is having a very stressful day,"* Lane said in an interview before the meeting. *"If you combine the effects of real stress with the artificial boost in stress hormones that comes from caffeine, then you have compounded the effects considerably."*³



Amidst the often-biased, money-driven studies of the day, Wesley's honest testimony shows that black tea, even when taken in "normal" levels, is addictive. However, this addiction is only one problem with the caffeine in black tea. The Consumer Dictionary of Food Additives describes caffeine as, *"An odorless white powder with a bitter taste that occurs naturally in coffee, cola, guarana paste, tea, and kola nuts."*

Caffeine is the number one psychoactive drug... *It can cause nervousness, insomnia, irregular heartbeat, noises in the ear, and in high doses, convulsions. It has been linked to spontaneous panic attacks in persons sensitive to caffeine."*⁴ Psychoactive or mind-altering drugs often lead to crime, and caffeine is no exception. Probation officer Barbara Reed Stitt, among other nutritional helps, regularly removed caffeine from her probationer's diet in order to improve behavior and prevent crime. In her book Food and Behavior, she states, *"Often an additive has been declared safe simply because it was used many years before the creation of the FDA (Food and Drug Administration). Caffeine is a good example. Although it is present in many foods and beverages, and is considered safe by the food industry, many researchers agree that if caffeine were to be developed today, it would be available only by prescription."*⁵ Evidently, popularity doesn't necessarily indicate safety and benefit to the mind.

Black tea, white tea, and green tea actually all come from the same plant; they are just processed differently. Keeping this in mind, one more point of interest comes from the book Caffeinated. It tells of a study by Bruce Goldberger, a forensic toxicologist (who traces causes of death by poison), stating, *"In his 2008 study on tea, Goldberger found that the caffeine content increased with the length of the steeping time. So a bag of Lipton tea steeped for one minute had a mere seventeen milligrams of caffeine; after three minutes, thirty-eight milligrams; after five, forty-seven milligrams. Most teas steeped for three minutes had between twenty-five and fifty milligrams of caffeine about half a SCAD (Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection, a sudden tear in a heart blood vessel). Surprisingly, Goldberger's findings bucked the popular notion that green teas are always less caffeinated than black teas."*⁶ Green, black and white tea all contain at least three psychoactive substances: caffeine, and its chemical cousins, theophylline and theobromine. It is worth noting that theobromine is so closely related to caffeine that *"Most of the caffeine produced in the USA prior to 1945 was obtained by methylation of theobromine extracted from cocoa."*⁷



Perhaps you are thinking, *"Well, I don't drink tea."* Maybe not directly, but many people are getting the caffeine extracted from tea in soda, energy drinks, or other caffeinated products. This is because *"Caffeine... extraction procedures involve three methods: direct decaffeination of green coffee beans... extraction from... fragments of tea leaves, and extraction from cola nuts."*⁷ The resulting caffeine powder can be VERY toxic.

In fact, ABC news headlined that *"Even a Teaspoon of [Pure Caffeine] Powder Can Be Fatal."* After telling the stories of a few people who have died from a caffeine overdose, the article reports *"It's unclear exactly how many cases of caffeine overdose there are because most people don't think of caffeine as dangerous and a fatal overdose can look just like a heart attack."*⁸ Recognizing that, like nicotine, caffeine can even be absorbed through the skin (that's why they sell caffeine patches), it is no wonder an 19th century health reformer said, *"The only safe course is to touch not, taste not, handle not, tea, coffee, wines, tobacco, opium, and alcoholic drinks."*⁹ When caffeine is on the menu, how much safer to say, *"It's not my cup of tea. The cost to physical and mental health is just too high."*

* Regarding financial costs of tea in England, some say between 1740 and 1822, 9% of one's average earnings was spent on tea

More info on caffeinated products may be found in the Health section of the [October 2021 Bible Banner](#), the [May 2018 Bible Banner](#). Also [February 2018](#) and [February 2014](#)

Disclaimer: We support scientific sources of quotes only as far as they match the Bible. If you choose to follow them back to their original source, reader discretion is advised.

2- -The Journal of John Wesley <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/13048053> 2 -- The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook by Glen Schiraldi, pg. 94 (Caution advised, this book also recommends unchristian therapies like hypnosis & autogenic training.) 3-- <https://corporate.dukehealth.org/news/morning-coffee-boosts-blood-pressure-stress-hormones-all-day> 4-- [Consumer Dictionary of Food Additives](#), pg. 96 5--Food and Behavior, pg. 74 6-- Caffeinated, pg. 18 7-- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK507027/> 8-- <https://abcnews.com/Health/pure-caffeine-teaspoon-powder-fatal/story?id=38688979> 9--Healthful Living, pg. 112



The Hermit and the King

by Eric B. Hare

A lazy hermit once lived in a shack high on a mountain overlooking a beautiful valley. Content to live as a recluse, he occasionally ventured to town to barter for food.

One day he heard the clippity-clop of an approaching horse. A noble stranger dismounted and stood admiring the view below. "Oh, good friend," said the stranger, "you have the most beautiful view in the kingdom! It makes me want to be a better man! Could I sit awhile to admire it?"

The hermit was speechless, for his only chair was broken. As he gathered his thoughts, the stranger mounted his horse, waved goodbye, and departed down the mountain. The stranger seemed familiar. Where had the hermit seen him? Ah, yes—it was the king! Ashamed of his disheveled appearance and of how poorly he had treated his king, he vowed to be ready should the king return! On his next visit to town,

he bartered wood for new clothes. Then he built a nice bench,
bathed, and put on his new clothes.

A few days later, he heard a horse approaching. The king had returned! Soon the king was resting on the new bench admiring the beautiful view. "Thank you, my friend. This view makes me want to be a better man. I'm so thirsty; may I have some water?"



The hermit hung his head. All he had was a dirty, cracked cup and he hadn't cleaned his spring in years! He went inside to clean his cup, but when he stepped outside, the king was gone! But when he returns, I will be ready! the hermit determined. He bought new dishes and cups in town and then set to work cleaning his spring.

A few days later, the hermit heard a horse coming up the mountain. It was the king! The hermit had baked cornbread that very morning and had filled a large bucket with fresh water from his clean spring. "Ahhh!" said the king, as he sat enjoying the beauty. "This view makes me want to be a better man. Your water is the sweetest water in my realm, and the court bakers couldn't make better cornbread. Could I spend the night so I could see the sun rise?" A flush of embarrassment crept up the poor hermit's neck and spread all the way to his ears. He only had the straw floor of his dirty shack to offer. While he stood speechless, the king mounted his horse and rode off down the mountain. But he will return, thought the hermit; and when he comes, I will be ready! This time the hermit really got busy. He repaired the rotting timbers of his shack and put new straw on the floor. Then he built a sturdy table and a bed. He was ready for the king!

The king came again and again to visit his new friend and to enjoy the beautiful view. Eventually, no one remembered that a lazy hermit lived on the mountain, for he was known simply as "the friend of the king."

"He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend." Proverbs 22:11



News with an Attitude -- Prophetic News Notes

The best most accurate portrayal of the news today is found in the Bible's descriptions of last day attitudes and character traits. Paul wrote to Timothy, *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."* 2 Timothy 3:1-5 In these days, people are choosing which kingdom they want to belong to. Those who follow Satan mirror his character, and those who follow Christ will reflect His character. *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:"* 1 Peter 2:21, 22 Using the description in Timothy 3 and it's opposite, the chart below contrasts these two characters. Your character is all you can take with you to heaven. By the grace of God, is your character ready?

Satan's Character and Kingdom	Christ's Character and Kingdom
Lovers of their own selves/Selfish	Unselfish and Self-sacrificing
Covetous	Content and Generous
Boasters, Proud	Meek and Humble
Blasphemers	Reverant, Pious
Disobedient to Parents	Obedient to Parents and our Heavenly Father
Unthankful	Thankful
Unholy	Sanctified
Without Natural Affection/Hard-hearted to Family & Friends/Unkind	Kind and Soft-hearted
Trucebreakers/Traitors	Faithful and Honest
False Accusers/Slanderers	Defender, Encourager and Advocate
Incontinent/Without Self-control	Self-denying, Moderate, and Temperate
Fierce/Easily Enraged	Slow to Anger and Gentle
Despisers of those that are Good	Love and Appreciate those that are Good
Heady/Rash/Hasty/Prone to do foolish things without thinking	Prudent, Reasonable, and Cooperative
Highminded/High-and-Mighty/Arrogant/Conceited/Egotistical	Caring for the Feelings of Others
Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God	Love God more than Pleasure
Having a form of godliness, but denying the power	Truly Godly by the Power of Jesus



God's Amazing Creations

Like most spiders, the golden orb-weaver spider has eight legs. It also has seven kinds of silk glands. Each one makes its own liquid protein (called spidroid) that is put together in numerous ways to create strands with different uses. These proteins are released as silk from six spinnerets. Some types of silk are used for web building, but others are made for egg cases or wrapping up prey. Dragline silk which is what spiders use to hang from ceilings or webs, is several times stronger than steel on a weight-for-weight basis. It's also stretchable, which is why webs can absorb the impact of flying insects. The golden orb-weaver is a pretty spider, but maybe not one you want inside your house! However, spiders work hard to make their webs, and the



Bible says, *"The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."* Proverbs 30:28

Use these clues below to figure out which Bible king they are talking about. (The Bible texts can help you.)

I was hidden in God's house from a wicked queen. But when I was seven years old, I became king. I am _____. (2 Kings 11:1-3,21)



I watched sheep before I became king. I played the harp & wrote Psalms for people to sing. I am _____. (1 Samuel 17:15;16:23, 2 Samuel 5:3, Psalm 23)



I became king when just eight years old. But to fight against idols & build God's house, I was bold. I am _____. (2 Kings 22:1,2)

Though I'm King of Kings, a manger once was my bed. And *"Behold, I come quickly,"* just as I said. I am _____. (Luke 2:11,12; Revelation 19:13,16;22:12,13)