

SOLOMON: A WISE MAN WHO ABANDONED WISDOM

United Kingdom

1 Kings 1 - 11; 2 Chronicles 1 - 9

STRUCTURE

Key-person: Solomon

Key-location: Jerusalem

Key-repetitions:

- Solomon's wisdom: he was wise (1 Kin 2:9; 4:30-31; 10:23); he asked the Lord for wisdom (1 Kin 3:9-12); God gave him wisdom (1 Kin 4:29; 5:12); people knew Solomon had wisdom from the Lord (1 Kin 3:28); the queen of Sheba testified to Solomon's wisdom (1 Kin 10:4-7).

- Solomon's wealth: God promised him wealth (1 Kin 3:13); he was wealthy (1 Kin 4:20-25); the queen of Sheba testified to his wealth (1 Kin 10:7); God multiplied Solomon's wealth (1 Kin 10:14-29); he was the richest king (1 Kin 10:23).

- Temple (1 Kin 3:1-2; 5:3-5, 17-18; 6:1-38; 7:12-51; 8:1-65; 9:1-25).

- The Lord spoke to Solomon (1 Kin 3:4-15; 6:11-13; 9:1-9 and 2 Chr7:11-14; 1 Kin 11:9-13).

- Solomon built: Temple (3:2; 5:3, 51, 58; 6:1-38; 8:13-27; 8:43-48; 9:1-3, 15) palaces (3:1; 7:2-7; 9:24); other building projects (9:17-19); shrines for other gods (11:7).

- Solomon's wrongdoings: he required forced labor (1 Kin 5:13-14; 9:15-28); he multiplied his wealth (1 Kin 10:14-29); he married foreign women and they seduced him to abandon God (1 Kin 11:1-3); he practiced idolatry (1 Kin 11:4-8).

- God's promises: promises to David about his descendants: (2 Sm 7:25, 28; 1 Kin 2:4, 24; 6:12; 8:15; 9:5); God kept his promises (1 Kin 2:24; 5:12; 8:15; 20, 24, 56); conditioned on obedience (1 Kin 2:24; 8:25).

Key-attitudes:

- The Lord was pleased with Solomon when he requested wisdom.

- The impressions of Solomon's wisdom and wealth.

- The joy and celebration when the Temple was dedicated.

- Solomon's wisdom at the beginning of his reign.

- Danger expressed in God's warnings of the results of turning away from following him.

- Solomon's imprudence and arrogance when he married foreign women.

- God's pleasure with Solomon at the beginning of his reign.

- God's displeasure with Solomon after he married foreign women.

Initial-situation:

David reigned as king 40 years over Israel. Before his death, David chose his son Solomon to succeed him as king.

Initial-problem:

David chose his son Solomon to succeed him as king, but another son, Adonijah, made a power play to become king.

Final-situation:

Ahijah the prophet told Jeroboam that after the death of Solomon, the Lord would rip ten of the tribes of Israel away from Solomon's son and give them to Jeroboam to rule. The Lord was doing this because Solomon stopped following him and started worshiping many other gods.

Solomon died, and his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king.

BIBLE STORY

When David died, Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established (1 Kin 2:10-12).

Solomon Ruled with Wisdom

Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and married his daughter. Solomon showed his love for the Lord by living according to the ways of his father David (1 Kg 3:1-3).

Solomon went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices to God. The Lord asked him in a dream, "What do you want me to give you?"

Solomon requested, "O Lord my God, you have made me king in my father's place. I do not have the wisdom to do my job. Give me a discerning heart to rule your people and to discern between right and wrong. Without wisdom, it is impossible to govern this great people of yours."

The Lord was delighted and promised Solomon wisdom, and as a bonus: riches, honor and a long life (1 Kin 3:4-15; 1 Chr 1:2-12).

Two prostitutes sought King Solomon. One said, "This woman and I live in the same house. I had a baby and three days later, this woman also had a baby. One night, the infant son of this woman died. She took my son from my bed while I was sound asleep. She put my son by her breast and put her dead son by my breast. The next morning, I got up to nurse my son, and there was this dead baby! But when I looked at him in the morning light, I saw that it wasn't my baby."

The other woman countered, "No! Mine is the living baby; yours is the dead baby!"

King Solomon requested, "Bring me a sword and cut the living baby in two; give half to one and half to the other."

The real mother of the living baby pleaded with the king, "Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!"

But the other one said, "If I can't have him, neither will you. Cut him in two!"

The king gave his ruling, "Give the living baby to the first woman. She is the real mother."

People in Israel realized Solomon had wisdom from God to administer justice (1 Kin 3:16-28).

Solomon's Achievements

Solomon began construction on the Temple. Solomon made an agreement with King Hiram of Tyre to help him cut and prepare the cedars of Lebanon for the Temple. King Hiram kept Solomon supplied with all the cedar and pine logs he wanted. Solomon provided Hiram with food and olive oil (1 Kin 5:1-12).

King Solomon drafted men as laborers from all Israel. He sent them to Lebanon in shifts of each month. They worked a month in Lebanon and were home for two months. The craftsmen cut and prepared the timber and stone for the building of the Temple (1 Kin 5:13-18).

The Temple that King Solomon built to the Lord was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide and 45 feet high. The Temple's 30 foot wide porch extended out 15 feet. Solomon built a three story structure for side rooms against the walls of the main hall (1 Kin 6:1-10; 2 Chr 3:3-14).

The Word of the Lord came to Solomon, "About this Temple you are building; what is important is that you obey my commands. Then I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. I will take up my residence among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel" (1 Kin 6:11-13).

So Solomon finished building the Temple. Solomon spent seven years building the Temple (1 Kin 6:14-37).

However, it took Solomon 13 years to finish building his palace which was a 150 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. He made another palace exactly the same for his wife, Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kin 7:1-12).

Solomon made all the furnishings for the Lord's Temple. When Solomon completed the Temple, he brought the items consecrated by David and placed them in the Temple (7:13-51).

King Solomon summoned the leaders of Israel to Jerusalem to bring up the Ark of the Lord. The priests carried the Ark, the Tabernacle and all its sacred furnishings to the Temple. When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the Temple of the Lord (8:1-13).

Solomon turned to face the people and blessed them. Then he praised the Lord for keeping his promise to David (8:1-20; 2 Chr 5:2 - 6:11).

Solomon faced the altar and prayed. He praised the Lord and requested that the Lord hear prayers made in the Temple. Solomon prayed that when in the future, the Israelites sin and God punishes them with a disaster; and as a result, they repent and pray in or facing the Temple, that God would forgive their sin and remove the disaster (1 Kin 8:22-53).

Solomon finished praying and shouted a blessing to the congregation of Israel. The king and all Israel offered sacrifices. They celebrated for 14 days (8:54-66).

The Lord appeared to Solomon a second time to tell him that if the Lord sent a disaster and then the people turned back to him, God would hear their prayers from the Temple. God warned that if Solomon turned away from the Lord, God would uproot Israel and reject the Temple (2 Chr 7:11-22; 1 Kin 9:1-9).

Solomon drafted forced labor for his building projects (9:15-23).

Every year Solomon received 25 tons of gold in tribute (1 Kin 10:14-15).

Solomon was wiser and richer than all the other kings on earth. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses (10:16-29).

Solomon Distances Himself from God

However, King Solomon loved many women who were not from Israel. The Lord had warned the Israelites, "You must not marry people of other nations because they will seduce you to follow their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon had seven hundred wives from royal families and three hundred concubines; a thousand women. As Solomon grew old, his wives seduced him away from the Lord and led him to follow after foreign gods. Solomon openly defied God.

On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built sacred shrines for the god of each of his foreign wives (11:1-8).

God was furious with Solomon for abandoning the Lord, the God of Israel. The Lord had appeared to Solomon twice, yet he disobeyed God's orders. So the Lord told Solomon, "Since you have not kept my covenant and obeyed my commands, I will rip the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your officers. However, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it while you are alive. I will rip it away from your son when he becomes king. I will not take it all, I will leave him one tribe to rule (1 Kin 11:9-13).

The Lord raised up adversaries against Solomon. The most harmful one was Jeroboam, who had been in charge of the whole labor force of the tribe of Joseph. One day, a prophet who was wearing a new cloak met Jeroboam on a remote stretch of road. The prophet took hold of his new cloak and ripped it into twelve pieces. Then he told Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself. The Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'I am ripping the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and giving you ten tribes. But for the sake of my servant David and out of respect for Jerusalem, he will keep one tribe. Here is the reason: he stopped following me and started worshiping many other gods. I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem.

"However, as for you, I will make you king over Israel. If you obey my commands and do

what is right in my eyes, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David. Israel will be yours.”

Jeroboam fled to Egypt where he remained in exile until Solomon's death (1 Kin 11:23-40).

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel for 40 years. When he died, his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king (1 Kin 11:41-43).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When the Lord asked Solomon what he wanted, what was Solomon's answer?
2. What were some of the ways Solomon showed his wisdom?
3. How did Solomon serve God at the beginning of his kingship?
4. What were some of the wrongdoings of Solomon toward the end of his kingship?
5. Why should the person who begins to serve God be concerned about continuing to serve him until the end of his/her life?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. The person who desires characteristics that please God will experience bonus benefits. Solomon asked God for wisdom. He received wisdom, but he received other bonuses, such as wealth and honor (1 Kin 3:11-14). The person who seeks the Kingdom of God (Mt 6:33) will receive other bonus benefits from God. He will discover that God will give him other good things (Rm 8:32).
2. God is the source of wisdom. It was the Lord who gave wisdom to Solomon (1 Kin 3:28).
3. A short-time benefit may result in long-term disaster. Solomon's marriage to foreign women resulted in political alliances (1 Kin 3:1); however, his wives seduced him to follow other gods (1 Kin 11:3-4). Forced labor (1 Kin 5:13:13-18) enabled Solomon to build the Temple, the palaces and other projects in a hurry, but Solomon's people rebelled against his harsh labor and heavy yoke (1 Kin 12:4). Solomon received 25 tons of gold in taxes every year (1Kg 10:14). This made him the richest king in the world (10:23), but the people considered the taxes a heavy yoke (1 Kin 12:4).
4. It is not enough to begin life serving God; it is important to end life being faithful to God. Solomon began well; however, he finished badly.
5. The person who does things for God, yet does not obey the Lord will not be rewarded by the Lord. Solomon was advised that the Lord's blessings would not be the results of his building the Temple. He would only be blessed if he obeyed the Lord (1 Kin 6:11-13).
6. The continuation of divine favors depends upon the fidelity of the recipient of the blessings. The fulfillment of every promise that God had made to David and to Solomon, with reference to blessing their families, depended upon their fidelity to divine precepts (1 Kin 9:4). God promised Jeroboam that God would make him a great king if he observed the Lord's commands and walked in his ways (1 Kin 11:29-38).