

Bible Stories

SOLOMON

1st Kings 11:1-11

January 14, 2023

The content of 1st and 2nd Kings presents Israel's history from a prophetic and moral perspective beginning with Solomon (971 BC) and concluding with the release of King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon (562 BC) – a time span of roughly 400 years.

The Chronicles are a retrospective, written after the return from Babylonian captivity. Their focus is genealogy, the early monarchy and the kingdom of Judah with only limited mention of the Kingdom of Israel – which had been destroyed by Assyria in 722 BC.

The authors of these books tell a sad story of Israel's tragic decline and eventual destruction because the people and their leaders **REFUSED** to maintain their side of the covenant they had chosen to make with God.

SOLOMON

Solomon was not David's oldest son, so he was way down the "**Line of Succession**," but God had chosen him to become ruler of Israel after David's death, so David instructed Nathan, the Prophet, and Zadok, the priest, to take Solomon to Gihon and anoint him king.

- **1 Kings 3:3-9** - Solomon showed his love for Yahweh by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places....⁵ At Gibeon Yahweh appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." ⁶ Solomon answered, ⁷ "Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹ So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

Great start! Solomon was humble and eager to follow the plans and purposes of God. Here are some of his greatest accomplishments:

On the 2nd day of the 2nd month in the 4th year of Solomon's reign construction on the Temple began. Construction took 7 years and no expense was spared – **1 Kings 6:1-8:13** and **2nd Chronicles 3-5**.

- The weight of the gold used for the Most Holy Place alone was 600 talents - 1 talent = between 75-100 lbs. (depending on which scholar you ask).
- The Most Holy Place was covered with between 45,000 – 60,000 **POUNDS** of pure gold. In today's money (December 2022) we're talking between \$1,274,400,000 and \$1,699,200,00 worth of gold.
- That does not include the gold, silver, copper, iron or precious stones used in the rest of temple.

Solomon's extraordinary wisdom made him famous and respected worldwide. He was a master sage, merchant and statesman.

- 2 prostitutes came before Solomon requesting justice in a particularly interesting case:

Prostitute 1: *My lord, this woman and I live in the same house and no one else lives with us. I had a baby boy and 3 days later, she also had a baby boy. During the night she accidentally laid on her son, killing him. In the middle of the night, she took my son from me, while I slept and replaced him with her dead son. The next morning, when I went to nurse my son, he was dead! But upon closer examination I determined he wasn't my son.*

Prostitute 2: *That's not how it happened. The living one is my son; the dead one is yours.*

Prostitute 1: *I am telling the truth! The dead one is yours; the living one is mine.*

Solomon: *Hmmm... Bring me a sword. ---- Now, cut the living child in two and give half to one mother and half to the other.*

Prostitute 1: *Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!*

Prostitute 2: *Neither of us will have him. Cut him in two!*

Solomon: *Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.*

When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice – 1 Kings 3:16-24.

- Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt and he was wiser than any other man. His fame spread to all the surrounding nations and the kings of the world sent men to listen to Solomon's Wisdom:

He spoke 3000 proverbs and wrote 1005 songs.

He described plant life, from the Cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls.

He taught about animals, birds, reptiles and fish – **1 Kings 4:30-34**.

The Queen of Sheba came herself to test Solomon and when she saw all his wisdom and great riches, she was overwhelmed – **1 Kings 10:1-13 & 2 Chronicles 9:1-12**.

The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life.... For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the River, from Tiphshah to Gaza, and had peace on all sides. During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree – 1 Kings 4:20-25

We can all agree that Solomon was doing well which resulted in the people's peace and prosperity **HOWEVER:**

In **Deuteronomy 17:14-20** God gave Moses very clear instructions for what would be expected of a King:

- **DO NOT** to acquire horses from Egypt or rely on their power – don't rely on your own military = your safety is found in My promise to protect you.
- **DO NOT** have multiple wives who could lead your heart away from fidelity to God to the worship of idols – have one godly wife.
- **DO NOT** acquire wealth because it will make you proud and insensitive to the needs of your people – live modestly.
- **COPY** by hand the teachings given by God and read them all the days of your life. In this way you will remain humble before God and will not oppress His people.

DO NOT to acquire horses from Egypt or rely on their power and don't rely on your military.

- Solomon had 1400 chariots and 12,000 horses, which he imported from Egypt and Kue. The royal merchants imported a chariot from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver, and a horse for a 150. They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans – **1 Kings 4:26; 10:26, 28-29 & 2 Chronicles 1:14, 16-17**.

DO NOT have multiple wives who could lead your heart away from fidelity to God to the worship of idols – have one godly wife.

- Solomon formed an alliance with Pharaoh by marrying his daughter – who was likely his only wife for the 1st 20 yrs. of his reign – **1 Kings 7:8**.
- Solomon loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter -- Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites -- He had 700 hundred wives of royal birth and 300 hundred concubines. They were from nations Yahweh had said, "**You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.**" Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.... – **1 Kings 11:1-3**.
- As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites.... On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods – **1 Kings 11:4-8**.

DO NOT acquire wealth because it will make you proud and insensitive to the needs of your people – live modestly.

- Solomon spent more time and resources on his own palace than he did on the Temple – **1 Kings 7:1**.
- The weight in gold Solomon received yearly was 666 talents (49,950 – 66,600 lbs.), not including the revenue from merchants, traders, Arabian kings and governors of the land. He made:
 - 200 large shields of hammered gold = 600 bekas of gold for each shield;
 - 300 hundred small shields of hammered gold = 3 minas of gold for each shield – these were stored in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.
 - A great throne inlaid with ivory and overlaid with fine gold. The throne had 6 steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them. 12 lions stood on the 6 steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom.
- All the goblets in Solomon's household were gold. All the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's days.
- Solomon had a fleet of trading ships. Once every three years the fleet returned, carrying gold, silver, ivory, apes and baboons.
- Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift -- articles of silver, gold, robes, weapons, spices, horses and mules.... He made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills – **1 Kings 10:14-25, 27 & 2 Chronicles 1:15; 9:13-27**.

COPY by hand the teachings given by God and read them all the days of your life. In this way you will remain humble before God and will not oppress His people.

- Solomon introduced a national tax system to provide for his daily provisions of 30 cors of fine flour, 60 cors of meal, 10 head of stall-fed cattle, 20 pasture-fed cattle, 100 sheep and goats + deer, gazelles, roebucks and choice fowl – **1 Kings 4:7, 22-23**
- Solomon used forced labor – conscripting laborers from all Israel – in order to fund his great building projects – **1 Kings 5:13**

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem for 40 years and everything God had instructed kings **NOT TO DO** – he did.

So, Yahweh said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates – 1 Kings 11:11.

What do we do with this story?

Solomon failed because he became complacent and secure in his own awesomeness. His fame, power and wealth replaced his loyalty to and reliance upon God and in the end his unfaithfulness erased all his great accomplishments.

As a consequence of Solomon's sins, the nation was divided into 2 kingdoms - "Israel" and "Judah".

250 years later = Israel would be completely destroyed by Assyria and its 10 tribes dispersed among the nations.

385 years later = Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed by Babylon.

This is what Yahweh says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am Yahweh, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," – Jeremaih 9:23-24.