

Lesson 11 – 1 Kings 3-8

Text: 1 Kings 3-8; 2 Chronicles 1-7:10

Main Characters: God, Solomon

Key Passages:

- 1 Kings 3:5-14 – When God offered Solomon anything, Solomon asked for wisdom.
- 1 Kings 8:4-11; 2 Chronicles 5:11-14 – When the Ark of the Covenant was put in its place in the temple, the glory of the Lord descended on the temple in the form of a cloud.

Main Storyline:

Solomon, having established himself as king, began ruling in the day-to-day affairs of Israel. One of his first decisions was to make an alliance with the Pharaoh of Egypt. It was typical custom for kings of that time to seal their alliances with a marriage, but God did not want his people intermarrying with foreigners who did not love the Lord (Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; Deuteronomy 17:14-20). This choice (along with many similar choices) eventually caused problems for him and the kingdom.

God loved Solomon from his youth, as it seems that Solomon followed in the example of his father, David, in serving the Lord. He was doing everything right, it seems, except that he was sacrificing in the high places (as the people had been doing) since the temple had not been built yet and the tabernacle pieces seem to have been strewn about Israel. Despite this, God loved Solomon so much that He told Solomon in a dream that He would grant him one request. Instead of asking for riches or power, Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge, that he could judge the people and discern good and evil. God, impressed with this request, granted him wisdom, but He also gave him riches, power, and the promise of long life (dependent on his obedience to His commandments). When he woke up, Solomon went to Jerusalem and made many sacrifices to the Lord and a feast for his servants.

One day, two women came to Solomon with a problem. They lived together and had both just given birth to sons. One of the women accused the other woman of accidentally smothering her child in the middle of the night and then swapping her dead child for the first woman's living son. The two women argued back and forth about to whom the living child belonged. Solomon, in his wisdom, called for a sword, and instructed his servant to divide the baby in half. One woman protested, urging the king to just give the baby to the other woman, while the other woman agreed with Solomon's plan. Solomon stopped his servant, recognizing the mother as the compassionate woman, and gave her son to her. All Israel was in awe of the king, as they recognized that this was the wisdom of God within him.

The land was very rich during Solomon's reign, as he had put under tribute a large swath of land around Israel. Solomon divided the land into twelve districts and put a governor over each one. Each district was responsible for providing food for the king, his household, and his horses. Though this was truly a huge amount of food, the people were wealthy, eating, drinking, and rejoicing. God gave Solomon great wisdom, such that people came from all over the world just to hear Solomon.

One of Solomon's great accomplishments (if not his greatest) was the construction of the Lord's temple. He put all of his resources to work (alliances, forced labor, etc.) and, over the course of 7 years, built a beautiful temple to the Lord, completely overlaid with gold. When the Ark was brought into it, the glory of God descended on the temple as on the tabernacle (Exodus 40). Solomon offered a prayer to the Lord to dedicate the temple to Him. Later, Solomon also built his own house over 13 years.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Wise people can make mistakes when they do not fully trust in God's wisdom (James 3:13-18).
- 2.) God often rewards those who use His blessings selflessly with even more blessings.