

What's the Message – Lesson 56

In this lesson we study the reign of King Solomon, as recorded in the books of First Kings and Second Chronicles.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. We pray that the Lord would guide your life, even as He did with David and Solomon, that you see our Heavenly Father not only as the creator, but also see Him as the sustainer of your life. As a result then, that your response to God's love is wanting to do His will and live as His obedient children. Amen.

Last time we saw how the schemes of others to succeed David were thwarted, and Solomon was proclaimed by David to be the son to follow him on the throne. He was anointed by Zadok, the priest, and as we read in First Kings, chapter two, verse 12: *So Solomon sat upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was firmly established.*

There are several acts that were taken by Solomon to assure there would be no threats to his rule, but to hold to the main theme, we shall jump to chapter 3 of Kings, and to the parallel account in Second Chronicles, chapter one, beginning with verse 7: . . . *God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to David my father, and have made me king in his place... Give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may lead this people." God said to Solomon ". . . wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had . . .* The reputation of Solomon as a wise man and ruler grew, and people came from many nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

The bureaucracy of the kingdom of Solomon likewise grew, and it grew to great extents, which required not only monetary tribute from the people of Israel and the conquered territories from the river Euphrates to the border of Egypt, but also took thousands of men to work in his large army and on his building projects. This required a levy of forced labor, something that had

never happened in Israel before, and now resentment also grew among the people.

The structure for which Solomon was most noted was the temple, the “House of the Lord” that required the skilled help and materials from Hiram, King of Tyre. The details of this design and construction are given in First Kings, chapters five through seven, and in the book of Second Chronicles, chapters 2 through 4. It was an elaborate temple, one that Israelites were proud of for generations, and took 7 years to build. But he spent 13 years building his own house, one given the name “The House of the Forest of Lebanon”.

These buildings were made of costly stones, of great size, and cut to measure; definitely built with skill and certainly built to last. This also applied to the house Solomon built for the daughter of Pharaoh, a very special wife in his harem.

After the construction of the temple was completed, Solomon called the people together to its dedication. Standing before this assembly, Solomon spoke a lengthy prayer which is recorded in 1st Kings chapter 8, beginning at verse 22, and in 2nd Chronicles, chapter 6. Then the priests placed The Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, and when they came out of the holy place, First Kings chapter 8, verse 10 tells us: . . . *a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house . . .* For seven days the king and the assembly celebrated and made continual offerings to the Lord, and on the eighth day Solomon sent the people back to their homes. In quick order the fame and wealth of Solomon grew, far beyond the borders of Israel.

And with that, Teacher, we have a summary of the beginning of the reign of King Solomon. It certainly seems like he got off to a good start, but what does that mean to us? Again I ask, what is the message for us to learn here?

Yes, Solomon did get off to a good start in many ways. However, there were signs to the careful observer, even at the beginning, that not everything was as it should be. Take a look at 2nd Chronicles, chapter 1, verses 14 to 17. There we read that Solomon accumulated hundreds of chariots and thousands of horses

from Egypt, and made gold and silver as common in Jerusalem as stones. That may not seem like anything amiss at first, but now take a look back at Deuteronomy, chapter 17, verses 14 through 17. There Moses is warning the Israelites about what they should not do when they come into the promised land. Those verses say that they will be permitted to set a king over themselves, but that this king must not multiply horses for himself from Egypt, nor multiply silver and gold, and especially not multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away from Yahweh.

Then in 1st Kings, chapter 3, verse 3, we read: *Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father; only, he sacrificed and burnt incense at the high places.* Now, when you read a reference to “the high places” you need to know that it means a pagan high place for worship to Baal and his goddesses. So when we see the practice of worshipping both Baal and Yahweh at the same location, we are seeing a casual attitude regarding the monotheism of Yahweh. We are already seeing here a tolerance of paganism that will only grow in the generations to come. It will lead, eventually, to the destruction of Israel as a nation. It will lead, before long, to the demise of Solomon.

The message to us is that neither Israel nor we can worship two gods. We are either faithful to our Lord and Savior and serve Him only, or we are failures and will receive His judgment.

Next time we will see the decline of Solomon, and the beginning of the divided kingdom.