

## Solomon

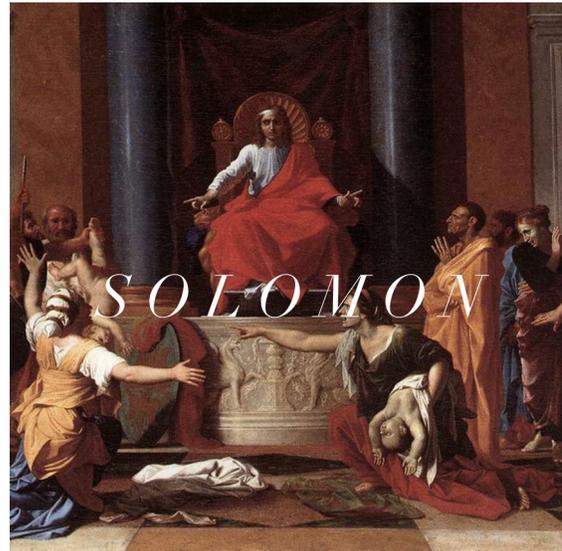
Scripture: 1 Kings 2-11

Time Period: After the death of King David

The story of Solomon

David was old. He had been king over Israel for a long time, and now his son, Solomon, had become king. Solomon was David's son from his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. God had promised David that Israel's king would always be someone from his family. Because David was at the end of his life, he gave Solomon some instructions. "Be strong and brave, Solomon," David said. "Obey God, and you will be successful. God will keep His promise that every king of Israel will come from our family." David died, and Solomon took control of his father's kingdom. Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. With the princess as his wife, Solomon didn't have to worry about being attacked by the Egyptians. The two countries were at peace. One night, God appeared to Solomon in a dream. God said, "Solomon, ask for anything you want, and I will give it to you."

Anything? A king might have asked to live a long life or to have lots of riches. Solomon could have asked God to give him victory over all his enemies. Solomon didn't ask to be rich or to live a long time. Solomon wanted to be a good king. He asked for something even better. "God, you made me king after my father," Solomon said. "I am young, and I don't know very much about being a king. Please make me wise and obedient to You. Help me know the difference between right and wrong. Help me lead Your people well." God answered Solomon, "I am pleased you have asked for this. I will give you wisdom. In fact, I will make you more wise and understanding than anyone who has ever lived. No one in the future will ever be as wise as Solomon." But God wasn't finished. "Because you asked for wisdom, I will also give you what you did not ask for: long life, riches, and honor. You'll be greater than any other king during your lifetime." Solomon woke up and realized God had spoken to him in a dream. Solomon praised God and offered sacrifices to worship Him.



God was true to his promise and gave Solomon wisdom. One of the most famous stories about Solomon's wisdom is the story of the two prostitutes fighting over a baby. The story goes like this... two prostitutes showed up before king Solomon. The one woman said, "My master, this woman and I live in the same house. While we were living together, I had a baby. Three days after I gave birth, this woman also had a baby. We were alone—there wasn't anyone else in the house except for the two of us. The infant son of this woman died one night when she rolled over on him in her sleep. She got up in the middle of the night and took my son—I was sound asleep, mind you!—and put him at her breast and put her dead son at my breast. When I got up

in the morning to nurse my son, here was this dead baby! But when I looked at him in the morning light, I saw immediately that he wasn't my baby."

"Not so!" said the other woman. "The living one's mine; the dead one's yours."

The first woman countered, "No! Your son's the dead one; mine's the living one."

They went back and forth this way in front of the king. Then Solomon said, "What are we to do? This woman says, 'The living son is mine and the dead one is yours,' and this woman says, 'No, the dead one's yours and the living one's mine.'" After a moment the king said, "Bring me a sword." They brought the sword to the king.

Then he said, "Cut the living baby in two—give half to one and half to the other." The real mother of the living baby was overcome with emotion for her son and said, "Oh no, master! Give her the whole baby alive; don't kill him!" But the other one said, "If I can't have him, you can't have him—cut away!" The king gave his decision: "Give the living baby to the first woman. Nobody is going to kill this baby. She is the real mother." The word got around—everyone in Israel heard of the king's judgment. They were all in awe of the king, realizing that it was God's wisdom that enabled Solomon to judge truly.

During the fourth year Solomon was king, he began to build a temple for the Lord. The temple was to replace the tent where God had met with His people for 480 years—ever since God led the Israelites out of Egypt. Solomon ordered thousands of workers to help build the temple. God blessed the temple and made a promise to Solomon. "If you obey My command and do what I say, I will keep the promise I made to David. I will live among the Israelites, and I will not abandon My people." With God's temple complete, Solomon gathered the leaders and people of Israel and sacrificed sheep and cattle to the Lord. Solomon turned to speak to the Israelites. "Praise God!" he said. "God promised David that his son would build a temple. We did it! God has kept His promise!" Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord and prayed with his hands spread out toward heaven. He knew Israel would sin one day and make God angry again. Solomon asked for forgiveness, and he asked God to hear their prayers. When Solomon had finished praying, he turned toward the Israelites and encouraged them to love and obey God. The people offered sacrifices to God and returned to their homes joyful because God was good to them.

Over the course of his life, Solomon would write what we now consider the Book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon as well as a number of Psalms.

King Solomon loved God, but after many years, Solomon did not love God with his whole heart. Some of the things he did were not what God wanted him to do. For example, God warned His people, the Israelites, to not marry people from other nations. They worshiped false gods, and God knew they would lead the Israelites away from Him, the one true God.

Solomon had hundreds of wives. Many of them were from other nations. Solomon's wives turned him away from God. Solomon was not faithful to God like his father David. He began to worship the false gods that his wives worshiped. Solomon even built shrines where his wives could worship the false gods.

This made God angry. God had spoken to Solomon and warned him about false gods, but Solomon did not listen. God said to Solomon, "Since you have done this, I will take the kingdom

away from you. You will be king the rest of your life, but when your son becomes king, he will lose everything except for one tribe.”

Eventually, God raised up enemies against Solomon, his officials turned against him and when Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king. Rehoboam was harsh to the people of Israel causing eleven of the twelve tribes to revolt and choose their own king. From this point on, the nation of Israel was a divided kingdom that did not know peace. Because of Solomon’s disobedience the Jewish people would eventually be captured and taken away from their homeland in Jerusalem to Babylon or modern day Iraq.