

# ROYAL INTRODUCTIONS

## Kings of the Past Who Point Us to the True King

### **SOLOMON: The Failure of Wisdom**

*By Ron Clegg, Assoc. Pastor for Discipleship*

Solomon is probably the most famous king of Israel, especially in the eyes of the wider world. Yes, David was the model and most revered by Israelites, but Solomon with all of his wealth and wisdom surpasses even David in world-wide fame. The well-known story of the Queen of Sheba is one example.

Yet, as strongly as Solomon started out, it is both amazing and deeply saddening to see him at the end of his life. Solomon was indeed a king who was gifted beyond comprehension with wisdom, yet that wisdom only got him so far, because it was not rooted in a faithful heart.

As I said, Solomon got a great start and showed much promise. He alone of all the kings of Israel experienced Yahweh speaking directly to him, not through prophets as with the others. God came directly to him three times. Solomon showed incredible wisdom even as he asked for more wisdom. In **1 Kings 3**, Yahweh came and asked what He could give to Solomon. Solomon wisely asked for wisdom to rule God's people well, declining to ask for wealth or length of days. In response to his righteous request, Yahweh gave him all three. Solomon's wisdom was unsurpassed by anyone throughout the world. People from the world over, including the Queen of Sheba, came to Jerusalem just to hear His wisdom. Even though the queen came with high expectations, she was still completely dazzled.

Solomon also oversaw construction of the Temple, a true wonder of the world. After seven years, when the Temple was complete, Solomon witnessed the Glory of Yahweh coming down to the Holy of Holies. It was the highpoint of His reign. As far as possessing the outward trappings of worldly success, and even experiencing personal encounters with Yahweh, Solomon was in a class by himself.

Even with all of this success and blessing, there were dark clouds on the horizon early on. In **1 Kings 3:1**, one of the first verses about Solomon, we are told that he took the daughter of Pharaoh King of Egypt as his wife. He did so to make a security alliance with Pharaoh, which is what kings did in those days. He did this in spite of the Covenant saying that the people of Israel were not to marry foreigners. Foreign wives would turn the heart of their husband towards the gods of the land and away from Yahweh, which is exactly what happened to Solomon. Solomon was never to look to any person or power for his security. That was to come from Yahweh alone.

In **1 Kings 11:1-10**, the writer seems to make a special point to highlight where Solomon's heart was going. He specifically details the incredible number of wives,

the unimaginable amount of gold, and the unfortunate source of Solomon's horses. He is referring back to **Deut. 17** where specific instructions were given for kings. They were not to multiply wives. They were not to seek much gold. And, they were never to go back to Egypt to get horses. The writer of Kings shows how Solomon disregarded all of those instructions. He ends the section with these words in **1 Kings 11:9-10**:

***"9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice  
10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded."***

By the time we get to the end of Solomon's life, we see the extent of his failure. The third and final time God came to Solomon was very different from the first two. Here, instead of Solomon being blessed by God, now we see him being rejected. Here are those final words from **1 Kings 11:11-13**:

***"Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. 12 Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen."***

What a sad ending! The Golden Child had a reputation for unbounded success, but the heritage he left behind was a kingdom torn apart. Except for Yahweh's faithfulness to His promise given to Solomon's father David, Solomon would have been brought to his end and the whole of the kingdom torn away. So much for his great wisdom.

The question for me is, how could someone reported to be so wise ultimately be so foolish? To answer this, we need to see the connection between true wisdom and a heart that beats for Yahweh. We see this in the writings of Solomon himself in **Proverbs 9:10**, ***"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."*** The fear of the Lord is the clarifying lens by which we understand all things. Because of rebellion and separation from our Creator, our understanding of anything is distorted. It is like looking through a lens that is terribly warped and scratched. Nothing seen through that lens is clear. Therefore, we cannot discover truth on our own. All of our education, all of our research, all of our study and exploration, all of what we would call "common sense"—all of our gains in worldly wisdom get us only so far. Actually, because of the distorted perspective we have, all of that understanding and "wisdom" can lead us to some very destructive places, as happened with Solomon.

Only the lens of the fear of the Lord gives us a true perspective on anything in this life, and that perspective begins with ourselves. The fear of the Lord prevents us from inflating our own importance, ability, and greatness. The fear of the Lord alone allows us to see ourselves as the creature, not the Creator. In that fear we

live life as humble servants of the Benevolent One instead of rulers of our destiny. It puts us in the place of stewards of His world instead of using this world according to our own designs. Basically, the fear of the Lord gives us a humility that changes and clarifies everything. That was something Solomon desperately needed. Without the fear of the Lord the world was all about Solomon, when it should have been about Someone else.

In that light, wisdom would have us see that success can be far more dangerous to us than failure. We hate failure. We pray against failure and ask God to give us success. We pray against poverty and for God to give us good things. We pray for God to give us what we need to feel secure. Yet, having those things proved to be a trap that Solomon could not escape. All of those things became the object of his trust, not the gifts of the One he should trust.

Finally, we are pointed to the Wise King who was to come, who displayed wisdom in a very different way. In **1 Corinthians 1:26-31** Paul writes:

***For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."***

Let us never boast in the accumulation of things, in our great education, in our accomplishments, or in the honor we receive from others. Let us run to the One who is Himself wisdom, the One who laid everything aside that He might serve His people, even through death. Let us boast in Christ alone, for only there will we find true wisdom.