



Writing Life Faith



Life of a King: Solomon's Wisdom

The Third King.

You can read King Solomon's story in 1 Kings 1-11 and 2 Chronicles 1-9.

Let me level with you. I, Solomon, didn't think I'd be King. As David, my father, grew old, my half-brother Adonijah claimed the throne. If Nathan hadn't spoken to my mother, who in turn talked to Abba, I doubt the throne would now be mine.

In his last recorded words, Abba commanded me to obey every command the great Moses had given us. Then he commanded me to make right all the wrongs committed against him. So I carried out his vengeance on Adonijah, Joab, Shimei, and the lot of them.

Then my reign began - with a dream. The day I married Pharaoh's daughter, the LORD God appeared to me and told me to ask for anything. Not knowing what to say, I requested wisdom in governing His people.

God granted my request, plus He gave me everything else: the wealth, the fame, the long life, all of it. I ruled for many years and was known around the world as the wisest man who ever lived. It was universally accepted that whatever decisions I made had to be the right ones.

On top of my intellectual prowess, I oversaw the greatest building project in Israel's history: the construction of the Temple. Seeing God's beautiful house reminded me that I was also worthy of a great and mighty abode. Besides, I needed the space to house my wives and concubines. The LORD had promised the kingship would rest in our lineage forever, and I did my part to secure not just my family's future, but the political alliances of Israel too.

As seen in Proverbs, I had great knowledge. I used that wisdom to gather the best treasures of the land, and I made silver as common as stones. I amassed great degrees of wealth, treasures, and wives. As God had entrusted me with Israel, I made it my one endeavour not to lose it, and so I fixated my gaze on the treasures I possessed. So firmly, that I realized they mattered more to me than God. The LORD had served His purpose in establishing my reign; now it was time for me to finish it. Then Jeroboam came on set.

Solomon, son of David's wife Bathsheba, was both the third King of Israel and the wisest man in history. He also wrote the majority of Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and probably Ecclesiastes. Yet somehow, all his knowledge couldn't save him from the treasures and pagan women who lured him from God. How did the wisest man end up an eternal fool?

The Beginning.

"Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern Your people well and know the difference between right and wrong..." (1 Kings 3:9)

After Adonijah claims the throne, David nullifies that request and appoints Solomon, commanding him to follow the LORD...and seek revenge on David's enemies. In the next chapter, Solomon's mistakes begin as he marries Pharaoh's daughter for political purposes. Solomon's folly wasn't one act of blatant disobedience, but a life of continual compromise. That night, as if to "win him back", the LORD appears and asks Solomon to request anything he wants.

Solomon asks for a heart that can understand the difference between right and wrong. God grants his request, and much more. Solomon soon becomes the wealthiest King in the area. People begin coming from far and wide to hear his wisdom.

The Middle.

"So it took seven years to build the Temple. Solomon also built a palace for himself, and it took him thirteen years to complete the construction." (1 Kings 6:38b-7:1)

Solomon was a master builder, and he didn't cheap out in fulfilling David's request to build the LORD a Temple. After seven years, the Temple is complete, and no Temple since has rivalled it. All seems good.

Until you reach the next verse, in which we discover Solomon spending almost double that time building himself a palace. Something is out of place. If we are more invested in personal achievements than God's Kingdom, things are terribly wrong. No matter how grand my works for the Kingdom may be, I'd have a hard time calling God my priority if I'm investing far more effort in advancing personal objectives. Who are we really serving: God or ourselves?

The End.

"Solomon had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines. And in fact, they did turn his heart away from the LORD." (1 Kings 11:3)

Solomon's life of compromise continued as he amassed great treasure and imported horses from Egypt. However, I think we know Solomon as "the guy with 1000 wives". While he

wasn't married to them all, you get the point. David's marital mistakes were only multiplied in Solomon's lifetime. If we don't correct sin now, future generations will follow our footsteps. For those who are leaders/managers/parents, we need to realize that not correcting our mistakes will hurt posterity.

To punish Solomon's sin, God raises up enemies, including Jeroboam, son of Nebat. Jeroboam meets the prophet Ahijah and receives a message for Solomon: the Kingdom will be ripped from you, and ten tribes will be given to Jeroboam. Solomon's descendants will be punished, though not forever. God's grace is present even in Solomon's sin.

In response, Solomon moves to kill Jeroboam, but he escapes to Egypt until Solomon dies. (Not unlike another to-be ruler who would utilize Egypt to escape another wicked king.)

What Defined Solomon?

To put it bluntly, here's what I learned from the third king...

Human Wisdom is not Godly Wisdom

"Because of Solomon's sin I will punish the descendants of David - though not forever."
(1 Kings 11:39)

Sometimes I think that if only I were smarter, or had a greater understanding of Scripture, I would never sin or fail. Solomon had more wisdom than I'll ever hope to obtain, and he still neglected to do what was right. The Israelites would have thought him a wealthy, prosperous, and wise king. To see what God thought, let's read Deuteronomy 17:16-17, which we touched on last week...

"The king must not build up a large stable of horses for himself or send his people to Egypt to buy horses, for the LORD has told you, 'You must never return to Egypt.' The king must not take many wives for himself, because they will turn his heart away from the LORD. And he must not accumulate large amounts of wealth in silver and gold for himself."

Suddenly, things become crystal clear: knowing what's right and doing what's right are strikingly different concepts. Solomon asked God to "know the difference between right and wrong." What he lacked was a desire to follow through on his convictions.

It isn't wrong to seek knowledge while on Earth. Yet worldly wisdom can never replace godly wisdom, lest we become like Solomon: materially rich but spiritually poor.

Good/Bad.

Solomon built the Temple, grew Israel's GDP, and brought many people to the country, but his heart was misaligned. Solomon did the right things, like his father David, but he allowed compromise and materialism to corrupt him. He sought the wisdom and status of the world over God. A quick caveat: this isn't to say we should discredit Solomon's words in Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. God often speaks truth through sinners like us.

Which is why we need to put Solomon in his place on the Kings Chart. He is our second king on the 'BAD' side.

While Solomon did great things, and may have even done them with the right motives, he was ultimately looking out for #1. The solution to avoiding Solomon's mistake doesn't require superhuman wisdom. It requires asking God for wisdom; not once, but repeatedly. Oh, and don't marry 700 people, worship their gods, or build a shrine to Molech. Don't compromise.

If only, amidst the pursuit of what would one day be "meaningless, meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 1:2), Solomon had heeded his words from Ecclesiastes 12:13... *"That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey His commands, for this is everyone's duty."*



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