



LEVEL 6  
**6·4**  
LESSON 4

# *Imperial Academy Bible Lessons*



**The Life of Solomon**

# The Life of Solomon

**K**ing David ruled over Israel for 40 years. His life was filled with blessings, adventure and excitement, as well as hardships, tests, trials, mistakes and lessons learned. God was building character in this man whom He would eventually resurrect to rule over Israel in the World Tomorrow (Ezekiel 34:23-24).

Toward the end of his life, David prepared his son Solomon to take his place ruling God's nation (1 Kings 2:1-4). God had promised that of all of David's sons, it would be Solomon who would inherit the throne (1 Chronicles 22:9). But other powerful people in the kingdom had different plans. Solomon's successful ascension to the throne would be a final test for the elderly King David.

## **STRUGGLE FOR THE THRONE**

David's health began to deteriorate as he entered the 40th year of his reign. His eldest son at the time, Adonijah, recognized that his father was unable to carry out many of his royal duties. He coveted the position of Israel's king. Like his older brother Absalom had done, Adonijah paraded throughout Israel to show how many people supported him. He convinced Joab, who was the commander of the army, Abiathar the high

priest and other influential men to support him as the new king (1 Kings 1:5-7).

David was unwell and unaware of what Adonijah was doing. The Prophet Nathan and Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, went to the king to tell him what was taking place. They reminded David that he had promised that Solomon would become the next king. The people of Israel were looking to David to confirm who would be his heir. If he did not do so before he died, Adonijah would undoubtedly take over (verses 11-27).

David confirmed that the next king would be Solomon. He ordered Nathan, Zadok the priest and Benaiah the warrior to have Solomon ride the king's own mule to the Gihon Spring and there anoint him as the new king of Israel. A large crowd witnessed Solomon's coronation; they shouted, "Long live King Solomon!" (verses 28-40).

Meanwhile, Adonijah was holding a feast of his own. When he learned that Solomon had been crowned king, he feared Solomon's response to his attempt to become king. He ran to the temple and took hold of the altar, an action which symbolized that he had sinned and was appealing for mercy.

Soldiers sent by Solomon took Adonijah into custody and brought him to the new king.

Solomon could have sentenced him to death for treason, but he granted him mercy. The new king told his brother, “If you repent and do things right from this point forward, I will not execute you. But if you do wickedly, you will die.”

### **A FATHER’S WISDOM**

Shortly before he died, David gave Solomon final, valuable advice. He reminded him of his duty as king and to be a strong and upright leader. “Obey God’s commandments and walk in His way of life. If you do so, God will prosper you and the nation,” David said. “Don’t forget God’s promise: If you continue to keep His law, then our family will continue to rule on the throne.”

David had lived a full life of 70 years; he had gained a lot of experience and wisdom.



Zadok and Nathan crown Solomon king.

Now, he was trying to pass along the most important lessons of his life so his son would be an even greater success as king.

David also gave Solomon instructions dealing with specific individuals. “Be kind to Barzillai and his family. They helped me flee from Absalom. Also, both Shimei and Joab did evil to me. I promised Shimei I wouldn’t order that he be put to death, but deal with him justly. You know the crime that Joab committed; do not let him go unpunished” (1 Kings 2:5-9).

### **SHORT ANSWER**

Summarize the crimes Joab had committed (2 Samuel 3:26-29 and 20:9-10). \_\_\_\_\_

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What was the penalty for these crimes? (Exodus 21:14). \_\_\_\_\_

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### **PUNISHING THE DISLOYAL**

Not long after David delivered these words of wisdom, he died. He was buried inside Jerusalem in a special tomb for kings.

After the funeral, Adonijah once again conspired to take the throne. He could still summon a lot of support from people who were more loyal to him than to Solomon. He began plotting another takeover. King

Solomon discovered the plot and ordered Benaiah, head of the palace guard, to execute Adonijah for his crime.

Solomon remembered what his father had said about Joab and Shimei. He executed Joab for his crimes committed many years ago and for supporting Adonijah's final attempt to take over the throne. Later, he executed Shimei because he had shown disrespect toward David in the past (1 Kings 2:28-46).

### **WISDOM FROM GOD**

During the early years of his reign, Solomon proved to be a worthy successor to King David. He loved God and worked hard to follow his father's example (1 Kings 3:3). For that reason, God poured out blessings upon Solomon and the nation of Israel as a whole.

Solomon praised God for the blessings and prosperity that He was giving to Israel. He went to the city of Gibeon, where the tabernacle was located (1 Chronicles 21:29), and offered a great number of sacrifices to God. Many people joined him in rejoicing and celebrating.

That night, after he fell asleep, Solomon received a vision from God. "Ask!" God said. "What shall I give you?" (1 Kings 3:5).

If God asked you this question, how would you answer? What would you ask for? Money? Better grades? Winning a championship? Solomon could have asked for anything: tangible possessions, personal glory, other advantages. How did he answer?

"And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people which you have chosen,

a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this your so great a people?" (verses 7-9).

Solomon recognized what an honor God had given him to rule over His chosen nation. He thought of the many men, women and children he governed and how he could make their lives better and make the name of God and His nation greater. He knew that he was not wise enough to do this on his own. Only God could give him these qualities of an exceptional ruler.

It pleased God that Solomon asked for wisdom to better serve Him and His people. God not only gave him wisdom, He gave Him more wisdom than any man who lived before him or after him. He even told Solomon, "Because you didn't ask for a long life, riches, honor or anything selfish, I will give you those things as well" (verses 10-14).

### **WISDOM IN ACTION**

Over the weeks, months and years, Solomon made wise decisions about the Israelites and their worship of God, their education, agriculture, transportation, military, cities, policies and courts of law. More and more people at the palace, in Jerusalem, throughout the nation, and even in surrounding nations began to recognize that he was exceptionally wise.

God had given him an understanding heart and discernment to solve problems that others could not.

For example: Two women of low character came before the king with a problem that no one could solve. They brought a baby with

them, and each claimed that the child was hers. The first woman said, “We live in the same house. I had a baby, and then three days later, she had a baby. One night while she was sleeping, she accidentally lay on her son and smothered him. When she woke up, she switched her dead baby and my baby.”

“That’s not true!” the second woman said. “Her boy died and this boy with us is my son.”

Solomon thought for a minute, then he ordered his guards, “Cut this child in half, and give half to each woman.”

The first woman quickly fell to the ground and cried, “No! Please no! Give her the baby! Spare his life.”

The other woman, said, “This is fair. Let neither of us have a child.”

Solomon immediately knew which woman was the true mother. He told the guard to

give the baby to the woman who pleaded for his life (1 Kings 3:16-28).

People recognized that God was guiding Solomon to make wise policies and render fair judgments. Rulers and citizens of other nations came to Israel to hear him speak and to seek advice from the wise king.

Solomon knew that he must continue to increase his knowledge in order to serve God and His people. He worked to observe and study the people and the natural world around him. He continually added to his knowledge, studying mathematics, music, plants, animals and other aspects of God’s creation and the man-made world. He summarized key principles of life in hundreds of short proverbs (1 Kings 4:29-34), many of which are recorded in the Bible. Solomon also wrote the biblical books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.

A lot of the proverbs that Solomon wrote are principles for wise rulership. Study the book of Proverbs and write a list of traits that make for a good ruler. Discuss with your parents how you can be a wise leader today and in the World Tomorrow. Here is a list of scriptures to help you get started: Proverbs 20:28; 24:23; 25:5; 28:16; 29:4, 12; 31:3-9. Also read Proverbs chapters 2 and 3.

### **A GRAND KING AND NATION**

Under King Solomon, Israel became strong and prosperous. Its borders extended hundreds of miles from the Euphrates River in the east and north, south to Egypt, and west to the Mediterranean coast (1 Kings 4:21, 24). Nations like Moab, Ammon and Syria submitted to Israel’s power and paid tribute to Solomon.

The palace was a busy place. Every day, feeding the staff required 240 bushels of



King Solomon’s wisdom from God leads to wise judgments.

flour, 480 bushels of meal, 30 oxen, 100 sheep and goats, plus game like deer and antelope (verses 22-23).

Solomon's army included probably hundreds of thousands of soldiers, 12,000 horsemen and enough horses to fill 40,000 stalls (verse 26).

Under Solomon, the entire nation experienced so much prosperity and peace that it was a type of what the whole world will enjoy in the World Tomorrow when Jesus Christ returns (Micah 4:3-4). It was as close as any nation has come to a perfect society, and it was thanks to God fulfilling His promises.

### **CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE BEGINS**

In this peaceful and prosperous time for Israel, Solomon began building the temple, a project that his father had made detailed preparations for.

King David had had a close relationship with King Hiram of Tyre (1 Kings 5:1). When King David built his palace, Tyre provided workers and quality materials (2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Chronicles 14:1). When Solomon succeeded his father on the throne, Hiram sent representatives to congratulate him.

Solomon reminded Hiram that his father had hoped to build a temple to honor God and now he was ready to construct it. "The timber in your kingdom is exceptionally fine, and the craftsman are especially skilled," he wrote. "Please supply me with fir and cedar from the forests of Lebanon and skilled laborers."

Hiram welcomed Solomon's request and delivered the precious timber to Jerusalem. Solomon paid him in large amounts of wheat, oil and wine as King Hiram had requested (1 Kings 5:2-11).

Many thousands of workers constructed this house for God. More than 3,000 foremen supervised the day-to-day tasks of the laborers.

First, workers leveled the ground on Mount Moriah to prepare it for the foundation of the temple. They cut out large stones from quarries near Jerusalem, and teams of men and oxen pulled them to the work site and set them in place. Timber was cut and prepared, then transported to the site. Gradually, the temple began to take shape, with the huge work site being fairly quiet without the clanking of tools as its parts had been precisely cut and fit well together (1 Kings 6:7).

The temple floor plan was exactly like that of the tabernacle that God had commanded the Israelites to construct after they had left Egypt. The main building was 120 feet long, 42 feet wide and 63 feet high. Around it was an outdoor court and numerous rooms accommodating priests and storing treasure. The entire complex covered several acres.

Inside the temple, not a single stone could be seen. The walls of the rooms inside were completely covered in fine polished wood or gold. The altar and carvings were also made of gold. Even the floor of the temple was covered in gold (verses 22, 30).

Candlesticks, wash basins, censers, spoons, tongs and other equipment used for sacrifices and services inside the temple were crafted to the highest quality. All of the furnishings were either gold, silver or brass. The veil that divided the holy place from the holy of holies was made of the finest cloth and colored with the rarest, most expensive dyes. The project cost billions and billions of dollars in today's currency.





Solomon observes the progress of construction of the temple.

After seven years of construction, the temple was completed in the 11th year of Solomon's reign (verses 1,37-38; 2 Chronicles 3:1-2).

### **DEDICATION CEREMONY**

Nearly one year after its completion, Solomon and the people were ready to dedicate the temple to God. One week before the annual Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites gathered for the most exciting event in their lifetimes (1 Kings 8:1-2).

Throughout the nation, Israelites gave countless offerings as they united to praise God (verse 5). The priests carried the ark of the covenant and the holy vessels out of the tent where they had been kept for years. A huge crowd lining the streets cheered as they witnessed the priests carrying the ark into the temple. The priests placed the ark in the Holy of Holies, the special inner room behind a heavy veil (verses 3-8).

### **THE ETERNAL'S GLORY**

Meanwhile, musicians and singers continued to praise God in song. Suddenly, a thick cloud filled the temple, bringing the music to a stop as the musicians, priests and the rest of the Israelites looked on in awe. Through this cloud, God was revealing that He was present in Israel, just as He had 500 years earlier when the tabernacle was dedicated (Exodus 40:34-35). He was also expressing to Solomon and the people that He was pleased with their rejoicing!

Solomon, standing in front of the altar, began addressing the crowd, and everyone stood up. He reminded the people of God's mercy and the promises that He had fulfilled. He knelt before God and delivered a powerful

prayer, praising God for His abundant mercy and blessings on Israel and thanking God for keeping his promises to his father, David. Solomon exalted God's greatness, saying that the temple was too small to contain a Being whose presence stretched to the farthest corners of the universe. But he asked that God would still place His name on the temple. He then asked God to hear the prayers of His people, to protect and rescue them from trouble, bless them, and forgive them upon repentance of their sins (2 Chronicles 6:14-42).

When Solomon concluded the prayer, a vibrant flash of lightning sent fire down from heaven. With a loud crack of thunder, the fire consumed everything that was on the altar as God expressed His approval in a thrilling way! Everyone immediately fell to their knees and began worshiping and praising God (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

A few days later, the people kept the Feast of Tabernacles, continuing the joyful excitement. Perhaps Solomon was thinking of this occasion when he wrote: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice ..." (Proverbs 29:2).

### **ANOTHER CONSTRUCTION PROJECT**

After the temple was finished, Solomon commissioned the construction of another structure: his own palace. This would be a separate building from King David's palace; its main structure would be 200 feet long, 100 feet wide, and roughly 60 feet high. Within this section was his throne room, which was decorated with gold and precious stones. It was from this magnificent platform that Solomon ruled and judged Israel. The rest of the palace, which included meeting spaces





Solomon dedicates the temple to God.

and rooms for cooking, dining, entertaining and guests, was made of stone and cedar. The building was surrounded by beautiful gardens, courtyards and porches.

This magnificent structure was a symbol to other nations of Israel's power and wealth. The beauty of Solomon's palace, along with the peace and prosperity throughout the

nation, showed what can happen under a government led by righteous kings who follow God.

### **GOD'S PROMISE AND CONSEQUENCES**

Just as God had spoken to Solomon before he built the temple and palace, He again addressed the king when these buildings

were completed, saying, “If you will walk before me as David your father did, and keep my commandments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom upon Israel forever” (1 Kings 9:4-5). Then came a grave warning: “But if you or your children turn from following me and to pagan religions, then I will cut off Israel. I will leave the temple and forsake my people. The temple will become ruins. Everyone who passes by will wonder why I allowed such destruction. And they will learn that I allowed it because of sin” (2 Chronicles 7:19-22).

Solomon wanted God to continue blessing Israel, and the temple and the capital city to continue as a beautiful example that glorified God. But desiring that was not enough. The only way for Israel to remain prosperous and peaceful was for Solomon, his children and the Israelites to continue obeying God.

Solomon’s projects in the capital city and elsewhere were enormously expensive. The Israelites were prosperous, but Solomon still had to lay heavy taxes on them to pay for everything he was building and doing (1 Kings 9:15).

Years before, when Israel first requested a king, God had warned what would result.

Read 1 Samuel 8:11-17 and summarize the parts of this description that fit Solomon.

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### **THE QUEEN OF SHEBA**

Even with the heavy taxes, Israel continued to grow in wealth. Together with Hiram, Solomon sent fleets of trading ships to

ports around the world, where they traded and returned with expensive items, such as gold, silver, ivory, fine woods, spices, other treasures and even apes and peacocks (1 Kings 10:14-29).

Surrounding nations heard more and more about Solomon’s wisdom and his nation’s multiplying wealth. A queen from a neighboring nation called Sheba came to see Solomon, bringing a large caravan of servants and camels carrying treasures as gifts.

She tested his wisdom with riddles and questions. His wise responses impressed the queen and she asked him for advice on questions she did not know the answers to. Solomon took her on a tour of Jerusalem, and she became even more inspired by his kingdom (2 Chronicles 9:1-9). Solomon told the queen as she prepared to depart that she could have any of his possessions. She selected a few items, and then he added even more (verse 12).

### **TROUBLE**

Just as God had said, when Solomon was obeying God, he was abundantly blessed. However, Solomon had a weakness that he was not overcoming. That sin was his desire for women.

God had instructed the ancient Israelites not to intermarry with people from surrounding nations. These marriages interfered with how He had created the races and would lead His people to adopt other cultures, including pagan religions (Exodus 34:11-17; Deuteronomy 7:1-6).

As Solomon’s wealth and prestige grew, he interacted with many foreign kingdoms. He met many princesses, such as the princess of Egypt. And he married many of these

women: Egyptians, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians and Hittites. Some he married so that his kingdom would have good relations with their kingdoms; some he married because he found them attractive. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines, which are like secondary wives (1 Kings 11:1-3).

Each of these wives and concubines had some type of influence over Solomon, and the more his heart turned toward them, their kingdoms, their concerns and their gods, the more his heart turned away from the true God of Israel. Solomon even built temples for their gods near God's temple, a horrible insult to the Creator who had abundantly blessed him (verses 4-10).

Israel still had a magnificent palace, a glorious temple, gold, silver, brass, ivory, fir, cedar, spices, royal servants, soldiers, horses, trading ships, alliances and many other assets—but these were not the factors that made the nation strong. God is the one who made Israel strong: He blessed it for obedience, and now He would curse it for sin.

Solomon allowed his heart to turn from God, and his remarkable godly wisdom began to dim.

God spoke to Solomon, saying, "Because you have turned from my commandments to idolatry and pagan gods, I will take the kingdom of Israel from you! However, because of the promise that I made to your father, I will not do it while you are alive. Instead, after your son inherits the throne, the kingdom shall be ripped from his hands and given to one of his servants" (verses 11-13).

God then stirred up Hadad the Edomite and Rezon, a Syrian army captain; these men were Solomon's enemies. Toward the

end of his life, these men grew stronger and more aggressive and developed into greater adversaries of Israel (verses 14-25).

When Solomon's reign was coming to a close, God sent the Prophet Ahijah to a man named Jeroboam. He told Jeroboam that God would make him ruler over 10 of Israel's tribes. Solomon discovered this and angrily sent soldiers to kill Jeroboam. But God's Word always prevails: Jeroboam escaped (verses 26-40).

### **SOLOMON'S DEATH**

Solomon reigned from the throne of Israel for 40 years. His father had lived to the age of 70, but Solomon died at the age of only 60. Why might Solomon have died at a comparatively young age?

*Review what God had promised Solomon in a dream just after he became king, by filling in the blanks using 1 Kings 3:14: "And if you will \_\_\_\_\_ in my \_\_\_\_\_, to keep my \_\_\_\_\_ and my \_\_\_\_\_, as your father David did \_\_\_\_\_, then I will \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_."* Had Solomon obeyed God's commandments, he might have lived much longer, just as God had promised at the beginning of his reign.

Solomon's son Rehoboam was anointed the next king of Israel. But because of sin, Israel's time as a united, prosperous, righteous kingdom under a godly ruler was almost over.

