

# WAS SOLOMON A SUCCESS — OR A FAILURE?

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We all know that we are supposed to read our Bibles! Some parts are easier than others!

It contains history ... law ... prophecy ... and personal stories/biographies.

**Today I want to review the story or biography of King Solomon — the wisest man who ever lived. And what we can learn — good or bad.**

He was the son of David and Bathsheba. He was Israel's third king after Saul and David. (Also their last king — as the nation thereafter divided).

It is not clear at what age he became king. Probably between 12–15 years old? He reigned 40 years — suggesting that he died in his early to mid fifties?? Remarkably young. Why did he die so unexpectedly?

## 1 Kings 3:3-15

3 And **Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.** *(No temple then)*

4 Now **the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there**, for that was the great high place: **Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.**

5 **At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask! What shall I give you?”**

6 And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7 Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, **but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.**

8 And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted.

9 **Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"**

10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

11 **Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,**

12 behold, I have done according to your words; **see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.**

13 **And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.**

14 **So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."**

15 Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

### **God's first appearance to Solomon.**

**He is going to give Solomon wisdom and riches and honour. But not (yet) a long life. That is conditional — "if".**

Already we can see there is a problem because he didn't live a long life.

**A great start to his reign. Good also for the nation. The wisest king ever.**

Here's a famous illustration:

### **1 Kings 3:16-28**

16 Now two women who were harlots came to the king, and stood before him.

17 **And one woman said, “O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house.**

18 **Then it happened, the third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we were together; no one was with us in the house, except the two of us in the house.**

19 **And this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him.**

20 **So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.**

21 **And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne.”**

22 Then the other woman said, “No! But the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son.”

**And the first woman said, “No! But the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son.”**

**Thus they spoke before the king.**

23 And the king said, “The one says, ‘This is my son, who lives, and your son is the dead one’; and the other says, ‘No! But your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.’ ”

24 **Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.”** So they brought a sword before the king.

25 **And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other.”**

26 **Then the woman whose son was living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, “O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!”**

But the other said, “Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him.”

27 **So the king answered and said, “Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she is his mother.”**

28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for **they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.**

**The incident with the 2 babies.**

These were good days for Israel.

### **1 Kings 4:20-21**

20 Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. (*Life is comfortable. Peaceful*)

21 **So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.**

### **1 Kings 4:25-34**

25 And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, **all the days of Solomon.** (*Peace for 40 years*)

26 **Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.**

27 **And these governors, each man in his month, provided food for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table. There was no lack in their supply.**

28 They also brought barley and straw to the proper place, for the horses and steeds, each man according to his charge.

29 **And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.**

30 **Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.**

31 For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.

32 **He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.**

33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish.

34 **And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.**

Good days! Israel's king is famous throughout the world of those days.

We can admire (and envy) Solomon's wisdom. Of course — it came from God. It looks like we can access that wisdom too.

### **James 1:2-8**

- 2 My brethren, **count it all joy when you fall into various trials,**
- 3 **knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.**
- 4 **But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**
- 5 **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**
- 6 **But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.**
- 7 **For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;**
- 8 **he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**

**It's a promise! WISDOM IS AVAILABLE.**

One of the "gifts of the spirit" in 1 Corinthians 12 is "The Word of Wisdom". **Something God gives even now.**

Let's jump ahead slightly and see an example of how "the world" reacted to Solomon's wisdom.

### **1 Kings 10:1-10**

- 1 **Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions.**
- 2 She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels that bore spices, very much gold, and precious stones; **and when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart.**
- 3 **So Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain it to her.**
- 4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built,
- 5 the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he

went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her. (*Took her breath away*)

6 **Then she said to the king: “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom.**

7 **However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard.**

8 Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom!

9 **Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness.”**

10 **Then she gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in great quantity, and precious stones. There never again came such abundance of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.**

The visit of the Queen of Sheba. The greatest royal procession ever? She made about a 1,500 mile journey.

She was real! Jesus mentioned how the Queen of Sheba came “from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon’s wisdom” — **but — He said “A Greater than Solomon is here”!!**

How far are people willing to go today to hear the wisdom of Jesus? How much effort? How much Bible Study do people do? Most church-goers ... Christians — rarely read their Bible (only 20% read it daily).

Verse 10 gives a hint of the Queen’s wealth. She gave Solomon gold valued at \$175 million.

### **1 Kings 10:14-15**

14 **The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold,**

15 besides that from the traveling merchants, from the income of traders, from all the kings of Arabia, and from the governors of the country. (*A huge amount of wealth pouring into Israel in those days*)

Solomon's basic wealth was 666 talents of gold — approximately \$1 billion — annually.

### **1 Kings 10:23-25**

23 **So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.**

24 **Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.**

25 **Each man brought his present: articles of silver and gold, garments, armour, spices, horses, and mules, at a set rate year by year.**

It seems that Solomon had everything? Unbelievable wealth ... fame ... wisdom “off the charts”.

What could go wrong? Anything? Jesus came later and said “what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world ... but suffers the loss of his own soul”?

**Trouble lies ahead!**

**But first — one of his greatest achievements — Solomon's Temple.**

### **1 Kings 5:1-7**

1 Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, because he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always loved David.

2 Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying:

3 **You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side, until the LORD put his foes under the soles of his feet.**

4 **But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. (*Peace and prosperity*)**

5 **And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God,** as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, “Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name.”

6 **Now therefore, command that they cut down cedars for me from Lebanon; and my servants will be with your servants, and I will pay**

**you wages for your servants according to whatever you say. For you know there is none among us who has skill to cut timber like the Sidonians.**

7 So it was, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly and said,

**Blessed be the LORD this day, for He has given David a wise son over this great people!**

## **The temple!**

### **1 Kings 5:13-18**

13 **Then King Solomon raised up a labor force out of all Israel; and the labor force was thirty thousand men.**

14 And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts: they were one month in Lebanon and two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the labor force.

15 **Solomon had seventy thousand who carried burdens, and eighty thousand who quarried stone in the mountains,**

16 **besides three thousand three hundred from the chiefs of Solomon's deputies,** who supervised the people who laboured in the work.

17 And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, and hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple.

18 So Solomon's builders, Hiram's builders, and the Gebalites quarried them; and they prepared timber and stones to build the temple.

**Nearly 200,000 construction workers.**

### **1 Kings 6:37-38**

37 **In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv.**

38 **And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished** in all its details and according to all its plans. **So he was seven years in building it.**

**The Temple was a stunning building.** It was started in Solomon's 4<sup>th</sup> year (so he was aged maybe in his late teens?). **It took 7 years to build and was finished when Solomon was still in his twenties.**



Over 8 million pounds of gold used (at today's value ... approximately \$200 billion). Plus 76 million pounds of silver.

**The overall cost would be well over \$200 billion.**

This new dwelling for Jehovah was probably the finest building ever constructed? **God had given the plans to David — so He was the architect!**

Solomon's reign is off to a great start.

**But perhaps a warning sign appears just here?**

**1 Kings 7:1**

**1 But Solomon took thirteen years to build his own house; so he finished all his house.**

**Solomon took 13 years to build his own house??**

Was he trying to "out-do" God's house? Not clear ... but interesting that the writer puts the comment in here.

**1 Kings 9:1-9**

1 And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he wanted to do,

**2 that the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. (20 years later)**

3 And the LORD said to him: **"I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.**

**4 Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments,**

**5 then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father,** saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'

6 But **if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them,**

7 **then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples.**

8 And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’

9 **Then they will answer, ‘Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the LORD has brought all this calamity on them.’ ”**

Half way through Solomon’s reign. **This is very much a warning to Solomon? IF you go after other gods — I will bring calamity and destroy this Temple.**

So here’s Solomon. **Wealthy ... famous — completed 2 magnificent projects. A PERSONAL WARNING FROM GOD.**

Which way will Solomon go now? Will he remain loyal and faithful?

**1 Kings 11:1-8**

1 **But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—**

2 **from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.”**

Solomon clung to these in love.

3 **And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.**

4 **For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.**

5 **For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.**  
6 **Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David.**  
7 **Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon.**  
8 **And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.**

One thousand women!! He may well have only been in his forties?

**MASSIVE IDOLATRY! RIGHT BESIDE THE TEMPLE!**

Not only evil in a personal sense — but also **setting a terrible example for the rest of Israel!**

**SO WE KNOW SOLOMON CHOSE DEATH.**

**1 Kings 11:9-13**

9 **So the LORD became angry with Solomon,** because his heart had turned from the LORD 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 had commanded.

11 **Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.**

12 **Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son.**

13 **However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”**

**GOD WAS ANGRY.**

And no doubt disappointed? After all He'd done for Solomon ... this was all the thanks He gets.

**God sets in motion His plan to break up the Kingdom. He sends a prophet to anoint Jeroboam I ... as the new king of Israel.**

Solomon finds out. Now what? Does he realise his sins ... repent ... humble himself? Seek to reconcile with God? **NOT A CHANCE!!**

#### **1 Kings 11:40**

40 **Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam**. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

**SOLOMON SOUGHT TO KILL GOD'S ANOINTED!! FIGHTING AGAINST GOD!**

#### **1 Kings 11:41-43**

41 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

42 **And the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.**

43 Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

**Solomon dies after 40 years.**

**NO HINT OF REPENTANCE!** It looks bleak for his future. Probably The Lake of Fire?

Despite God's personal intervention to warn him — he pursued other gods and turned his back on the true God. He started so well — but — crashed and burned.

**AND HE KNEW BETTER!!**

#### **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**

14 "When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,"

15 **you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.**

16 **But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses,** for the LORD has said to you, You shall not return that way again.'

17 **Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.**

18 "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites.

19 **And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes,**

20 that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, **that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left,** and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

Solomon had 40,000 stalls for horses — with many imported from Egypt. He multiplied his wives almost beyond belief ... and — as predicted — "they turned his heart away".

**And it is almost certain that he didn't read THE BOOK OF THE LAW "all the days of his life".**

**WE REAP WHAT WE SOW.** Sow luxury living and rebellion — REAP THE LAKE OF FIRE!

So many lessons for us!

PROSPERITY AND FAME bring huge temptations — not all can cope!!  
"What does it profit a man ... if he loses his soul"!

**Some of Solomon's comments in the Book of Ecclesiastes show how he considered suicide. His prosperity and wives couldn't fill the spiritual vacuum. As he wandered far away from God.**

**It's important to start — but more important is how we finish!**

**If only Solomon had chosen to live a disciplined ... righteous life.** He could have looked forward to eternal life. Now — the Lake of Fire?

We can learn from his mistakes — and do better!