



THE REIGN OF SOLOMON – PART 6

While the Israelites remained faithful and obedient to the Lord, they lived peacefully and perfectly secure. However, over time they became very careless and even disobedient in their relationship with God. They chose religion over relationship and it cost them greatly. Religion always fails because it aims at the wrong target. It seeks to achieve a status of spirituality instead of seeking and serving God with the whole heart. In other words, religion leads to hypocrisy.

Even though God gave Solomon warnings at the beginning and all throughout his life, his heart was eventually turned away from God. At the end of his life, Solomon is not happy and excited about what God has allowed him to do; rather, he is an upset, angry, and bitter old man proving that religion never satisfies.

Ecclesiastes 1:16-18 says, "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

After offering a thousand burnt offerings on the brazen altar, Solomon laid down to rest. There, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and asked him what he wanted God to give him.

1 Kings 3:5 says, *“In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.”*

2 Chronicles 1:7 says, *“In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.”*

Let me remind you that Solomon is in Gibeon. He’s worshipping God at the high place and not just any high place, the great high place. And yet, God doesn’t just appear to Solomon in a place where Solomon shouldn’t be, but He blesses Solomon abundantly. What does that mean to us? Does it matter then how we live? Yes, God absolutely cares how we live. What this tells us is that God is a God of grace and mercy and He continues to work with us, to walk with us, and to bless us even when there are areas of our lives that He is working on desiring that we will respond to Him responsibly and sincerely in those areas that aren’t quite right.

When asked this question, Solomon began to think back over the life of his father and considered his relationship with God. Let me ask you a question, when your children (or others for that matter) think about you, is the first thing that comes to their mind the relationship that you have with God? It should be. Solomon no doubt had heard about the great accomplishments of his father, but he had also been an eyewitness of the great mistakes of his father. But there was something else about his father that stood out to Solomon, the great mercy and the great kindness that God had poured into his father’s life even though he had made such huge mistakes.

1 Kings 3:6-9 says, *“And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy 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 thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”*

The obvious question is, “Why did Solomon ask for wisdom? Well, Solomon shares with us the answer as to why he asked for wisdom in a statement that he later makes to his own son.

Proverbs 4:3-7 says, *“For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.”*

We live in a world where the distinction between good and evil has vanished. As a nation and as a culture, we have lost the ability to discern between what is right and what is wrong. Truth has become the victim of preference and personal opinion. The more the line of distinction is blurred between the sacred and the secular, the quicker we move towards apathy and apostasy.

Isaiah 5:20-21 says, *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!”*

2 Timothy 3:13 says, *“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”*

Wisdom is “looking at life the way God looks at life.” It’s the ability to base our decisions on truth.

John 17:17 says, *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”*

There are a lot of things that are trying to claim your time and your attention, but you must not forget to prioritize wisdom.

Proverbs 4:5-9 says, *“Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.”*

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”*

You can save yourself a lot of hurts, headaches, and heartaches, if you will simply learn to pause and consider your present circumstances through the eyes of God. This is what we call discernment. *Discernment* means “to examine; to judge closely; to separate; to investigate.” It is the ability to see the difference between what is right and what is wrong, what is primary and what is secondary, what is essential and what is trivial, what is important and what is not important. Throughout this life you are going to be presented with a ton of options and you be offered a ton of opportunities and you need to be able to recognize that not all of them are going to be good, healthy, or wholesome. Just because a solution may provide an answer for the present circumstances does not necessarily mean that it is the best choice.

Proverbs 20:17 says, *“Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.”*

Never judge a situation by what it is now; judge a situation by what it will be tomorrow. Today's decisions will take you in the direction of tomorrow's destination.

James 1:14-15 says, *"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."*

Every day our lives are full of choices and the decisions that we make will either invite a blessing or a burden into our life.

Proverbs 16:25 says, *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."*

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 says, *"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."*

Using discernment, we are less likely (but by no means are we exempt from) to become ensnared in Satan's traps.

Luke 22:31-32 says, *"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."*

1 Peter 5:8 says, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."*

While Solomon had accepted God's call, he was apprehensive because of his lack of experience and he was uncertain about his ability to lead rightly.

1 Kings 3:7 says, *"And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in."*

Solomon was about twenty years of age when he ascended to the throne. A mere child compared to when his father ascended to the throne. He understood that Israel was no ordinary people (they were God's chosen people) and that he had been task with the responsibility to lead them in such a way that put God on proper display for all the world to see. As such, Solomon needed to be more than just a political and national leader; he needed to be a proper spiritual leader for the nearly six-million individuals who had been entrusted to his care.

1 Chronicles 21:5-6 says, *"And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword."*

That's one-million one hundred thousand fighting men in Israel and four-hundred seventy-thousand fighting men in Judah. This averages out to a population approximately in the six-million range.

Solomon took in to consideration his duty to the nation and the discernment needed to lead in the affairs of the nation, but, ultimately, he desired to see God glorified.

1 Kings 3:7-9 says, "And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy 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 thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"

God was pleased with Solomon's request for wisdom and God granted him with much more than he requested. God granted Solomon with wisdom, with wealth, with honor and with the promise of a long life if Solomon would daily make the choice to walk in the ways of God.

1 Kings 3:10 says, "And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

God's bounty is available to those who most want God's blessing.

Deuteronomy 30:9 says. "And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers."

Psalms 23:6 says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

As we will see, God will use Solomon to accomplish many great things in the land and for the nation, but ultimately, Solomon failed to meet the condition of continued faithfulness to God and will die at the age of sixty having wasted so much potential because of the compromises that he made.

1 Kings 11:42-43 says, "And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead."