

# 1 Kings 9-10

## Chapter 9

### The High Point of Solomon's Reign

Chapters 9 & 10 mark the high point of Solomon's rule over Israel. Just as David reached his high point at about 2 Samuel 7-10 and then the sin with Bathsheba starts a long slow decline, so too with Solomon. The height starts for both with their obedience to God and their focus on his sanctuary and worship and the decline begins with their bad choices in regard to woman (lack of self-control). With David it was an affair with Bathsheba, murder and cover up, and with Solomon it was the taking of too many foreign wives for political purposes and then allowing them to draw him away from the sole worship of God. This is a warning to all of us about being vigilant during the good times, for it is when things are going well and God is blessing us that we get comfortable and allow sin to get a foothold in our life.

The Lord appeared a second time to Solomon with a two-part message: 1. I have placed my name in the temple you have built and I will dwell there forever if you and the people remain faithful to me. 2. If you will personally walk before me in righteousness and integrity as your father David did, then I will establish your kingdom and secure it for your successors. BUT if you don't... all of the curses of Deuteronomy, including exile and destruction of the temple will be enacted.

### The Activities of Solomon

The rest of this chapter describe the political and economic activities of the king's administration. The passage tells us that we are now twenty years into his reign (of 40 years) Again, the alliance with Tyre is highlighted. 20 towns, that is bordering territory is given to Hiram as payment for all of his help and materials provided for the construction projects in Jerusalem. He was not too pleased with the deal, indicating that Solomon was the stronger of the two partners in the alliance. Next is a description of the forced labor that he used to construct not only the city of Jerusalem but also the fortresses in the strategic parts of the land to regulate trade and defend the kingdom. Verse 20 begins the account of how Solomon used the remaining Canaanites in the land as slave labor but did not enslave his own people. Finally Solomon's merchant fleet is described. Again he turns to Hiram to gain experienced personnel to build and sail these ships especially on the Red Sea to the south.

### Chapter 10 – The Queen of Sheba

This is an important passage because, like the story of the baby and the two prostitutes which highlights Solomon's justice, this story highlights the fame and influence of his kingdom. This head of state comes from East Africa because of the stories she has heard and the new source of trade that is now flowing on the Red Sea. She comes to see for herself the wealth of this kingdom and establish formal trading relationships. She comes over land with a great caravan carrying large amounts of gold and precious stones. She was impressed with the beauty and magnificence of Solomon's capital and with all of the signs of wealth and extravagance of his court. Her response is what is most important. She Praises the God of Israel for the wisdom and righteousness of Solomon (vs 9) This was the ultimate purpose of Israel according to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12) that through him all of the families of the earth

would be blessed. Israel was supposed to be a shining light to the nations of what obedience to the one true God looked like. They were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, leading them to the worship and obedience of God himself. The Queen of Sheba is the one strong example of this happening on a national scale.

It is interesting that when Jesus is born, Matthew tells us that a group of Magi come to visit him bring gold and spices, which are two of the items that are mentioned as gifts from the Queen of Sheba for Solomon, the son of David. Jesus in his birth, achieved the same things that Solomon achieved at the height of his reign. Jesus at birth builds the temple (his body) and is worshiped by foreign representatives who present him with costly gifts. Jesus is the Ultimate Son of David and will take the Kingdom of God much farther than even Solomon, the greatest king, could have ever dreamed.

### **Solomon's Splendor: 10:14-24**

This last section of the text is devoted to giving the reader a glimpse into the amazing wealth of the king. These overt signs of wealth were clearly there to impress all who came to visit Solomon. It was to his advantage to show his wealth and power with these signs of prosperity as he negotiated trade deals and military alliances. Solomon was paid in gold for the commerce he was involved in. He then turned that gold into visible signs of his power. Imagine walking into the throne room of Solomon which was the great hall of the "Forest of Lebanon" – his impressive cedar adorned palace. On the walls and in the hands of his royal guards were shields of hammered gold – 500 large and small shields. Then you saw the king sitting on a throne of gold and ivory that had two lions for arms and 12 lions that made up the six steps of the base. Then servants came out to provide refreshment in gold goblets and gold plates and serving trays of gold.

In conclusion, the text says that he was greater in wisdom and riches than all other kings of the earth and that constantly people were sending delegations to Jerusalem to open diplomatic relationships and bring tribute to the king.

I believe that chapters 26-29 which talk about the horses and chariots really fit better with the next chapter so we will discuss them next week.

The wealth of the king is described without any commentary. The only real mention of the wealth of David was that he amassed it for the construction of the temple. He built a palace of cedar but it was not as impressive as Solomon's. Certainly the prosperity of Solomon was part of the blessing of the Lord on his life and reign. We can see the benefit of using some of his wealth to show the prosperity of the nation to obtain a better position in trade and international affairs. But it feels arrogant and begins to show a heart that is leaning toward the world's system and values instead of God's values. Solomon, unlike David, is acting like the kings of the world. He is beginning to live a lifestyle that looks indistinguishable from the world. This is a warning sign. Is our life and lifestyle indistinguishable from the world? If God gives us wealth do we use it like the world does to impress others, to increase our own prestige, power and comfort? The Bible does not condemn the lifestyle of Solomon, but we will see that there will be consequences for his decisions. He is beginning to follow Man's way and not God's way.