

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL
A KINGDOM *established*
GOD ALL WISE
Solomon Asks for God's Wisdom

Today, we begin a five-week study of events in the life of Solomon, son of David and Bathsheba, king of Israel. After the death of their first child we read in **2 Samuel 12:24 (KJV)** ²⁴ *And David comforted Bathsheba his wife...and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him.* The name Solomon means peaceful. David had a total of 19 sons by his wives. This number does not include his concubines' sons. Solomon was not first in line to succeed David as king. However, David had organized the building material for the future temple and we read in **1 Chronicles 29:1 (ESV)** ¹ *And David the king said to all the assembly, "Solomon my son, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, for the palace will not be for man but for the LORD God.*

Solomon is a good biblical example of an individual who began his walk with God in the right way and yet came to a disappointing end because of his life choices. The Apostle Paul understood the importance of finishing well. He wrote in **2 Timothy 4:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* And Solomon understood that too. In fact, he would eventually write in **Ecclesiastes 7:1 (ESV)** ¹ *A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth.* And also **Ecclesiastes 7:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *Better is the end of a thing than its beginning...* Solomon's good beginning started with a request for wisdom.

Read 1 Kings 3:5-10 (ESV) ⁵ *At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you."* ⁶ *And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness..."* ⁷ *And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but 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 many to be numbered or counted for multitude.* ⁹ *Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"* ¹⁰ *It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.*

Solomon was crowned king somewhere around the age of 20. We are told in the beginning of chapter 3 that he loved the LORD and was walking in the statutes of his father. Solomon had come to Gibeon along with leaders of Israel. It was at a sacred place. David had already moved the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, but the rest of the tabernacle, including the altar of sacrifice, was still at Gibeon, located five miles north of Jerusalem. Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings to the LORD as he and his leaders praised Yahweh and sought His face.

It was in this setting where Solomon experienced his dream – a direct revelation from God – unlike some other dreams in the Bible that needed interpretation. The meaning of Solomon’s dream was clear. The LORD said: *Ask what I shall give you.*

What would you ask for if you were given that choice? I suspect that for most of us what we would ask if given the choice changes depending upon where we are in life’s journey. Some would ask for riches or fame or maybe just the perfect job; others for good health or the perfect spouse; still others peace within their families. I know that the phases in my own life have revealed different desires of my heart. In the latter days of my mother’s walk with God she often prayed that souls would be saved in churches all over the world before the great and coming day of the Lord.

Solomon didn’t just jump at the question with a ‘give me’ attitude. Solomon took time with the LORD admitting that he wasn’t the king because God recognized his abilities but because God kept His promises to his father David. Why would it come to Solomon’s mind at the age of 20 to ask: *Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people.* That desire had been instilled in Solomon’s heart through the efforts of his father. When David told Solomon that he would be the one to rule the kingdom, David said in *1 Chronicles 22:12 (KJV)* ¹² *Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God.* Other translations use the word discretion in place of wisdom. The Life Application Bible reminds us that, “the times when we tell our children what we pray God will accomplish in their lives can be some of the best gifts we give them.”

Read 1 Kings 3:11-15 (ESV) ¹¹ *And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right,* ¹² *behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.* ¹³ *I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days.* ¹⁴ *And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”* ¹⁵ *And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.*

Matthew 6:33 (ESV) ³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* It would be centuries before these words of Jesus would be spoken on earth. But, here in the life of Solomon we see the words of Jesus played out in ‘real time.’ Because of Solomon’s desire to put God’s kingdom first, the LORD gave Solomon additional blessings. Remember this: God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with the LORD.

As with so many of the promises of God to men who had gone before, the LORD was careful to remind Solomon that his obedience to God’s covenant and his continued devotion to the LORD were the keys to his

future blessings. It's unfortunate that Solomon with all his God-given wisdom forgot this part of the agreement and gradually drifted into sin and disobedience, and God had to chasten him.

This was the first recorded time that the LORD spoke to Solomon. There would be three more conversations between God and Solomon during his reign. We will study those in the weeks to come. After Solomon returned to Jerusalem he went to the tent that housed the Ark of the Covenant and offered more sacrifices there. Recall that the Ark represented the Presence of God among the people. Our next passage takes us to a vivid example of the reign of wisdom.

Read 1 Kings 3:16-28 (ESV) ¹⁶ Then two prostitutes came to the king.... ¹⁷ The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. ¹⁸ Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house... ¹⁹ And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. ²⁰ And she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me, while your servant slept, and laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. ²¹ When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead. But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child..." ²² But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine." ... ²³ ... ²⁴ And the king said, "Bring me a sword." ²⁵ And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." ²⁶ Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death." But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him." ²⁷ Then the king answered and said, "Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother." ²⁸ And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

This story is an example of Solomon's wisdom. It is interesting that the example related is not one connected to Solomon's wisdom in foreign policy or his leadership expertise. It is instead an example of the heart – the heart of two women who were prostitutes of all things. Like his father David, Solomon was wise in giving the common people access to the king!

Psychiatrists are trained to 'read' people through such things as body language, appearance, posture, physical movements and facial expressions. Undoubtedly, Solomon had this ability. However, as judge in the case, Solomon would need something to **prove** the rightness of his decision. He asked for a sword to be brought in with the intent of dividing the baby in two. It was the presence of the sword that brought the truth to light! Ron Mattoon says, "**The sword brought out the best in one woman and the worst in the other.** It revealed what was in each woman's heart. The Bible does this too." **Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)** ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. In the courses of our own lives, we are wise when we turn to God and His Word for instruction and leadership. **James 1:5 (ESV)** ⁵ If

any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. Solomon became famous for his wisdom

Read 1 Kings 4:29-34 (ESV) ²⁹ *And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore,* ³⁰ *so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.* ³¹ *For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.* ³² *He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.* ³³ *He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish.* ³⁴ *And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.*

King David enjoyed God's created world and wrote hymns of praise about the Creator and His creation, but Solomon looked upon nature more as a study. These differences in David and Solomon remind us of the differences God gives to all his children – no two fingerprints are the same! God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond all the great wise men of the east. The wise men Ethan and Heman are mentioned here. Most likely, the wise Ethan wrote **Psalm 89** and the wise Heman wrote **Psalm 88**. We see a picture of true wisdom in **Psalm 89:1 (ESV)** ¹ *I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.*

To be honest, not everyone wants godly wisdom. Some prefer to be ruled by emotion. Others choose living life for the pleasures of the moment over following the godly wisdom they have been given. Then there are those who have earthly wisdom and become 'too smart' for their own good. Although Solomon did not always live wisely, Solomon gave God credit for his wisdom. **Proverbs 2:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

Most of Solomon's 3,000 proverbs have been lost. Wiersbe say that fewer than 600 are recorded – Mattoon says 915. As we consider how a majority of the work of wise King Solomon no longer exists, I cannot help but think what can we do in this world that will last? My mind goes back to a time of 40 days of prayer and fasting in the life of our church in 1998. As I personally sought the LORD's will for our church family, the Lord revealed a scripture to me. **Proverbs 11:30 (KJV)** ³⁰ *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.* The wise person trusts Jesus and then shares Jesus – that is wisdom that will last for eternity.