

The Rise and Fall of the House of Solomon



SABBATH—DECEMBER 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Chronicles 6:1-48; 2 Chronicles 7:1-4; 1 Kings 3:16-28; 1 Kings 11:1-43.

MEMORY VERSE: “Much will be required of everyone who has been given much” (Luke 12:48, NlrV).

“**RICHARD CORY**” IS A POEM ABOUT A RICH MAN from a poor man’s viewpoint. The poor man is jealous of Richard Cory. The poor man complains of everything Richard had that made others “wish that we were in his place.” But the poem ends when one night, Richard Cory “went home and put a bullet through his head [committed suicide].”

Solomon did not kill himself physically. But he did “kill” himself spiritually. Solomon had all the world could offer. He had the best heaven could offer. “Solomon was the son of David. Solomon made his position secure [strong] over his kingdom. The Lord his God was with him. He made Solomon very great” (2 Chronicles 1:1, NlrV).

What happened? How could someone who walks so close to God and receives so many gifts from heaven and earth be so bitter and suffer so much?

It is easy, really! Who we are, what we have, or how close to God we walk does not matter. In the end, we are fallen creatures with rotten natures. If we do not daily surrender ourselves to God (Luke 9:23), we are in danger of letting those natures ruin us.

This week, before we study Ecclesiastes itself, we will look at Solomon’s life situation. This will help us understand why he wrote Ecclesiastes.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 31**THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON
(1 Kings 4:29-34)**

What do the following verses tell us about the nature and character of Solomon in his earlier years?

1 Kings 3:28 _____

1 Kings 4:29-34 _____

1 Kings 10:23 _____

Matthew 12:42 _____



Solomon's understanding was like the sand by the sea (1 Kings 4:29).

Solomon was an intelligent¹ man. He had many talents. Of course, intelligence and wisdom are not the same thing. Some of the world's most devilish people were very intelligent. What they did not have was the right kind of "wisdom."

According to the Bible, there are at least two kinds of wisdom: (1) the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 3:19) and (2) the wisdom that comes from God (Job 28:28, Psalm 111:10).

How are these two kinds of wisdom different?

Solomon was clearly a person who had worldly wisdom. But he also had the wisdom that came from God: "God made Solomon very wise. His understanding couldn't [could not] even be measured. It was like sand on the seashore. People can't [cannot] measure that [sand] either" (1 Kings 4:29, NIV).

"The fear² of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." All wisdom and knowledge come from that "fear." This fear recognizes that God is powerful and good. This fear recognizes that God is the starting point of all true wisdom. Any truth without that foundation (basis) might be knowledge. But it is not wisdom. It is sad that so many intelligent, educated, and knowledgeable people know nothing of this wisdom.

¹intelligent—to be very smart. Intelligence is something a person receives at birth. But wisdom means showing good sense or judgment from past experience.

²fear—this does not mean being afraid. Instead, fear means showing proper respect for God.

Solomon was an educated, intelligent professional. Many people recognized him as very smart. But when God told Solomon he was a sinner, he answered, “What sin? I am not a sinner.” How is this an example of knowledge without wisdom? What other examples of knowledge without wisdom can you think of? What do these examples teach you about the difference between worldly knowledge and heavenly wisdom?



Solomon's wisdom was a gift from God.

MONDAY—JANUARY 1

SOLOMON'S WALK WITH GOD (1 Kings 3:16-28)

Solomon received intelligence from God at birth. But that was not enough to give him the kind of wisdom he showed in the early years of his rule.

What does 1 Kings 3:16-28 tell us about “the wisdom from God”?

Solomon's wisdom and ability to judge wisely were gifts from God. But this did not happen out of nothing. Solomon walked with God. He had a relationship with God. In this relationship, Solomon's heart was surrendered to God in faith and obedience. Only through such surrender could God give Solomon the wisdom he needed to judge wisely.

What important things do you find in Solomon's words that show his positive attitude³ toward God? 1 Kings 3:3-14.

Solomon asked for wisdom to be a good king. His whole attitude in asking showed that he understood his need of God. Solomon, the king of Israel, came before God as a humble servant. Solomon saw his need of a greater power. So God could work wonderful things through him.

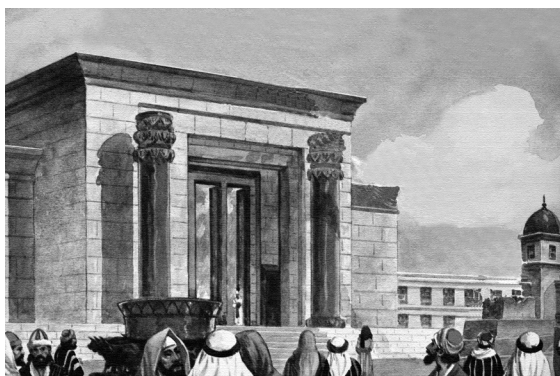
Solomon also obeyed God (1 Kings 3:14). This is another great example of how faith and works go together. God could work through Solomon as long as Solomon showed faith through obedience.

How well do your works show your faith? What changes do you need to make?

³attitude—how a person thinks and feels toward God, other people, or things.

TUESDAY—JANUARY 2**SOLOMON IN GOD'S TEMPLE
(2 Chronicles 6:12-42)**

Perhaps Solomon's greatest honor from God was to build the temple in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was God's chosen city (2 Chronicles 6:6). David, Solomon's father, had wanted to build the temple. But God asked Solomon to build it.



Solomon's temple

Second Chronicles 6:12-42 is Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple. What important parts of his prayer stand out in your own mind? What principles⁴ can you find in this prayer that you can use in your experience with God in your daily life and as a church member?

So many powerful truths are in Solomon's prayer. Read again 2 Chronicles 6:18. Here Solomon showed that he accepted God's greatness.

⁴principles—basic rules of life.

⁵confession—to say that you have sinned.

⁶repentance—showing sorrow for the sins done.

⁷eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

Study all of Solomon's prayer. It shows that he understood that his people needed to remain obedient to God. None of the special blessings given to Israel came without their obedience.

Perhaps the most important point in this whole prayer is the promise of forgiveness. If Israel sinned and were punished for those sins, God would hear from heaven "and forgive." But notice how forgiveness was always connected with the people's confession⁵ and repentance.⁶

How do you understand 2 Chronicles 5:36 on the basis of the gospel? What point was Solomon making in this verse?

Solomon's prayer shows the difference between human weakness and God's loving forgiveness. Second Chronicles 7:1-3 shows that God accepted Solomon's sacrifices, which were offered with his prayers.

We all have sinned. Why is it so important for each of us to understand Christ's death for our own sake? Why must our hope of eternal⁷ life depend only on Jesus?

WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 3**SOLOMON'S FALL
(1 Corinthians 10:12)**

God blessed Solomon very much.

But Solomon started to lose his way. “Solomon’s backsliding was so slow that he did not notice it at first. When he realized it, he had wandered far from God. Very slowly, Solomon began to trust less and less in God’s leading and blessing. More and more, he put confidence in his own strength. Little by little, Solomon withheld from God that steadfast obedience which was to make Israel a special people. He followed more and more closely the customs of the neighboring nations. Solomon gave up more and more to the temptations of his power, success, and his honored position. He forgot it was God who had made him powerful and successful.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 55.

What does the Bible show as the cause of Solomon’s spiritual downfall? 1 Kings 11:1-4. Solomon’s actions broke what special command of God? Deuteronomy 17:17.

Solomon was wrong in taking many wives, especially the foreign wives who did not know God. But the greater problem was where these marriages would lead him. The women slowly led him away from God. First Kings 11:4 says that when Solomon was “old,” his wives turned his heart away. Solomon’s backsliding did not happen suddenly. It began with a little broken law. But that “small” step led to a great leap into backsliding.

What did this backsliding cause Solomon to do? 1 Kings 11:4-9.

Very shocking! *From a position of honor and glory with God to worshipping and serving false gods?* If it could happen to Solomon, it could happen to anyone.

What is causing you to backslide? Be very honest with yourself. How do you get rid of these things?

THURSDAY—JANUARY 4

SOLOMON’S LAST DAYS (1 Kings 11:11-13)

God did not sit by and do nothing while Solomon fell into backsliding. No, God worked on the heart of His once-faithful servant. God “is patient with you. He doesn’t [does not] want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, he wants all people to turn away from their sins” (2 Peter 3:9, NIV).

What did God say to Solomon about Solomon’s actions? How do we see in these verses the principle that our actions influence others? Where do we see God’s mercy⁸ toward Solomon here? 1 Kings 11:11-13.

What troubles did God bring to Solomon as a result of his sins? 1 Kings 11:14-43.

In the end, Solomon saw the fool-

⁸mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

ishness of his ways and repented. The king learned much from this terrible experience. In his later years, Solomon “wrote for future generations⁹ the history of his wasted years with their lessons of warning.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 79. This history is in the book of Ecclesiastes.

How do Ecclesiastes 1:1, 16 and Ecclesiastes 2:4-10 help us know that Solomon was the writer?

Many lessons can be learned from Solomon’s sad story. First, no matter how important we are, none of us is protected from the foolishness of sin and backsliding. Second, Solomon’s fall brought suffering not just upon himself, but upon other people too. This is a common principle that many of us know all too well. Finally, as we study the book of Ecclesiastes, we can see the bitterness and suffering Solomon faced because of his foolish choices.

Solomon fell a long way. But God did not give up on him. What good news do you find in that for yourself?

FRIDAY—JANUARY 5

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 25–46. Also read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, introduction to Ecclesiastes.

“For many years Solomon showed faithfulness to God. He followed firm principles and strictly obeyed God’s commands. He directed in every important project and managed wisely the business matters connected with the kingdom. Solomon’s wealth and wisdom, the great buildings, and the wise judgments he made in the early years of his rule won the loyalty of his people and respect and honor from the rulers of many lands.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 32.

“But Solomon began to forget God and His power and glory. Solomon became more interested in worldly things, and his self-confidence increased. So he tried to carry out the Lord’s purpose in his own way. He thought that political and business agreements with neighboring nations would help them to know more about the true God. So Solomon entered into unholy agreements with nation after nation. Often these agreements were sealed by marriages with ungodly princesses. The commands of God were forgotten for the customs of neighboring nations.”—Page 54, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① As a class, talk about other great leaders who made terrible mistakes. How were these mistakes the same as Solomon’s mistakes? What lessons can you learn from these mistakes?

⁹generations—all the people born about the same time. Your parents belong to one generation. You belong to the next generation.

② In what “hidden” ways do we face the same danger of slowly losing our faithfulness to God? What are our responsibilities to someone who is starting to fall away? How do we help that person without appearing judgmental?

③ Do you know someone who has fallen away from God? What can you, as a class, do to try to bring this person back to Him? What are the first steps you could take to show this person that God still loves him or her?