

**Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)**  
***Construction of Cities and Royal Palace***  
***Extent of Solomon’s Glory***

**Readings: 1 Kings 7:1-12; 9:1-28; 2 Chronicles 7:11-22; 8:1-18; 9:21; 1 Kings 4:1-29; 1 Kings 10:1-13; 2 Chronicles 1:14-17; 9:1-28; Psalms 72**

***Reflections:***

- The description of Solomon’s temple is magnificent by ancient terms. The reader definitely is drawn into the grandeur of this era of Israel and her new king. We may be tempted to question Solomon’s focus as his palace takes six additional years to complete. In the context of the story, this is only to build on the sense that finally the ultimate king of kings has arrived. These are the glory years of Israel as they are at peace and their nation is being built up with incredible buildings. From this height Israel will soon begin her fall.
- God comes to Solomon in a dream (night vision). What God will say to Solomon is a promise that will resonate over the years. “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land.” What is fascinating in this simple promise is the emphasis on relationship. Seeking God’s face means seeking communication, intimacy and personal relationship. As we saw with David, the emphasis is on humility of heart and seeking an intimate relationship with God. The promised response is God hearing, pouring out mercy and healing. The promise culminates with God promising to make the temple a place for his name (revealed true identity), his eyes (again seeing human need) and heart (love and compassion).
- The promise also comes with a great warning about turning away and pursuing other gods and abandoning God. No doubt in that moment, Israel thought “how in the world would we ever turn away from God?” Yet, as we will see, God’s warning is given for a reason. God knows that no matter how wonderful the setting and how perfect the environment, the biggest issue has not yet been dealt with. The human heart—even within Solomon the king. One day he will lead the way in abandoning God for other idols and gods.

- Solomon now continues to improve his kingdom. He gives twenty towns to Hiram, king of Tyre for his help. Obviously the king doesn't think much of the gift as he called them a name that means, "good for nothing." Now this is a contrast as Hiram had given Solomon some villages and Solomon in this season rebuilds them. He also takes more slaves under his control from those that previously occupied the land. He uses these slaves for additional building projects across the kingdom. Again it is interesting how the tables have turned. Israelites were once the slaves to the Egyptians forced to build their cities and monuments. Now Israel is doing the same. This should cause us to note that they still don't get God's heart. God is a God of mercy and had always wanted Israel to remember their humble beginnings as a nation so that they would be a nation of mercy to those in need. As soon as Israel has security and power, they start to make slaves of others.
- Solomon's power and wealth and security even affords him the ability to begin to build a navy in partnership with Hiram. What an accomplishment for Israel's king: "Once every three years it returned, carrying gold, silver, and ivory, and apes and baboons."
- Key verse: "God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore." He wrote proverbs, was a scientist of sorts, obviously the most learned man of his era.
- All those who visit Solomon keep heaping up the wealth. Solomon's rule continues to expand as he gathers in more and more territories under his control. And the people are full of security and joy. "The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand of the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy." Verse after verse of this section portrays a time of incredible prosperity, organization and peace.
- The visit of the queen of Shebah is like a crown jewel. He wows her beyond belief and she returns to him the highest of praise "Because of the Lord's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness."
- "Can things get any better than this?" This is what the reader is to ask. Everything about this stage of Israel's story suggests that the finally Israel has arrived.
- The Psalm of Solomon captures the vision of Solomon as the ultimate king well. The emphasis is still upon maintaining justice and mercy for the poor and needy. Interesting how this psalm is written of Solomon even though he was in the business of making slaves of the aliens in their midst. Again, each step along the journey of Israel is simply setting the stage to show us what doesn't work. As perfect and glorious as Solomon's kingdom is, none of this can stop the corruption of the human heart abandoning God to pursue idolatrous ambitions.