



WEEK 5 | *1 KINGS 9:10-11:43*

SUCCESSFUL KING SOLOMON?

Over the last five weeks, we've watched Solomon as God blessed him with wisdom. We've seen how Solomon responded by building a temple for God. And as we come to the end of his story now, we need to ask: Was Solomon a success?

When you think of "success", who comes to mind?

What makes them "successful"?



WHAT'S THE STORY?

Read Sidebar: Laws for the King

1. From the laws for the king, what was God's success criteria for Solomon?

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Read 1 Kings 9:10-10:29

2. Imagine you *didn't* know God's criteria. How successful does Solomon sound here?

What was the Queen of Sheba's verdict?

3. Remembering God's criteria, how does Solomon actually fair?

9:22 (compare 5:13-16 and the people's words to his son in 12:4)

10:14-21

10:26,29

Read 1 Kings 11:1-13

4. Which two words are repeated through v1-4?

Why was *this* his ultimate downfall (more than gold, horses, inequality etc)?

Laws for the king

The king must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

Deuteronomy 17:16-20

5. What's God's final verdict on Solomon? v9-13

From last week, what further repercussions could be expected? (see 9:6-9)

6. If you've ever read about David in 2 Samuel, you might be surprised by the positive assessments here of this sinner in sex and violence, who also refused to enact justice when his sons did similar! But in what respect did he at least do better than Solomon?

In the rest of the chapter, everything gradually goes downhill for Solomon. God raises up enemies on all sides, including previous allies like Egypt, giving Solomon trouble for the rest of his life. And when we come back to 1 Kings another year, we'll pick up the story with the kingdom of Israel immediately getting torn apart under the reign of Solomon's own son.

7. Given that result, do you think Solomon would have been satisfied with his "success"?

Is that similar to the "success" people usually desire today? How so?

FOLLOW THE STORY

Ezekiel—a prophet carried off to Babylon along with the nation once Solomon's idolatry had crept into almost all of the kings who followed - indicted all the kings as "shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves" so that "the flock was scattered" and "they became food for all the wild animals" (Ezekiel 34:2,5).

Drawing on these words, Jesus claimed to be different.

*Read the sidebar:
I am the good shepherd*

8. How would you describe Jesus' relationship with his Father God?

How does it compare to Solomon's relationship with God?

I am the good shepherd

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

John 10:11-18



9. Why is Jesus “good” in his Father’s eyes?

What’s the result of his action, for us?

What about for Jesus himself?

How does this compare to Solomon’s “success”?

David Foster Wallace—a prize-winning novelist, but not a believer himself—noticed Solomon’s problem is actually universal. **Read an excerpt from his famous lecture to university students in the sidebar.**

10. Do you think this explains where Solomon’s life ended up?
How so?

Does this resonate with your own experience at all?

If you love Jesus instead of worshipping anything else, will that be any different? How so?

11. This is really the key question of the whole series: Do you think, deep down, you want relationship with God through Jesus above every other good thing? Why or why not?

What could people pray for you out of this whole series on Solomon?

Everybody worships

Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of God... is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you’ll never have enough, never feel you have enough. It’s the truth. Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure, and you’ll always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you’ll die a million deaths before they finally plant you... Worship power, and you’ll end up feeling weak and afraid, and you’ll need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you’ll end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out.

David Foster Wallace