

King Solomon: Wise but Foolish (I & II Kings & II Chronicles)

By Joelee Chamberlain

We've had lots of good stories from the Bible, haven't we? And they are all true stories. We talked about when God made everything, the sky and stars and the whole world with everything on it. And then we talked about how God chose Abraham to be the beginning of His special people, the Jews, didn't we? And Abraham had a son named Isaac, and Isaac had a son named Jacob. And God gave Jacob another name, didn't He? What was that name, do you remember? Yes, it was Israel. And Jacob (Israel) had 12 sons, and these 12 sons became the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. We call these tribes of Israel the Jews or Hebrews or children of Israel, don't we? Then God had Jacob and his sons live in Egypt when the famine came, and in Egypt the tribes of Israel became a great, big nation of people. And then God had Moses lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Finally God had Joshua lead the children of Israel, the Jews, into the promised land of Canaan. Then we started calling the land of Canaan where they were the land of Israel, didn't we? And the Jews had judges over them for a long time, and God was their king. But finally the children of Israel wanted a man to be their king, someone they could see. Who was their first king, do you remember? Yes, it was Saul.

But then we started talking about David, didn't we? David was the shepherd boy who killed Goliath while Saul was king, and later David became the next king of the Jews after Saul was killed in battle, didn't he? Do you remember which two books in the Bible told about when David was King? That's right. II Samuel and I Chronicles talked about when David was the king of the Jews, didn't they? And David loved the Lord God very much, and God loved David. Now, do you remember who became king after David? That's right, David's son Solomon.

So, both II Samuel and I Chronicles told stories about King David, didn't they? They were told two times, weren't they? (Remember how later in the New Testament there are four books of the Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that tell about Jesus when He was here on earth?) Well, now there are going to be many more kings of the Jews, and some of them are going to be told about twice, too, just as King David was. Those books of the Bible are going to be the books of I and II Kings and II Chronicles. But today we're going to talk mostly about David's son (Solomon) and some about Solomon's son. We will find those stories in part of I Kings and part of II Chronicles.

Let's see, now. Do you remember how Solomon became king? Remember that God had told David that Solomon was to be king after him, but when David was very old and was going to die soon, one of David's other sons, Adonijah, had tried to make himself king, hadn't he? So when David found out, do you remember what David did? That's right! David quickly had Solomon made to be king right then. And David had Solomon ride on David's own mule and sit on David's own throne. That way everyone knew that Solomon was the next king. Now, we don't know just how old Solomon was when he became king, but he seems to have been fairly young. But the Lord was with Solomon and made Solomon to be a very great king. Solomon loved the Lord and wanted to obey

Him.

Well, when Solomon became king, Solomon made a great, big sacrifice to the Lord. That night the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream. That was very special, wasn't it? Then God said to Solomon, "What would you like for Me to give to you?"

Solomon said, "You loved my father David very much because he was faithful to you and tried to do what you wanted and he loved you. And now you have made me, his son, to be king. But I am young, and there are many, many people that I am now king of. So please give me wisdom so that I may know how to lead all of these people."

The Lord liked what Solomon had asked for. The Lord said to Solomon, "You could have asked for great riches or for a long life or for great honor. Instead you have asked for wisdom to know how to be a good king to my people. So I'm going to give you much wisdom, so much that you will be the wisest man ever. But I will also give you what you did not ask for. I'll give you riches and honor, more than other kings." And the Lord said to Solomon, "And if you will obey me as your father David obeyed me, then I'll give you a long life."

Then Solomon woke up. Then Solomon went to where the ark of God was in Jerusalem, and he offered many more offerings to God and held a great feast.

The Bible tells a story that shows how wise Solomon was. Would you like to hear it? All right; I'll tell it to you. Well, one day, 2 women came to King Solomon. One woman said, "Oh, my king, this other woman and I both live in the same house, and we both had baby boys about the same time. This other woman's son died during the night, and she took her dead son in the middle of the night while I was sleeping and put him with me. Then she took for herself my living son from me while I was still sleeping. Then in the morning when I woke up, there was a dead baby. I looked at the baby, and I realized that it wasn't mine; it belonged to the other woman. But this other woman insists that the dead baby is mine and the baby that's alive is hers." Then the other woman said, "No, the baby that's alive is mine, and the dead baby is yours!" The first woman said, "No, no! The baby that's alive is mine, not yours! Yours is the dead baby!" And this is what they were saying to King Solomon.

Now how was Solomon to decide which woman was really the mother of the baby that was alive? Well, he played a trick on them, a trick that showed who was really the mother of the living baby! And this is what he did. Solomon said, "Bring me a sword." And a sword was brought to Solomon. Then Solomon said, "What we'll do is we'll take the baby that's still alive, and we'll cut him into 2 pieces and give a piece to each woman." (Of course, Solomon wouldn't really have hurt the baby! He was testing the women.)

Well, the real mother of the baby that was alive said, "Oh, no! Give the baby to the other woman! Please don't kill him!"

But the other woman (whose baby was already dead) said, "Yes, go ahead and cut the baby

in two. That way neither of us will have it."

Then King Solomon knew who was really the mother of the baby that was alive. He knew that the real mother wouldn't want her baby hurt. And Solomon said, "Don't kill the baby! Give the baby that's alive to the first woman. She is the mother."

So the woman got her baby back. Now, what do you think of that?!

Well, everyone heard about this, and they knew that part of the wisdom that God had given to Solomon was wisdom of how to be fair to people. That would be very important for a king, wouldn't it?

Well, God was with Solomon, and his kingdom was very large. God gave Solomon many riches and much power and honor, as well as great wisdom. And Solomon knew about all sorts of things. He knew about trees and animals and birds and reptiles and fish. And people came from all over the world to hear Solomon talk and to hear the wise things he said. Also, Solomon wrote down lots of songs and wise sayings, telling us how we can live wisely. We have some of those in the Bible in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. See how wise God had made Solomon?

Now, do you remember that Solomon's father David had wanted to build a temple for God? And, remember, God had said David wasn't to build it himself, but that David's son Solomon would build it. So David had collected all sorts of things for building a temple to God. He couldn't build it himself, but he could help by collecting the things that would be used to build the temple. Well, now Solomon got busy and built that temple. He had lots of people working on it. It took 7 years to build God's temple there in Jerusalem! Now, Solomon didn't want a lot of building noises around when the temple was built, so everything was fixed ahead of time and then brought to where the temple would be and then quietly put together. So while the temple itself was being built, you didn't hear hammers or other tools making noises. And when the temple was finished, it was very beautiful!! There were great big stones and pillars in it and there was lots of beautiful wood in it and lots of things were covered with gold.

And when the temple was all finished, Solomon had a great, big ceremony to dedicate this beautiful temple to the Lord. All the leaders of the Jews came, and the priests carried the ark of God from the tent that David had made for it and put it in the temple in the Holy of Holies, that special room made just for it. And in the Holy of Holies were two great big statues of cherubim (a kind of angel) and the priests put the ark under the wings of the cherubim. And the Levites who were musicians made lots of music and sang, praising the Lord and thanking Him because He is so good and loved them so much.

Then King Solomon stood up and said to all of the people, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, Who keeps all of His promises and takes care of us and Who chose us to be His special people. May this house be special to you." And Solomon praised God and asked His blessing for a long time. Then Solomon blessed all the many people who were there for the ceremony.

Now, do you think God liked the temple and what Solomon was doing? Yes, He did! And what do you think happened as Solomon finished praying?! Well, there were offerings there waiting to be burned up, and the Lord God sent fire from heaven and burned up the offerings Himself!! And the glory of God, His bright light, filled the temple! This showed everyone that God liked the temple and God like the ceremony and God liked the sacrifices. It also showed them that the Lord God was there watching all of this. And when the children of Israel, the Jews, saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they all bowed down to the ground with their faces to the ground and worshipped the Lord and thanked Him for His love for them. Then Solomon held a big feast for the people for 7 days! What a good time! After that the people all went back to their homes full of joy because the Lord was so good to them. Doesn't that all sound like a wonderful, happy time?

After that the Lord again appeared to Solomon and said to him, "I have heard your prayers, and I have chosen this temple for Myself. I have chosen that My name will be here forever. If the people are humble and pray to Me, I will hear them from heaven and forgive them." And the Lord said to Solomon, "You be careful to obey me as your father David obeyed me. If you disobey me, I will have to punish you. Don't forget me and start worshipping idols, or I will take your kingdom away from you so that everyone will know that only I am God."

Solomon built lots of other things, too, including a beautiful palace for himself. But the greatest thing he built was the temple of God there in Jerusalem.

Now, there was a queen in the far away country of Sheba. And she heard about Solomon and how wise and great he was. And this queen of Sheba decided to go visit Solomon and to test him with hard questions to see if he were really as wise as everyone said. So the queen of Sheba went to Jerusalem. She had lots of people and camels and presents (like spices and gold and precious jewels) with her. She went to Solomon, and she asked him all sorts of hard questions. Do you think Solomon could answer her questions? Yes!! Solomon answered all of her questions. There wasn't anything she asked him that he couldn't explain to her!

Well, the queen of Sheba saw how very wise Solomon was, and she saw the big palace he had built for himself and how many servants he had and the beautiful clothes that even his servants were wearing and all of the delicious food on his table and the beautiful temple and all of the offerings that Solomon offered at the temple. And then she knew that what she had heard about Solomon was all true. The queen of Sheba said to Solomon, "Everything I heard about you was true, but I didn't believe it until I came here and saw it all with my own eyes. It's even more than what I heard! Blessed be the Lord God who made you king." Then the queen of Sheba gave Solomon all of the presents she'd brought with her. And Solomon gave presents to the queen of Sheba. Then she went back to her own country.

And Solomon was not only the wisest man on earth, he was the richest. Solomon had ships that would bring him riches from other lands. The Bible tells us that these ships would bring him gold and silver and ivory and apes and peacocks! He built himself a beautiful palace, and his throne

was made of ivory covered with gold. And the throne had statues of lions on each side of it! Wouldn't that have been something to see!

People came from all over the world to hear Solomon's wisdom, and they would bring him presents of silver and gold and beautiful clothes and spices and horses and mules. And all of the things that Solomon drank out of were made of pure gold! So Solomon was very, very wise, and Solomon was very, very rich. And this was all because the Lord God was blessing him, wasn't it?

Solomon was the king over all 12 of the tribes of Israel, all of the children of Israel. (Remember, the 12 tribes came from the 12 sons of Jacob that we talked about way back in the book of Genesis. And the tribes were named after Jacob's sons. There was the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin and the tribe of Levi and of Joseph of all of the others. And Solomon was king of all 12 of these tribes.) And Solomon's kingdom was very big, and he collected lots of horses and chariots and soldiers. The Lord had greatly blessed Solomon, hadn't He?

But after a while Solomon, the wisest man on earth, did something that was not only very foolish, it was also disobeying God. Now way back in the law that God had given to Moses, God had told the children of Israel that they weren't to marry women from countries that worshipped idols. God had also said that the kings of the Jews weren't to have lots and lots of wives. Well, Solomon started marrying lots and lots of women. And these women were from other countries where the people worshipped idols. So what do you think happened? Why, Solomon wanted to please his wives, so he started building altars for them, altars for their false gods. And when Solomon started getting old, he didn't follow the Lord all of the time like he should have. In the Bible it even sounds as if Solomon even began going to these altars with his wives. Solomon was sort of forgetting the real God, wasn't he? Wasn't that silly of him? Especially since it was the Lord God of Israel, the only real God, the One Who had made Solomon rich and great and wise. And that was not only very silly, it was also very wicked. And do you think God liked what Solomon was doing? No! God had warned Solomon to obey Him, hadn't He? And now Solomon, the king, was disobeying God.

Well, now the Lord was angry with Solomon, because Solomon's heart was turning away from the Lord. So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since you have disobeyed me and not done what I told you to do, I'm going to tear your kingdom away from you, and I'll give it to someone else. But, because of your father David, I won't tear your kingdom from you away while you're still alive. But I will tear it away from your son. However, I won't tear it all away. I will leave your son two of the 12 tribes. This will be for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of my city Jerusalem which I chosen."

And now the Lord let some of Solomon's enemies come and fight against him, and Solomon began having troubles. Of course, this was happening because Solomon was disobeying God and sort of forgetting the Lord God. Now, there was a man named Jeroboam. Jeroboam was a hard worker, and when King Solomon saw what a hard worker he was, Solomon had Jeroboam take charge of building some walls around the city. Well, one day Jeroboam was outside of Jerusalem, and a prophet of the Lord named Ahijah came up to him. The prophet Ahijah and

Jeroboam were alone in the field. And one of them (I'm not sure which) had a nice new robe on. Ahijah caught the new robe and tore it into 12 pieces. Then Ahijah the prophet said to Jeroboam, "Here, take 10 of these pieces. For the Lord God of Israel says, `Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes, because he has forsaken me and is worshipping false gods and idols, and isn't obeying me as his father David obeyed me."

Ahijah said to Jeroboam, "And the Lord says, `I will let Solomon's son keep 2 of the tribes, one for the sake of my servant, his father David, and the other for the sake of Jerusalem, the city I have chosen to put my name in."

And the prophet Ahijah said to Jeroboam, "The Lord says, `You will be king over 10 tribes, and if you will obey me and do what I say, as my servant David did, then I will be with you."

Now, in some way Solomon heard about this. Well, you'd think that Solomon would be sorry for what he had done, wouldn't you? And you'd think that Solomon would humble himself before the Lord and ask forgiveness, wouldn't you? But no! Instead, Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam! And Jeroboam ran away and went to Egypt and lived there until Solomon died.

Well, Solomon was king of all of the children of Israel, all 12 tribes, for 40 years, and then Solomon died and was buried in the city of David. And Solomon's son became king of the Jews. Solomon's son's name was Rehoboam.

Goodness! That name, Rehoboam, sounds a lot like Jeroboam, doesn't it?! Remember, Jeroboam is the man who had to run away from Solomon because the prophet Ahijah had said Jeroboam would be king over 10 of the tribes of Israel, isn't he? It is hard to keep those names straight, Rehoboam and Jeroboam, but let's try to remember which is which, all right? Let's see, Rehoboam is Solomon's son. Rehoboam-Solomon. Well, let me tell you how I remember them, okay? Do you know your alphabet? Well, if you do, you know that when you're saying the alphabet, you say, "...o-p-q-r-s-t...", don't you? Well, what letter comes right before "s"? That's right, "r," "...r-s...". Well, "R-r-rehoboam" starts with an "r" and "S-s-solomon" starts with an "s", so when I try to remember which is the son of Solomon, Rehoboam or Jeroboam, I just say my alphabet and when I come to "...r-s...", then I remember it's Rehoboam!! "r-s" "R-r-rehoboam/S-s-s-solomon." And that was the only way I could keep them straight! Maybe this will help you, too!

Anyway, when Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king of the Jews, king of all 12 tribes of Israel. But, remember, the Lord had said that He would tear 10 of the tribes away from Solomon's son, hadn't He? The Lord had said that Solomon's son would only be king over 2 of the tribes, one tribe for the sake of David and one tribe for the sake of the city of Jerusalem. Well, how is that going to happen? The Bible tells us, so let's go on!

Well, after Solomon died and when it was time for Rehoboam to have the ceremony to be made king, Rehoboam left Jerusalem and went to another city to be made king, and all of the Jews came there to make him king. Now, remember that the other man, Jeroboam, had run away to Egypt? Well, after Solomon had died, Jeroboam had come back to the land of Israel. A whole

bunch of the Jews had Jeroboam go with them to King Rehoboam. They said to King Rehoboam, "Your father Solomon made it hard for us." (They had a lot of taxes and had to work for Solomon a lot.) They said, "Please make it easier for us than your father did, and we will serve you."

Rehoboam said to the people, "You go away for 3 days, and then come to me again." So the people went away, and Rehoboam began asking men for advice, what he should do. Should he make it easier for the people or not?

First Rehoboam went to the old men who had been advisors to Solomon. Rehoboam said, "What do you advise me to tell the people?"

The old men said to Rehoboam, "If you will be kind to the people and speak good words to them, then they will serve you."

But Rehoboam decided not to pay attention to what these wise old men told him, and he went to the young men he'd grown up with and asked them, "What do you advise me to tell the people who've asked me to make things easier for them than my father did?"

The young men said, "You tell them this. Tell them, `Huh! I'm really going to make things hard for you! I will be much harder on you than my father was!'"

Well! Three days later Jeroboam and the people came back to Rehoboam as he had said for them to do. And Rehoboam didn't pay any attention to the good advice that the old men had given him. Instead, Rehoboam said to them, "My father Solomon made it hard for you, but I'm going to make it much harder!"

Now why do you think Rehoboam said such a proud and foolish thing? Why, it was because this was the way that the Lord was going to tear 10 of the tribes away from Rehoboam's kingdom!

Well, when the people heard what King Rehoboam had said, that he wouldn't listen to them, the people said, "Huh! What do we have to do with you! You are from the tribe of Judah! We aren't from the tribe of Judah! We don't have any part with David's tribe of Judah! You take care of yourself!" And the people all went home.

Well, King Rehoboam sent out a man to make the people from these other tribes work for him, but they threw stones at the man and killed him. Then Rehoboam hurried and got in his chariot and fled back to Jerusalem. He knew now that Israel was rebelling against the house of David. (Remember, David was Rehoboam's grandfather. So when David's son or grandson was king, that was called "the house of David." It meant David's descendants.)

But what were the other 10 tribes going to do now that they'd said they didn't want Rehoboam to be their king? Well, when they all heard that Jeroboam was back, they sent for him and made Jeroboam to be their king instead!

Rehoboam heard that the 10 tribes of Israel had made Jeroboam their king, so Rehoboam gathered soldiers from the 2 tribes that had stayed with him. These were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (the tribe of Benjamin had land right next to Judah), and Rehoboam was going to go out and fight against Jeroboam and the other 10 tribes to get the whole kingdom back again.

But God sent a prophet to Rehoboam. This prophet told Rehoboam, "This is what the Lord says. `You are not to go up and fight your relatives in the other tribes. All of you go home, because I have caused this.'" And Rehoboam listened to the word of the Lord, and Rehoboam and his army went home and didn't fight Jeroboam. So, from that time on the Jews and their the land were divided into two countries. The 10 tribes in the northern part of the country were called "Israel," and the 2 tribes in the southern part of the country (the tribes of Judah and Benjamin) were called "Judah." So now there were two kingdoms of Jews, the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. Jeroboam was now king of Israel, and Rehoboam was now king of Judah. Two kings over the two groups of Jews.

Now, why did God let His people, the Jews, become divided into two countries, do you remember? Yes, it was because of King Solomon, wasn't it? The Lord had come and spoken two times to Solomon when Solomon first became king. Now, that was very special, wasn't it, to have God speak to him? And the Lord had given Solomon great wisdom and riches and peace. But finally when he got old, Solomon had disobeyed God and had started worshipping idols. Only the Lord God must be worshipped, right? Because only God is God. But this shows us that sometimes even very wise people can do foolish things, so we need to be careful always to be wise. And to be wise we need to remember what God tells us in the Bible to do and then do what the Bible says, don't we?

So what have we talked about today? And where in the Bible do we find these stories that we had today? Yes, in parts of I Kings and II Chronicles. Now, I'm going to ask you a lot of questions about it what we talked about today! I'll bet you can remember the answers! First, we talked about the wisest man in the world, didn't we? What was his name? That's right, Solomon. And who was Solomon's father? Yes, David was Solomon's father. What did Solomon, this very, very wise man do that was very foolish and wicked? Yes, he married lots of women who didn't worship the Lord God of Israel, and he began making altars for their false gods and going to these altars with his wives. So what did the Lord tell Solomon He was going to do about Solomon's wicked foolishness? That's right, God told Solomon that He was going to tear 10 of the tribes away from Solomon's son. So how many tribes would Solomon's son have then? Yes, only two, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Why would the Lord leave two tribes with Solomon's son, do you remember? Yes, the Lord would leave one tribe with him because of Solomon's father David (who had followed the Lord so well), and the other tribe because of Jerusalem, the city where the Lord had put His name. (Remember, Jerusalem is in the land of the tribe of Judah.) Okay, what was the name of Solomon's son who became king when Solomon died? Remember your alphabet!! Yes, "r-s", Rehoboam was the son of Solomon. And how did the Lord make 10 of the tribes leave Rehoboam and get their own king? That's right, Rehoboam was very foolish and told the people he'd make things harder for them, so they left him. And then what was Rehoboam's kingdom of only two tribes called? Yes, it was called "Judah." And what were the 10 tribes called then? Yes,

they were called "Israel." So Rehoboam was the king of Judah, but who became king of Israel? That's right, Jeroboam became king of Israel. And that's all we're going to talk about today in the stories of the kings of Judah and Israel. Look at all of the trouble that the wise yet foolish King Solomon caused with his wickedness!

We need to remember always to be wise, don't we? And what is the wisest thing in the world that we can do? Well, I'll tell you. First we need to remember that we all do sins and so God should punish us for our sins. That punishment is that we shouldn't be able to be with God when we die. But the Lord God loves us so much that He made a way so that we wouldn't have to be punished but could be with Him, right? And do you remember what this way is? That's right. God the Father sent his Son, Jesus, to come to earth as a baby. (His mother Mary was a great-great-great-granddaughter of King David! And that makes Jesus the great-great-great-great-grandson of King David!)

Anyway, Jesus when He grew up, He died on the cross for our sins, to take the punishment for our sins. Then 3 days later the Lord Jesus was alive again here on earth! Then later He went back to heaven, and He's still alive in heaven. And if we just trust the Lord Jesus to take the punishment for our sins, then when we die we can go be with Him, can't we? And that is the wisest thing that we can do, to trust the Lord Jesus Christ to take our sins away.

Oh, did you know that when Jesus was here on earth that He talked about Solomon and the queen of Sheba? Jesus said that a long time before that the queen of Sheba had come from far away to hear the wise things that Solomon had said, but that now Jesus Himself was there and He was greater than Solomon. He meant that the people He was talking to should listen to Him. Of course, Jesus is even wiser than Solomon was! So if we want to be wise, we will read what Jesus says in the Bible and believe in Him, won't we?

Well, that is all for this time. Have you enjoyed what we've been talking about? I hope so. The next time we will talk some more about the kings of Judah and of Israel.