

## The Gospel of the Kingdom

### Week 5 - Day 1: The Golden Age of Israel

**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.**

Last week, we saw how Israel began to drift away from the commands of God as they settled into the promised land. As a result of the ensuing chaos, Israel grew in their desire to establish a king to unify them and bring law and order to their society.

We walked alongside Israel as they chose to anoint Saul who eventually succumbs to pride in his role as king over Israel. Following Saul, we saw how God chose David, worked through him in mighty ways, and elevated him from a position of humility to become the most prominent king of Israel. In the end, God promises David that one of his offspring would be established as king over God's people planted securely in the promised land forever! This offspring would be like a son to God himself!

Who would be the offspring of David whose throne would be established over God's people forever?

The search for this Messiah ("anointed one") begins with the immediate offspring of David!

Following the reign of king David, his son Solomon became the next king of Israel. When Solomon was king, he asked God for wisdom and discernment to lead the people of Israel. Out of God's love for David and His people, God honored Solomon's prayer.

**1 Kings 3:9-14 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?"**

**It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 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, 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. 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. 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."**

King Solomon's wisdom would become renown not just in his kingdom, but also around the world. Under Solomon's reign, Israel would grow a powerful army, expand their kingdom's wealth, and create alliances with other kingdoms to ensure the peace of the land.

**1 Kings 4:29-30, 34 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.**

**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.**

Solomon's greatest achievement, however, was the construction of the temple for the Lord. No longer would God's presence need to be transported from place to place in a portable tabernacle. This temple was designed to become the permanent house of God in Jerusalem so that the city of David could become God's kingdom space forever!

**1 Kings 8:15-21 And he said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying, 'Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there. But I chose David to be over my people Israel.' Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. But the Lord said to David my father, 'Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless, you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.' Now the Lord has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and I have built the house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. And there I have provided a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord that he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt."**

If you are keeping track, Israel now has a permanent **space** for God's presence, God is granting wisdom to Solomon like never before to **rule** over His people, and God is immeasurably blessing His **people** with wealth so the whole earth would be blessed through Israel.

**1 Kings 10:23-25 Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. Every one of them brought his present, articles of silver and gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.**

God's loving rule, over God's family of people, in God's permanent space!

Could Solomon -- an offspring of Eve, a descendant of Abraham, and from the royal line of David --- be the Messiah ("anointed one") that Israel and all of humanity was looking for?

Unfortunately, even King Solomon's wisdom would not be enough to defeat the serpent and his kingdom of sin on earth. In expanding his armies, his wealth, his wives and concubines, and treaties with other kingdoms, his heart had turned away from God.

Let's recall Moses' standards for a King in Deuteronomy:

**Deuteronomy 17:14-20** “When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. “And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.”

Here is a list of how Solomon seems to break every one of these standards and ironically winds up ruling more like Pharaoh did in Egypt.

**1 Kings 3:1** Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the Lord and the wall around Jerusalem.

**1 Kings 5:13** King Solomon drafted forced labor out of all Israel, and the draft numbered 30,000 men.

**1 Kings 10:14-15** Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, besides that which came from the explorers and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of the west and from the governors of the land.

**1 Kings 10:28-29** And Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders received them from Kue at a price. A chariot could be imported from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver and a horse for 150, and so through the king's traders they were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

Just like Pharaoh, all of the wisdom and wealth resulted in the “hardening” of Solomon's heart:

**1 Kings 11:1-8** Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

Clearly, Solomon could not be the Messiah promised by God. He used his God given wisdom to receive God’s benefits, but forgot about the God who blessed his kingdom.

However, just like we received a glimpse of the coming *King* through David’s story, we now receive a picture of the coming *Kingdom* when we reflect on Israel’s golden age under the reign of Solomon.

Under Solomon’s reign, God’s rule was established as an anchor to keep Israel’s hearts tethered to a relationship with God in love and wisdom. Under Solomon’s reign, God’s people experienced the blessings of tremendous fortune and spread the glory of Yahweh to the nations. Under Solomon’s reign, God turns Jerusalem and the promised land of Canaan into His permanent kingdom space as He resides in the temple!

Yet God desires full obedience to his commandments. Humans still bowed the knee to Satan and His kingdom in their sin. As promised, God tore the kingdom away from Solomon and punished him by foreshadowing the tragic division of Israel’s kingdom.

**1 Kings 9:4-8a** And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’ But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will become a heap of ruins.

**1 Kings 11:11-13 Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.”**

Who would be the David-like king whose heart is perfectly aligned with the commands of God? Who would be the Solomon-like king who would usher forth a reign of God’s prosperity, wisdom, and blessing amidst His presence? How would this king defeat the kingdom of the serpent especially when the kingdom of God’s people would be divided and vulnerable?

...the search for these answers continues.

-Chris Rodriguez

**Share the Gospel:** As God’s kingdom people today, we can look to Solomon’s story and remember that Jesus has given us access to God’s heavenly blessing through wisdom and discernment. Instead of seeking God for His benefits, we should seek to be with God and embrace the ways of obedience in God’s Kingdom as a response to His love that pursues us and resides in us. When we become a part of God’s Kingdom, we become heirs of the King of kings as our bodies become a temple (God’s kingdom space where God rules over us)!

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers: