

OT LESSON #26
**“KING SOLOMON: MAN OF WISDOM, MAN OF
FOOLISHNESS”**

by Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: President Heber J. Grant made an applicable remark:

There is but one path of safety to the Latter-day Saints, and that is the path of duty. It is not a testimony, it is not marvelous manifestations, it is not knowing that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true, that it is the plan of salvation, it is not actually knowing that the Savior is the Redeemer, and that Joseph Smith was His prophet, that will save you and me, but it is the keeping of the commandments of God, the living the life of a Latter-day Saint (Heber J. Grant, Conference Report, April 1915, p.82).

To the interesting list of things that will not provide safety, we might add *wisdom*. Solomon was the wisest of all men,

So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart (1 Kings 10:23,24).

It was a gift Solomon had sought and the Lord had provided (1 Kings 3:9-11). But it did not save him, because somehow he was turned out of the path of his duty.

1. THE LORD BLESSES SOLOMON WITH WISDOM, RICHES, AND HONOR.

Have you seen the movie *Aladdin*? If you had your own genie and three wishes, what would you ask for? What an opportunity that would be. Solomon was invited by the Lord to ask for anything: “In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee” (1 Kings 3:5). Whenever we have opportunities to choose, whether they be of this significance or not, we show clearly whether or not we hunger and thirst after righteousness. Solomon certainly did. He was a man of exceptional righteousness. He saw the Lord on two different occasions (1 Kings 3:5; 9:2). He sought for blessings that would enable

him to bless others (1 Kings 3:7-9). He judged Israel with insight and inspiration—with unparalleled wisdom—as is shown in the case of the two harlots who claimed the same baby (1 Kings 3:16-28). How wise was Solomon? The Lord said to him:

I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee (1 Kings 3:12).

For much of his reign, Solomon presided over a kingdom of unsurpassed peace and prosperity. The Queen of Sheba visited him and concluded that everything she had heard of Solomon was understated.

Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice (1 Kings 10:8,9).

The record suggests that Solomon received annually 666 talents of gold (1 Kings 10:14). At today's prices that is probably in the neighborhood of \$15,000,000.00. The description of his wealth is astonishing (1 Kings 10:14-23).

2. KING SOLOMON DIRECTS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A GREAT TEMPLE AND HAS A PALACE BUILT FOR HIMSELF.

David longed to build a temple, but the Lord would not allow it.

Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: [As for me], I [had] in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou [hast been] a man of war, and hast shed blood (1 Chron. 28:2,3).

Of all the sons of David, Solomon was chosen for the throne and for this sacred duty.

And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father (1 Chron. 28:5,6).

David gave the charge to Solomon, and also gave him the pattern for the temple, which he had received by revelation.

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it. Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of *all that he had by the spirit*, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD (1 Chron. 28:9-13, emphasis added).

David gave his son the pattern for the temple, which he had received "by the [S]pirit."

All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern (1 Chron 28:19).

The Lord made a powerful promise to the children of Israel as they labored on the temple.

Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments

to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father: And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel (1 Kings 6:12,13).

My son wrote home from his mission field in California and sent a photo of himself standing on a hillside with his left hand raised and his index finger pointing to the roof of a house on the slope of that hill. He wrote a caption for the photo: *Meg Ryan's house!* I guess it is pretty impressive to be able to say that you live and work in an area where somebody as famous as Meg Ryan lives. But I have often thought that I should have sent a photo back to him—one of me with my finger on the top of the Timpanogos Temple—to which I would have added the caption, *God's house!*"

The Lord's promise in verse 6:13 to dwell among his people is a sobering reminder of the implications of the explosion in temple construction. In a way never seen before in the history of the world, God dwells among his people.

Brigham Young said,

I have determined, by the help of the Lord and this people, to build him a house. You may ask, "Will he dwell in it?" He may do just as he pleases; it is not my prerogative to dictate to the Lord. But we will build him a house, that, if he pleases to pay us a visit, he may have a place to dwell in, or if he should send any of his servants, we may have suitable accommodations for them. I have built myself a house, and the most of you have done the same, and now, shall we not build the Lord a house? (JD, vol. 1:p. 376).

President Hinckley has determined, with the help of the Lord, to build him a multitude of 'houses.' How blessed his people are to have so many places where we can go and receive his richest blessings and highest ordinances.

The 6th chapter of 1 Kings ends with a this declaration:

And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which [is] the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it

(1 Kings 6:38).

Notice how the next verse (1 Kings 7:1) begins. What do you think the historian who wrote Kings meant to convey to us by using the word 'But' to begin the description of Solomon's own house?

But Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house.

Note the size of the temple:

And the house which king Solomon built for the LORD, the length thereof was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits (2 Kings 6:2).

And the size of Solomon's house?

He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof was an hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars (1 Kings 7:2).

Does it matter that Solomon spent more than twice as much time and made a bigger house for himself than he made for the Lord? Is it possible to anticipate the future troubles of this great king because of what we see happening here?

As a point of interest you might note that Solomon's temple was about 100 feet long and 30 feet wide and 45 feet high. Modern mini-temples average about 110 feet by 80 feet, and are about 50 feet high. The Salt Lake Temple is 186.5 feet long and 118.8,5 feet wide. It is 210 feet high.

The temple of Solomon was adored with incredible riches. Note in 2 Chron. 28:14-18 that David had prepared 108,000 talents of gold for use in the temple. Gold today is selling for just over \$320.00 per ounce. Each talent weighed just over 75 pounds (75.6 lbs). A talent of gold was worth \$387,000.00 at today's prices. But David had 108,000 talents. Thus, the gold of the temple alone was worth over \$41,796,000,000.00! (see 1 Kings 6:220-22).

3. SOLOMON DEDICATES THE TEMPLE.

The dedicatory prayer for this temple is in 1 Kings 8:23-53. It is quite wonderful and worth a careful reading or two for what it teaches about those who reverence the temple in any age of time. You will discover as you read (and mark!) that the temple can help us resolve our most serious problems. This may be because the Lord pays special attention to what happens at his house. Solomon prayed that the Lord's

. . . eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there . . . (1 Kings 8:29).

Here are some of the problems mentioned in the prayer with which involvement in the temple can help.

unanswered prayers (8:30).
encroaching enemies (8:33)
drought (8:35)
famine, disease, plague (8:37)
a plague of the heart (8:38)
repentance (8:46,47)

President Boyd K. Packer understood what the temple can do for us. He said,

Temples are the very center of the spiritual strength of the Church. We should expect that the adversary will try to interfere with us as a church and with us individually as we seek to participate in this sacred and inspired work. Temple work brings so much resistance because it is the source of so much spiritual power to the Latter-day Saints and to the entire Church (Boyd K. Packer, "The Holy Temple," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 36).

How can we overcome the 'resistance' that so often surrounds our efforts to do temple work? How can we insure that we are the recipients of the spiritual power that is available there ?

4. SOLOMON BECOMES EXCESSIVELY WEALTHY AND MARRIES MANY NON-ISRAELITE WOMEN WHO PERSUADE HIM TO WORSHIP IDOLS.

1 Kings 10 described the wealth of Solomon and some of the ways in which he used that wealth. Does this description give you any concerns? Ought this wealth to have been used in any different way? I wonder if there any poor in Israel, or any homeless. Were there hungry and sick and afflicted whose lives might have been blessed by the gold that went into the shields and chargers and drinking vessels and around his throne.

Note that the first word of 1 Kings 11 is the same as the first word of 1 Kings 7. In spite of his remarkable accomplishments and his righteousness, something happened to Solomon. The record suggests that Solomon, in order to solidify and protect his political alliances, married many women not of the covenant. What kinds of rationalization might have led Solomon to this terrible mistake?

But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods; Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, and it became as the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, as David his father, and went not fully after the Lord (1 Kings 11:1-6, JST).

The cost of Solomon's rebellion was the same as the cost of Saul's. God took away most of the kingdom and gave it to another, more faithful man.

And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were

alone in the field: And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee . . . (1 Kings 11:29-31).

CONCLUSION: The commandment to marry in the covenant is one about which God has never been ambiguous. Beginning in Genesis 24 with Isaac and Rebekah, and continuing throughout the ages to our own time, the prophets have made the will of God perfectly clear. Solomon is only one of many examples of the wisdom of these abundant warnings .

God intended when He led Israel out of Egypt, that there should be no intermarriages between Israel and the nations which surrounded them, and a great many of the evils that came upon Israel were due to this. I may say, however, for the men of this Church, that there have been but comparatively few instances (probably because there have not been so many temptations for them) of their taking wives who were not of the Saints. They have not married strange women as did many of the Israelites, as did Solomon the wise king, which God gave to Israel. He married strange wives, and through these marriages he was led away into idolatry in his old age, and the anger of God was brought upon him and his house because of this. Many of the evils that fell upon Israel were due to intermarriage on their part with women who were not of their faith, and who were from nations who did not have the same worship that Israel had. Marriages of this nature are contrary to the command of God. We are commanded not to marry with those who are not of our faith, and no woman ever did it, no girl ever did it that has not sooner or later had sorrow because of this. God is not pleased with such marriages, and it is not in the nature of things to expect blessings to follow such intermarriages (Journal of Discourses, Vol.26, p.319, George Q. Cannon, August 26th, 1883).

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