

# SPIRITUAL WISDOM

1 Kings 3-7

Key Verse: 3:9

**“So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”**

Now Solomon’s throne was firmly established. What would he do and how would he use the power which was now in his hand? According to 3:3, Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.” At that time, the bronze altar built in the wilderness by Bezalel was located at the high place of Gibeon (2Chr 1:5). The ark of the Covenant was in Jerusalem (2Chr 1:4). The temple had not been built. So Solomon went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices. He wanted to show his love for God, so he offered a thousand burnt offerings. Solomon was a passionate man. He loved God wholeheartedly. He showed his love in an extravagant way. So, even though it was not exactly the way God wanted him to express his love, God accepted his sacrifices and visited him in a dream. God said to him: “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

## **I. Solomon Asks For Wisdom (3:1-15)**

Solomon did not ask for wealth or for women or for long life. He thought about his people—God’s people. They needed a shepherd. David was a shepherd king. Now, David was gone. His people needed a shepherd. Solomon prayed, “Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, but I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?” (3:7-9)

God was pleased with Solomon’s request, so he promised to give him the wisdom he asked and the riches and honor for which he did not ask. Furthermore, God taught him that more than a thousand burnt offerings, he wanted Solomon to walk in the way of God. He said, “If you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.” This is the real secret of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Pr 9:10). The source of wisdom is found when we live according to the word of God. Solomon woke up and realized that it was a dream. He then returned to Jerusalem and stood

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before the ark of the covenant and again sacrificed burnt offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his officials.

## **II. Solomon, A Wise King (3:16-4:28)**

God gave Solomon wisdom. The writer of Kings records an example of a wise ruling which Solomon made early in his reign. Two prostitutes came before him, each claiming to be the mother of a baby. There was no way he could know who was the real mother of the baby who died in the night. Both women claimed the living baby, but one was the mother and one was not. Solomon depended on a woman's maternal instincts when he said, "Let's cut the baby in two and give each woman half." The true mother came forward. She was ready to give up the baby in order to save it's life. So Solomon knew which woman was the real mother. When the people heard of his wisdom in this ruling—even though he was such a young man, they held the king in awe.

In his wisdom, Solomon organized his kingdom so that responsible men were his chief officials. Azariah, son of Zadok, was appointed priest. Zadok and Abiathar probably retired as priests. (Abiathar was sent home) The other officials were men or their sons who were loyal to Solomon. Solomon also appointed 12 district governors. They were responsible for supplying provisions for the king and the royal household. This created unity and kept order in the kingdom. Under Solomon's wise rule there was peace. The people ate and drank and were happy. "During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree." (4:20-25)

There were also some small seeds of disobedience that would later grow and lead to the disintegration of the empire. In Deuteronomy 17 there are instructions for the king which were written by Moses. "A king should not acquire horses for himself or go to Egypt to get more." A king should not accumulate gold and silver. A king should not have many wives. But Solomon acquired many horses (4:26). Solomon also made an alliance with Pharaoh and married his daughter. This shows the strength of his kingdom Perhaps it was a wise political alliance but a poor spiritual decision. He built a palace for her. We know that later he married many wives and they turned his heart from God.

In the early days of his reign we can see that Solomon loved God and sought to walk in his ways. He built the temple which David his father wanted to build. 3:3 says that he showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

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At this time, the temple had not been built, so this kind of worship was permissible. The high places were places where pagan gods were worshiped. Later, the fact that they were not removed became a stumbling block to Israel. (IKi 15:14;22:43; 2Ki 12:3;14:4; 15:4,35,etc)

Solomon spent seven years building the temple. He spent 13 years building his own palace. After building the temple he built his own palace, including the Palace of the forest of Lebanon and the Hall of Justice. Then he built a palace for Pharaoh's daughter.

His extensive use of forced labor in all of his building projects later became a stumbling block to the monarchy. (12:18)

Solomon was renowned for his wisdom. He was wiser than the renown wise men of his times. He wrote proverbs and songs and he was an authoritative naturalist, an expert in plant life, in birds, fish and animals. People came from all over the world to listen to his wisdom.

The wise men of his times were Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcot and Darda, the sons of Mahol. We don't know who these men were. The Bible teaches us that true wisdom comes from the fear of the Lord. (Pr 9:10)

## **III. Solomon Builds the Temple (Chapters 5-7)**

Hiram was the king of Tyre in Lebanon. Lebanon is famous for its cedar trees. King Hiram was a friend of King David and he sent envoys to greet Solomon when he heard that Solomon had succeeded his father. (5:1-2). Solomon told Hiram of his intention to build the temple of the Lord. (5:2-6) He asked Hiram's help. He requested Hiram to have his laborers cut the cedars of Lebanon. He would pay them. The Sidonians were experts in cutting trees. (Sidon is also in Lebanon) Hiram agreed and they made plans to transport them to by rafts on the sea. Solomon also agreed to provide food for Hiram's royal household. They were both happy with this arrangement, and both were honest and trustworthy in keeping the terms agreed on.

Solomon conscripted laborers from all Israel. The Israeli laborers went in one-month shifts to Lebanon. They worked with the laborers from Tyre. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor. They removed from the quarry large blocks of quality stone to provide a foundation of dressed stone for the temple. The blocks of stone

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were dressed at the quarry site so that no sound of a hammer or chisel was heard at the temple site. (6:7)

Construction of the temple began in the 480th year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. – the 4th year of Solomon's reign, second month, the month of Ziv. (6:1)

The man who did the beautiful bronze work for the temple was Hiram, the son of a Jewish mother and a man of Tyre. He was a craftsman who was very skillful in bronze work. He erected two pillars, (Jakin and Boaz) and cast the Sea, which stood on 12 bulls and was circular in shape. He also made all of the utensils needed for the sacrifices on the altar—all from bronze.

The temple structure is described in 6:2-10. (According to 1 Chr 28:11-19 David had made the plans for the temple and gave them to Solomon. Solomon followed David's plans.) The exterior of the temple was 90' by 30' by 45' (height) There were three floors—the lowest floor 7½', middle floor, 9' and the third floor 10½' There was a wall around the main structure with side rooms. Everything was built of cedar.

The interior walls were lined with cedar boards. The floor was of pine. He partitioned off 30' at the rear of the temple with cedar boards from the floor to the ceiling. This was the Most Holy Place, or the inner sanctuary. This inner sanctuary was 30' by 30' by 30'. (the main hall was 60' long) The ark of the covenant of the Lord, which had been brought to Jerusalem by David and had been housed in a tent, was placed in this Most Holy Place. The Bible, the law of Moses, was inside the ark. The whole room was overlaid with gold. The altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary (the altar of incense, placed at the door) was also overlaid with gold. Also, placed in the Most Holy Place were a pair of cherubim. Each was 15 feet high. They were overlaid with gold. The wing of one cherub touched one wall and the wing of the other touched the other wall and the wings touched each other in the middle of the room. So they hovered over the ark of the covenant. (No mention is made of the atonement cover (mercy seat)) The doors of this inner sanctuary were made of olive wood and carved with cherubim, palm trees and open flowers. They were overlaid with gold. The contents of the main hall—the Holy Place are not described here. Chapter 7:48-50 describes them as the other furnishings in the temple. Most important were the lampstands (Menorah) and the golden table on which the Bread of the Presence was placed. There were several other items made of gold. David had prepared these things and Solomon brought them and placed them in the temple or in the temple treasury.

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In 6:13 God states the purpose of the temple. God wants to live among his people. He promised Solomon as he had promised David: “I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.” God’s presence among his people was conditional on Solomon’s obedience to God’s decrees, regulations, laws and commands.

In Exodus 25:8, the Lord told Moses, “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. “The temple, like the tabernacle in the desert, was made as a place where the God of Israel might come and dwell among his people. God still wants to live among his people. He has given us his word, the Bible to live by. The altar and the sacrificial system are not described in these chapters, although Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on the altar at Gibeon. Only when sins are forgiven can men and women come into the presence of God. This temple looks forward to Jesus, the one whose blood atones for our sins. God’s presence among us is his grace. It is not based on our obedience to the law, but on God’s mercy and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus. God the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; the word of God is the source of wisdom. The presence of God dwelling with us is the fruit of wisdom and the source of life and peace and joy.

From these chapters we learn that true wisdom comes from God’s word. The wise man lives according to the word of the Lord. God wants to dwell in the midst of his people. We must prepare a place for him to live in our hearts. We must prepare his sanctuary in his way, not in our own way.