

File No. 67

I KINGS 3:3—15, 28; 4:29—34; 10:1—10, 13

II Chronicles 1:1—13

SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM / QUEEN OF SHEBA

(SBS Bk 2 Story No. 54 & 56)

Story Notes

Background Information

In the nine chapters beginning here, we are told the story of Solomon. His father's reign had been tempestuous but Solomon's was to be peaceful. David had remarked on his son's wisdom (2:6, 9). This wisdom, or perhaps, canniness, led him to cement ties with Egypt by a marriage. Already, we suspect that Solomon was one step removed from the immediate dependence that his father had on the living God. Perhaps he humoured the people with his maintenance of the 'high places'. (After the building of the temple, the prophets who recorded this history regarded the retention of these shrines as a sign of deficiency in a king.)

'High places' could be places for pagan worship (Num. 22:41) or for the worship of Yahweh (II Chron. 33:17). Moses had commanded that sacrifices be made in the place that God caused his name to dwell (Deut. 12:10—14) It was not a matter of personal choice (Deut. 7:5; 12:3; cf. 12:6—14). While Solomon chose the tabernacle for his own offerings, he did not seem to be so concerned about the proliferation of places which had no divine sanction.

Main Lesson

Chapter 3—4

Solomon, the beloved of God, did love God and was extravagant with his worship. God revealed himself to him. Solomon was grateful for the covenant made with his father and realised that this was why he had come to the kingship. It appears he had done nothing like his brothers in vying for this position. In meekness, he asked for wisdom for when he had to discern between good and evil. God was pleased to grant his request. Immediately, we are given an example of the practical value of this wisdom. The many rivalries common in Israel were tempered by Solomon's wisdom and the country settled down under his leadership.

His reign would not have been possible without the breadth of wisdom, knowledge and heart that God was giving Solomon. This gave him a wide audience with surrounding peoples.

Chapter 10:1—10

Solomon's riches and wisdom gave him fame as far as Sheba (modern Yemen) and this was linked with 'the name of the Lord' and so, with the temple (8:20). The Queen of Sheba visited Jerusalem with more than trade in mind. She opened up all that was in her heart. Solomon's wisdom, and the riches she saw left her speechless. She heard of the Lord who loved Israel forever. Solomon had explained the covenant made with his father, giving glory to God. She saw that what God had done brought delight to Israel's administrators and justice and righteousness to the whole nation.

Numerous gifts were exchanged. We are also told of the exotic imports that Solomon was able to afford, and the amount of gold Israel received and how it was used in enriching his house. The Queen of Sheba left, but she was one of many world dignitaries who came to learn the wisdom and observe the riches of Solomon. He had asked for wisdom and our writer reminds us that God gave it to him. God had also given him riches.