

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 6: God's Covenant and Solomon's Splendor

1 Kings 9:1–10:29

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

First Kings 9–10 is a passage balanced on a knife's edge. On one side: the most extravagant display of divine blessing in the Old Testament, a king whom the nations admire, a wealth that staggers description, a wisdom that sends a pagan queen home praising the Lord. On the other side: a conditional covenant warning that has already introduced the reader to the logic of Solomon's eventual catastrophe. The teacher's first task is to hold both sides of that knife simultaneously, to celebrate what is genuinely glorious without letting the celebration become naive. God's second appearance to Solomon is not a trophy presentation; it is a covenant renegotiation, and the 'if' at its center is not a minor footnote.

The doctrinal weight of Q9 is substantial. The conditional 'if' of 9:4–9 is not a unique feature of Old Testament religion; it runs through the entire New Testament. Christians can fall away. The warnings in Hebrews 3, 6, and 10 are addressed to people who have come to faith, have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and who are warned that it is possible to draw back to destruction. The teaching that genuine believers are unconditionally guaranteed to persevere regardless of their choices is not taught in Scripture; it is contradicted by the very pattern that God establishes with Solomon and by the New Testament's urgent call to 'hold fast' and 'take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.' The teacher should present this not as frightening but as a call to genuine, daily, trusting faithfulness rather than presumptuous assumption.

The formation aim runs through the Queen of Sheba's testimony. She came expecting to be impressed by a king and left praising the Lord. The student who is genuinely shaped by this lesson will leave asking not 'how can I be more like Solomon at his best' but 'what does my life communicate about the God I follow, and does the quality of my wisdom, integrity, and character regularly lead the people around me to bless the Lord?'

Question 1

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 9:1–9. God's second appearance to Solomon begins with affirmation: He has heard the prayer, consecrated the temple, and put His name there forever. But the affirmation is immediately followed by a conditional warning. What does the structure of this divine speech, blessing and warning held together by 'if,' tell us about the nature of God's covenant with His people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God's second appearance to Solomon (9:1–9) is structurally parallel to the first at Gibeon (3:4–14), but the emphasis has shifted significantly. At Gibeon, Solomon asked for wisdom and God responded with lavish, unconditional generosity. Here, having completed the temple and his palace, Solomon receives both affirmation and warning in a single message. The parallel structure invites comparison: the young king who asked for wisdom is now being told what wisdom requires in the long run.

The structure of the speech is precisely 'if... then... but if... then.' This is classic covenant language, the structure of blessing and curse familiar from Deuteronomy (chs. 27–28) and from the covenant ceremony at Shechem in Joshua 24. God is not introducing a new principle; He is applying to Solomon and the temple the same covenant logic that has governed Israel's relationship with God since Sinai.

The 'if' is not a threat designed to intimidate; it is the grammar of genuine relationship. You cannot have a real covenant with someone who has no real freedom to keep or break it. A relationship in which one party's choices are irrelevant is not a relationship; it is a mechanism. God's conditional covenant with Solomon assumes that Solomon's choices genuinely matter, that they can either open or close the channels of blessing, that the relationship requires ongoing faithfulness from both sides.

The teacher should help students see that 'conditional covenant' is not the same as 'earning blessing.' Solomon has already received enormous blessing before this speech. The condition is not a prerequisite for God's initial generosity; it is the shape of the ongoing relationship. God gave the wisdom; God gave the wealth; God gave the temple's glory. Now He says: stay in that relationship with the faithfulness that belongs to it. This is the logic of Paul's 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' (Phil 2:12), which immediately follows the affirmation that God is at work in us.

The specific conditions stated (walking before God as David did, keeping statutes and ordinances, not serving other gods) are not arbitrary. They are the things that define who Israel is as God's covenant people. To abandon them is not merely to break rules; it is to become someone other than the people God called.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Covenant conditionality as the grammar of genuine relationship, not merely legal transactionalism
- The parallel structure of God's two appearances to Solomon and what the shift in emphasis reveals
- The difference between conditional covenant and earning blessing: grace precedes the condition

- The specific content of the conditions: walking as David walked, keeping God's statutes, avoiding other gods
- The ongoing nature of covenant faithfulness: not a one-time decision but a direction of life

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God structured His message to Solomon as 'if... then... but if... then' rather than simply pronouncing blessing on the finished temple?
- What does the 'if' in God's covenant tell you about how God relates to people He has blessed and gifted? Does He relate to us as puppets or as genuine partners?
- How does the logic of 'grace first, then faithfulness' (God already gave the wisdom and the blessing before stating the condition) shape how you understand the relationship between God's generosity and our response to it?

Question 2

Student Question:

The 'if' in God's covenant with Solomon is personally confronting because it applies to us as well. God's ongoing work in our lives is not a mechanical process that runs independently of our choices and faithfulness. Where in your own relationship with God do you most feel the weight of that 'if,' the sense that your response to God's goodness genuinely matters?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This application question targets one of the most common distortions in Christian thinking about assurance: the confusion of genuine confidence in God's grace with a presumptuous assumption that one's spiritual condition is guaranteed regardless of choices. The former is biblical and life-giving. The latter is a form of spiritual complacency that the New Testament warns against repeatedly.

The 'if' in God's covenant with Solomon applies to us not in the specific terms of the Mosaic covenant, which Christ has fulfilled, but in the universal terms of covenant relationship. Every genuine relationship has an ongoing dimension. To be in Christ means to continue in faith, to hold fast, to not shrink back. Hebrews 3:14 states this with precision: 'We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.' The 'if' is not a doubt about whether we are in Christ; it is a description of what being in Christ looks like over time.

The practical texture of this question is about where students feel the weight of their ongoing choices in relation to God. Not 'are you sure you are saved?' but 'do you live with a sense that your daily choices about prayer, scripture, fellowship, integrity, and service genuinely matter to the quality and continuity of your relationship with God?' The person who answers 'no, my daily choices do not really affect my relationship with God' has functionally adopted a theology that the Bible's own warning passages contradict.

The teacher should frame this positively as well as soberly. The 'if' is not primarily frightening; it is motivating. It means that faithfulness today genuinely matters. It means that a choice to return to God, to confess sin, to recommit to obedience, genuinely changes something. It means we are not locked into past failure or past success. Every day is a new day with a God who responds to genuine faith and genuine repentance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The difference between genuine assurance of God's grace and presumptuous assumption of guaranteed outcomes
- Hebrews 3:14 as the New Testament counterpart to the conditional covenant of 1 Kings 9
- The ongoing dimension of covenant relationship: holding fast, not shrinking back
- The positive motivating force of the 'if': daily choices genuinely matter and can genuinely change the trajectory
- How to hold both confidence in God's grace and seriousness about ongoing faithfulness simultaneously

Discussion Prompts

- Does your daily life reflect a sense that your choices in prayer, scripture, integrity, and fellowship genuinely matter to your relationship with God, or do you function more as if the relationship is on autopilot?
- What is the difference between the assurance that God is faithful and the assumption that our spiritual condition is guaranteed regardless of how we live?
- Name one area of your life where you have been treating a past spiritual experience as a permanent deposit rather than as a continuing relationship requiring continuing faithfulness.

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 9:6–9. God tells Solomon specifically that if Israel turns away, this magnificent temple will 'become a heap of ruins,' and the nations who pass by will say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?' The blessing will become a testimony to the seriousness of God's covenant. What does this tell us about how God uses even judgment and loss to make His character known to the nations?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The warning in 9:6–9 is remarkable for its specificity about the temple itself. God tells Solomon that if Israel turns to other gods, the temple, this magnificent, newly consecrated house, will 'become a heap of ruins.' This is not an abstract warning. God is saying: the very building you just built for My name will become the evidence of how seriously I take covenant faithfulness.

This is precisely what happened. Jeremiah stood at the temple gate and declared: 'Do not trust in these deceptive words: This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord' (Jer 7:4). The people of Jerusalem had turned the temple into a talisman, an insurance policy against judgment, a religious achievement they could point to as proof that God was on their side no matter what. God sent Jeremiah to disabuse them of that notion. And then He sent the Babylonians.

The narrator describes the nations' response to the ruined temple: 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?' And the answer given is precise: 'Because they abandoned the Lord their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods.' Even the ruin is a testimony. Even the judgment communicates something about God's character: that He is not a tribal deity who protects His people regardless of their faithfulness, but the holy God who takes His covenant seriously enough to let His own house be destroyed rather than pretend that covenant-breaking has no consequences.

The theological principle here is important for the teacher to draw out: no religious institution, no matter how venerable or beautiful or historically significant, is immune from the judgment of God when the people who belong to it abandon Him. The early church, the Jerusalem congregation, was scattered within a generation of Pentecost. Great movements of revival in church history have become cold and formal within a century. The glory of God does not stay where God's people do not stay. Ichabod (1 Sam 4:21) is always a possibility.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The danger of treating religious achievement (a beautiful building, a long history) as a guarantee of God's ongoing favor
- God's willingness to let even His own house be destroyed to vindicate the seriousness of His covenant
- Jeremiah's 'temple sermon' (Jer 7) as the fulfillment of exactly this warning
- How God uses even judgment to communicate His character to the surrounding nations
- The principle that no religious institution is immune from God's evaluation and judgment

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that God was willing to let His own temple become a heap of ruins rather than protect Israel from the consequences of their unfaithfulness?
- Jeremiah's contemporaries pointed to the temple as proof that God would never judge them. How do people in our own time sometimes point to religious buildings, heritage, or history as a similar kind of insurance policy?
- When you see a church that once flourished now empty or dead, what does that phenomenon communicate about how God relates to congregations that drift from faithfulness?

Question 4

Student Question:

The warning that the temple itself could become a heap of ruins is a reminder that no religious achievement, no beautiful building, no history of faithfulness, is a guarantee of continued blessing if the heart turns away. Is there anything in your own spiritual history, a conversion experience, a period of spiritual growth, a time when God was very near, that you have been treating as a permanent deposit rather than as a continuing relationship requiring continuing faithfulness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This application question presses the warning of 9:6–9 into personal territory. The dynamic being probed is the common human tendency to live on spiritual capital accumulated in the past: a dramatic conversion, a period of intense prayer and Bible study, a mission trip, a time of deep revival in a congregation. These experiences are real and their effects are lasting. But they can also become a substitute for present faithfulness if they are treated as a permanent deposit rather than as a chapter in an ongoing story.

The Ephesian church received a letter from Christ in Revelation 2:1–7 that names this exact dynamic. He commends them: their orthodoxy is impeccable, their endurance is admirable, they have tested false apostles and not wearied. Then He says, ‘But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.’ The problem is not that they did something wrong; it is that they stopped doing something right. The warmth of early devotion had cooled into careful correct religion. And Christ says: remember, repent, do the first works again. Or else.

The teacher should invite students to locate the spiritual peak experiences of their lives without sentimentalizing them, and then to ask honestly: is the relationship with God currently at a similar depth, growing toward it, or trading on the memory of it? There is a difference between being someone who was transformed by an encounter with God and being someone who is currently being transformed. The first is testimony; the second is life.

The application is not guilt but direction. If the diagnosis is ‘I have been living on the memory of 1995,’ the prescription is not ‘condemn yourself for the last thirty years’ but ‘do the first works’: return to prayer, return to the Scriptures, return to the assembly with genuine expectation, return to God with the kind of honest confession that characterized the early days. The return is always available; that is the whole logic of Solomon’s ‘hear and forgive’ prayer.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Living on accumulated spiritual capital versus ongoing present faithfulness
- The Ephesian church’s pattern (Rev 2:1–7) as the New Testament parallel: abandoning first love
- The difference between being someone who was transformed and someone who is currently being transformed

- The prescription for spiritual drift: 'do the first works' rather than condemn the lost years
- How community and accountability help prevent the drift from living relationship to religious memory

Discussion Prompts

- Is there a spiritual peak in your past, a conversion, a revival, a season of intense growth, that you have been referencing more than you have been living from currently? What would returning to 'first works' look like for you?
- How does treating past spiritual experiences as a permanent deposit rather than a chapter in an ongoing story affect how you approach God in prayer and worship today?
- What would be the concrete signs that you have moved from living on spiritual memory back into active, present relationship with God?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 9:10–14 and 9:26–28. Solomon's dealings with Hiram of Tyre and his establishment of a fleet at Ezion-geber reveal a king deeply engaged in trade, international diplomacy, and wealth acquisition. In the context of Deuteronomy 17:14–20, which warned the king of Israel not to multiply gold for himself, how should we evaluate Solomon's growing commercial empire at this stage in his reign?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The details of Solomon's commercial arrangements in 9:10–28 show a king who is brilliantly pragmatic and relentlessly expanding. The deal with Hiram (9:10–14) shows Solomon trading cities when he runs short of gold. The forced labor (9:15–22) shows a king using the organizational structure of the state to build his projects. The fleet at Ezion-geber (9:26–28) shows a king opening trade routes that had never been available to Israel before, bringing back 420 talents of gold from Ophir.

Deuteronomy 17:14–20 is the controlling text here. God had anticipated the institution of monarchy and warned specifically against three things: multiplying horses (military dependence on Egypt), multiplying wives (political marriages that lead to idolatry), and multiplying gold for himself. The king was to trust God rather than military assets, political alliances, and accumulated wealth. And the king was to keep a copy of the Law beside him and read it every day so that 'his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers.'

At this point in the narrative, Solomon is amassing gold at a rate that should be alarming. He is not yet multiplying wives or horses in the same visible way, but the trajectory is clear. The narrator in chapter 10 will state that Solomon received 666 talents of gold each year (10:14), an amount so staggering that the number seems chosen partly for its symbolic weight. The thing Deuteronomy warned against is what Solomon is becoming.

The teacher should help students see that the warning is not against wealth per se but against the way accumulated wealth changes the internal architecture of the person who possesses it. Deuteronomy's concern is that the king's heart will be 'lifted up above his brothers' and will drift from trusting God to trusting assets. This is Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:24 stated in Old Testament terms: you cannot serve God and wealth, because they make rival claims on the loyalty and trust of the heart.

The application is not primarily about income level. The Deuteronomy 17 principle applies across economic situations: what is the thing you are accumulating, whether money, credentials, relationships, influence, or security, that has begun to function as your practical trust rather than God Himself?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Deuteronomy 17:14–20 as the evaluative framework for reading Solomon's commercial expansion
- The three prohibitions for the king: horses (military dependence), wives (political-religious compromise), gold (self-trust through wealth)
- How accumulated wealth changes the internal orientation of the heart toward self-trust rather than God-trust
- The principle of Matthew 6:24 as the New Testament statement of the same concern
- The distinction between wealth as blessing and wealth as rival object of trust

Discussion Prompts

- How does Deuteronomy 17:14–20 change the way you read Solomon's commercial dealings in chapter 9? What warning signs can you already see at this stage?
- What is the Deuteronomy 17 principle about gold doing in a law for kings? What is it saying about the relationship between accumulated resources and the orientation of the heart?
- What is the equivalent of 'multiplying gold' in your own life, and how do you assess whether it has begun to shift where your practical trust is placed?

Question 6

Student Question:

The warning in Deuteronomy 17 was not that wealth is evil but that the accumulation of wealth tends to produce a shift in where a leader's confidence is placed, from the Lord to resources, from trust to leverage. Where in your own life do you notice that financial security, career success, or accumulated resources has begun to shift where your practical trust is placed?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The personal application of the Deuteronomy 17 principle is one of the most practically searching in the lesson. The question is not whether a person has money; it is what the money,

career success, or accumulated resources is doing to the internal orientation of the heart. Deuteronomy 17 worried about the king's heart being 'lifted up above his brothers,' developing a functional independence from God based on the security that accumulated resources provide.

Jesus names the same dynamic in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:19–24): 'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' The treasure is not merely what we have stored up financially; it is whatever we are most counting on, most protecting, most working to maintain. And Jesus says: the location of your treasure is also the location of your heart. They cannot be separated.

The practical diagnostic is the anxiety test. Where do you feel most anxious when it is threatened? The person whose practical security is in their investment portfolio feels the most anxiety when markets fall. The person whose practical security is in their career position feels the most anxiety when it is threatened. The person whose practical security is in God feels the most peace precisely in those moments because the source of their security is not fluctuating.

The teacher should be careful not to imply that financial planning, saving for retirement, or building a stable household is sinful. Solomon's wealth was not condemned by God at this point; the Proverbs commend the ant who stores food in summer for the winter. The question is not 'do you have resources?' but 'where does your heart actually go when you think about the future, and who or what are you actually trusting when circumstances get hard?'

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The diagnostic difference between having resources and trusting resources as a substitute for trusting God
- Jesus' teaching on treasure and heart location (Matt 6:19–24) as the New Testament statement of the Deuteronomy 17 concern
- The anxiety test as a practical indicator of where practical trust is placed
- The legitimacy of financial responsibility and prudent planning alongside the call to trust God as the ultimate source of security
- How prosperity can shift the center of gravity of the heart without the person noticing

Discussion Prompts

- When something that gives you security is threatened, whether financially, professionally, or relationally, what does your instinctive anxiety response reveal about where your practical trust is placed?
- What would be the visible evidence in your daily choices and attitudes that your primary trust is in God rather than in your resources, credentials, or accumulated security?
- How do you hold together responsible financial stewardship and genuine heart-level dependence on God, so that prudence does not quietly become self-reliance?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 10:1–13. The Queen of Sheba comes to test Solomon with ‘hard questions,’ and when she has heard all his wisdom and seen all his house, she is left without any spirit in her. She declares that his wisdom and prosperity have exceeded everything she heard. What is the text saying about the purpose of Solomon’s wisdom and wealth at this point, and how does her confession, ‘Blessed be the Lord your God,’ connect his splendor to God’s own glory?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Queen of Sheba narrative (10:1–13) is one of the most dramatic scenes in the Books of Kings. She comes from what is likely the southwestern corner of the Arabian peninsula (modern-day Yemen or possibly Ethiopia), a journey of perhaps 1,200 miles, with a ‘very great retinue, with camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones’ (10:2). She has heard ‘the report of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord’ (10:1). His wisdom and his devotion to God are already internationally famous.

She comes to test him with ‘hard questions’ (Hebrew: riddles, or difficult challenges), and Solomon answers every one. She observes his house, the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his ministers, and their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings. And ‘there was no more breath in her’ (10:5, literally). She is overwhelmed not just by the material wealth but by the whole picture: wisdom, order, beauty, devotion. Everything fitting together as a coherent whole.

Her confession is the key to the passage: ‘Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, to execute justice and righteousness’ (10:9). She came to evaluate a king and ends up blessing God. She came looking for Solomon and departs with a doxology. The wisdom and the wealth of Solomon’s kingdom are not finally about Solomon; they are testimony to the God who gave them.

Jesus references this scene in Matthew 12:42: ‘The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.’ The queen of Sheba traveled 1,200 miles to hear wisdom that was a pale reflection of the wisdom of God. Jesus is the wisdom of God in person (1 Cor 1:24, 30). If she found it worth that journey to encounter a shadow of divine wisdom, how much more should those who stand in the presence of the fullness treat it with the same breathtaking seriousness?

The teacher should hold together the positive testimony and the implicit warning. Solomon at his best is magnificent precisely because he is being who God made him to be in the service of the purposes God gave him for. But the reader already knows from chapter 9 that this best is conditional, and chapter 11 will show that it does not hold. The queen of Sheba’s visit is a high-water mark. It is worth celebrating, but the tide is about to turn.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The international reach of Solomon's reputation: wisdom and devotion to God as the content of his fame
- The queen's doxology as the intended outcome: Solomon's splendor pointing to the God who gave it
- Jesus' reference to the queen of Sheba (Matt 12:42) as the key to the passage's forward trajectory
- Christ as the wisdom of God in person (1 Cor 1:24, 30), the greater Solomon to whom all this points
- The witness function of a life well-lived under God's blessing: people see the gift and bless the Giver

Discussion Prompts

- The queen of Sheba came expecting to test a king and left blessing God. What does that tell you about the relationship between the quality of Solomon's life and the witness it gave to the nations?
- When Jesus says 'something greater than Solomon is here,' what is He claiming about Himself, and what does it mean for how seriously we should receive His words?
- What would it look like for your life and your congregation's life to function the way Solomon's kingdom functioned for the queen of Sheba, so that observers end up talking about God?

Question 8

Student Question:

The Queen of Sheba came looking for Solomon and left talking about God. She arrived to test a king's wisdom and departed with a doxology. When the people around you observe your life, your decisions, your character under pressure, what do they tend to conclude about the God you follow? What gap, if any, exists between the witness you intend and the witness you actually give?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The witness question in 10:1–13 becomes the personal formation question here. The queen of Sheba noticed several things: the wisdom of Solomon's answers, the order of his household, the quality of his servants, the devotion of his worship. She noticed the whole picture, not just the impressive parts he might have staged. And the whole picture led her to God.

People are paying attention to Christians in exactly this way. They notice not just what we say about God but how we treat our employees, how we handle money under pressure, how we speak about people who are not in the room, how we respond when we are wronged, how we

behave when no one from the church is watching. The witness of a Christian life is total, not selective.

Paul's image of Christians as 'a letter from Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God' (2 Cor 3:3) captures this. You are being read by the people around you. The question is not whether you are giving a witness but what witness you are giving. Every workday is a reading of that letter. Every family dinner is a reading. Every interaction with a neighbor is a reading.

The specific question the application presses is the gap between intended witness and actual witness. Most Christians intend to represent God well. The question is whether the day-to-day reality matches the intention. The way to close that gap is not primarily to try harder to appear more Christian; it is to pursue genuine formation into the character of Christ, so that what is observed is not performance but genuine transformation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The totality of the Christian witness: not just religious moments but the whole texture of daily life
- Christians as 'letters from Christ' being read by the people around them (2 Cor 3:3)
- The gap between intended and actual witness as the diagnostic question
- Genuine character formation versus performance as the two competing strategies for witness
- How the quality of our ordinary life functions as testimony to the character of the God we follow

Discussion Prompts

- Think of someone who observed your life last week, a coworker, a neighbor, a family member. What would they say they concluded about your God from what they saw?
- Is there a gap between the witness you intend to give and the witness you are actually giving? What is the most significant thing creating that gap?
- What is the difference between trying to perform a convincing Christian witness and being formed into the kind of person whose ordinary life naturally draws people toward God?

Question 9

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 9:4–5 alongside Hebrews 3:12–14 and 10:26–31. God's covenant with Solomon is explicitly conditional: 'if you walk before me.' This conditionality runs through both the Old and New Testaments and directly refutes any teaching that God's people are guaranteed to persevere in faithfulness regardless of their choices. What does the pattern of conditional covenant in Scripture teach us about the genuine freedom and the genuine responsibility of those who are in relationship with God, and why does it matter for how we live day to day?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question carries the heaviest doctrinal weight of the lesson and addresses one of the most practically important issues in contemporary Christian life: whether God's people can fall away, and whether the New Testament teaches unconditional guaranteed perseverance.

Begin with the pattern established in 9:4–5. God's covenant with Solomon is explicitly conditional: 'if you walk before me as David your father walked... then I will establish your royal throne.' And in 9:6–7: 'But if you turn aside... then I will cut off Israel from the land.' This is not the structure of a God who guarantees outcomes regardless of human response. It is the structure of a God who enters genuine covenant relationship in which the human partner's faithfulness is genuinely meaningful.

Move to Hebrews 3:12–14: 'Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.' This is addressed to 'brothers,' people who are already in the family of God. The warning is real. The possibility of an 'evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God' is presented as a genuine danger to people who are currently in Christ, not merely a hypothetical for people who were never genuinely converted.

Move to Hebrews 10:26–31: 'For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.' Again, this is addressed to people who have received 'the knowledge of the truth.' The deliberate, sustained turning away from Christ is presented as a genuine possibility and a genuine danger with genuine eternal consequences.

The teacher should address the teaching sometimes called 'once saved, always saved' or unconditional perseverance directly, warmly, and clearly. This teaching does not appear in Scripture. What does appear is the urgent call to 'hold fast,' to 'take care,' to 'exhort one another every day,' to 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' These exhortations are not addressed to non-Christians to get converted; they are addressed to Christians to remain faithful. The God who established a conditional covenant with Solomon establishes the same conditional structure with His new covenant people, and the New Testament is consistent and clear about it. The positive framing matters enormously. The conditionality is not a source of terror for the faithfully persevering Christian; it is a motivation for genuine, ongoing, grateful, trusting faithfulness. It is the difference between a marriage that endures because both partners genuinely choose to remain faithful each day, and a legal arrangement that cannot be dissolved regardless of how either party behaves. The former is a living relationship. The latter is a contract. God calls us to a living relationship.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The explicit conditionality of God's covenant with Solomon as a pattern running through both Testaments
- Hebrews 3:12–14 as a direct New Testament statement of the possibility of falling away from God
- Hebrews 10:26–31 as a warning to those who have received the knowledge of the truth
- Why the teaching of unconditional guaranteed perseverance ('once saved, always saved') is not taught in Scripture and is contradicted by the warning passages
- The positive framing: conditionality as the structure of a living, genuine relationship rather than a legal mechanism
- The role of Christian community in the daily exhortation that guards against the deceitfulness of sin
- The difference between genuine assurance of God's faithfulness and presumption that our spiritual state is guaranteed

Discussion Prompts

- How does the consistent pattern of 'if' in God's covenant with Solomon, and the same pattern in Hebrews 3 and 10, shape how you understand what it means to be in relationship with God?
- What does Hebrews 3:13 ('exhort one another every day') tell us about the role of the Christian community in helping us remain faithful? How is your congregation functioning in that way for you?
- How do you hold together genuine confidence in God's grace and genuine seriousness about ongoing faithfulness, without sliding either into presumption on one side or fear-based insecurity on the other?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking across all of 1 Kings 9–10, from God's conditional covenant warning to Solomon's staggering wealth to the Queen of Sheba's doxology, name one truth that this passage has pressed most deeply into your heart, and describe one specific action you will take this week because of it.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question of Lesson 6 asks students to identify the one truth from this rich passage that has pressed most deeply into their heart and to commit to one specific action in response. After moving through the conditional covenant warning, Solomon's commercial expansion, the queen of Sheba's doxology, and the conditionality of new covenant perseverance, students will have been moved at different points.

The teacher should model specificity. A named truth: not 'I was reminded that I need to be faithful' but 'I realized that I have been living as though God's continued work in my life is guaranteed regardless of my choices, and the word 'if' in 9:4 stopped me cold.' A named step: not 'I will try to be more faithful' but 'I will ask my small group to hold me accountable to daily prayer this month because Hebrews 3 says I need the daily exhortation of brothers and sisters to prevent the hardening that sin produces.'

Solomon's splendor in chapters 9–10 is genuinely breathtaking. The 666 talents of gold per year (10:14), the great throne of ivory and gold (10:18–20), the drinking vessels all of gold, the fleet returning from Ophir with gold and silver and ivory and apes and peacocks (10:22). It is overwhelming in its abundance. And yet the whole edifice rests on the 'if' of chapter 9, and within one chapter the 'if' will begin to break down.

The lesson's deepest truth is the one Jesus names in Matthew 12:42: something greater than Solomon is here. Solomon's wisdom was borrowed wisdom; Jesus is the wisdom of God. Solomon's kingdom was conditional; Jesus' kingdom is established on a finished work that cannot be undone. Solomon's temple was a magnificent shadow; Jesus is the living reality. Solomon's glory faded; the glory of the risen Christ increases. The application of the whole lesson is to live in glad, trusting, grateful allegiance to the greater King whose kingdom is already established and whose covenant is sealed not with gold but with blood.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The discipline of naming a specific truth and a specific step rather than settling for general impressions
- The contrast between Solomon's conditional and fading glory and the eternal, finished kingdom of Christ
- Jesus as the greater Solomon: true wisdom, unconditional kingship on the basis of finished sacrifice, unfading glory
- The call to daily, glad, trusting faithfulness as the response to a God who has been extravagantly generous
- The role of the Christian community in sustaining the kind of ongoing faithfulness the 'if' requires

Discussion Prompts

- Which single moment in 1 Kings 9–10 most arrested you, and what truth did it press into your heart that you did not fully have before?
- What is the one specific action you are committing to this week in response to this passage, named precisely enough that someone could ask you next Sunday whether you did it?
- How does the knowledge that you belong to a greater King than Solomon, one whose kingdom is already established and whose covenant is already sealed, change the urgency and the gratitude with which you approach daily faithfulness?