

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings

Lesson 6: God's Covenant and Solomon's Splendor -- 1 Kings 9:1-10:29

If you had watched the dedication of the temple, witnessed the cloud of glory filling the house, listened to Solomon's magnificent prayer, and seen the king bless the people with his hands raised toward heaven, you might have thought: this is the summit. Nothing can go wrong now. God has come to dwell with Israel. Solomon has prayed with genuine wisdom and humility. The nation is at rest from its enemies. The most powerful king in the ancient Near East is also, apparently, the most devoted to the Lord. What could possibly unravel this?

God knows. And so, not long after the temple's dedication, He appears to Solomon a second time. The first appearance had been early in the reign, at Gibeon, when God offered Solomon anything he wished and Solomon asked for wisdom (3:5-12). That appearance glowed with promise and possibility. This second appearance in chapter 9 is different in tone. God acknowledges the temple, accepts it, consecrates it for His name. And then He says something that sounds like a warning siren buried inside a blessing: 'If you will walk before me, as David your father walked... then I will establish your royal throne... But if you turn aside from following me... then I will cut off Israel from the land... and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.'

The word 'if' is doing enormous work in that speech. It is the word that keeps blessing from becoming presumption. It is the word that keeps covenant from becoming unconditional entitlement. And Solomon, for the next several chapters, appears to be everything the 'if' hopes for. His wealth is staggering. His trade routes stretch from Ophir to Tarshish. The Queen of Sheba travels from the ends of the known earth specifically to test the wisdom of this king and goes home confessing that even half of it had not been told to her. Solomon in his glory is almost too much to look at directly.

But the 'if' is still there. It is there in chapter 9, and it will still be there in chapter 11, when the narrator shows us what the prosperity has been doing to Solomon's heart while everyone was admiring his throne room. This passage is not a simple celebration of a great man at the height of his powers. It is the story of a man who received everything from God and was asked only to remain faithful, a story that ends with us wondering whether prosperity might be the most dangerous gift God can give. And it is a story that points beyond Solomon to a greater King whose kingdom rests not on conditional treaty but on a finished sacrifice and an empty tomb.

Group Discussion: When you consider the conditional nature of God's covenant with Solomon ('if you walk before me... but if you turn aside'), what does that tell you about how God relates to people He has blessed with significant gifts, responsibilities, or positions of influence?

Personal Reflection: The Queen of Sheba came from the ends of the earth because she had heard of Solomon's wisdom and his relationship to God, and she left overwhelmed by what she

saw. What does the quality of your daily life, your speech, your integrity, your relationships, communicate to the people around you about the God you follow?

Read 1 Kings 9:1-10:29

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?

5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?

10. 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.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Deuteronomy 17:14–20, where God gives the law of the king, warning against multiplying horses, wives, and gold, the exact temptations Solomon will face; 2 Chronicles 9:1–12, the parallel account of the Queen of Sheba with additional details; Matthew 6:19–24, Jesus' teaching on where we store our treasure and how it shapes the orientation of the heart; Matthew 12:42, where Jesus declares that one greater than Solomon is here; Hebrews 3:12–14, where the conditional nature of remaining in Christ is stated with urgent clarity

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