

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 5A

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

We have seen Solomon's religious piety and enthusiasm in building the "house of the LORD" in Chapter 8, and also his great palace. Twenty four years had passed since David, his aging father, had named him as his successor to the throne. Chapters 9 and 10 describe Solomon's large building projects and the strengthening of Israel with all the other nations of the world. It was a period which can be called "The Golden Age of Israel" when the nations of the world acknowledged her glory and paid homage to King Solomon.

God had blessed Solomon with wisdom and wealth. The acquiring of wealth and wisdom has its dangers and temptations. Many who have been blessed by God in their younger and formative years and who have achieved their desires with prayerful help from God have fallen at the hour of testing. They have succumbed to temptations which irreparably destroy their spiritual lives. God knows our human nature and frailty. Is Solomon

an exception? Was he not endowed with godly wisdom that should have prevented his falling away?

In these two chapters, we see Solomon establish himself and bring the nation, Israel, to the height of its glory, splendour and power.

Chapter 9 records God's second appearance to Solomon (vv.1-9) and Solomon's ambitious building projects. Solomon's name became so famous that the queen of Sheba took the trouble to visit him and Israel with a large retinue. Chapter 10 relates this visit (vv. 1-13); and the rest of the chapter explains Solomon's wealth and the construction of his beautiful and impressive throne.

OUTLINE

1. God appears to Solomon again (vv.1-2);
2. The Conditions for Blessings (vv.3-5);
3. The Conditions for Punishment (vv.6-9);
4. Solomon Strengthen Israel (vv.9:10-24);
5. Solomon's Religious Commitment (vv.25-28)

COMMENTARY

God Appears to Solomon

Again 9:1-2

God took the initiative in appearing to Solomon the second time at the same place where He first appeared to him in a dream (3:5). The

words of God to him this time shed some light as to why God spoke to him again. Sometimes when a person has completed a challenging task, he is tempted to take some time off and relax. His commitment and self-discipline in life begin to slacken and he begins to give in to self-indulgence. It was possible that Solomon was in danger of adopting this attitude which would subsequently affect his spiritual life and relationship with God. God knows our weaknesses and so He decided to speak to Solomon a second time.

This would be the second turning point in Solomon's life. The first time round was the LORD meeting a new king who had little confidence in himself. This time the LORD would be meeting a king with much worldly experiences and who had already done much for the LORD. The Word of the LORD would be strict and firm. He was no longer speaking to a child but a grown man. In fact he was addressing an experienced ruler.

The Conditions for Blessings– 9:3-5

God's words of a success kingdom to Solomon can be applied in two ways.

First, God gave him an assurance. He told Solomon that he had heard his prayer and supplication, referring to his lengthy dedicatory prayer at the temple when it was completed. God assured him that He had "hallowed" the temple, which he had built to put His Name there perpetually, and that His eyes and His heart would be there perpetually. We learn that God alone can and have the

power to make a place or a person holy. God revealed that He was pleased with Solomon for building the temple. Solomon had asked God that His "eyes may be open towards this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou has said, 'My name shall be there, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place'" (8:29). God not only answered his prayer, but God granted more than he asked. God said that not only His eyes would be toward the temple, but His heart would be there, and not only day and night, but perpetually!

Second, God promised that He would establish his rule over Israel for ever as He had promised to David, his father – "there shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel" (9:5b). But with this promise, God set forth some conditions. The first condition was: "if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked" (9:4a). God made David the model for all the succeeding kings in walking before God. David had sinned in the Bathsheba affair which resulted in the murder of Uriah. But David confessed to God and repented of his sin. God then forgave him. The injunction to Solomon to "walk before Me" was to live with a continual consciousness of the presence of God and His law. It is to realise that God's watchful eye is constantly overseeing everything we say or do. It is not a life of perfection but one of holiness.

The second condition was: "if thou wilt walk in integrity of heart" (9:4b). The heart is the centre of our personality and the seat of our

decision-making. One of Solomon's proverbs is (23:7): "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he". God reminded Solomon to be absolutely sincere in his heart in his relations with Him. This was of ultimate importance. His motives must be godly. Solomon must beware of an external life of holiness without the internal. He would be surrounded by wealth untold and an opulent lifestyle that would put any king of this world to shame. His "external" religious way of life must reflect a heart that loves the LORD. It must not be for show to please men, especially important and famous men and women.

The third condition was: "if thou wilt walk in uprightness" (9:4c). This was to perform righteous deeds. This came after the injunction to walk in integrity of heart. It is of no use to possess a righteous heart if the life is full of unrighteous deeds. There are many people today who possess a good and sincere heart but they do not have the courage and strength to do the right things at the right time. They fear man rather than God. They may possess all the wisdom and blessings from the LORD and have been endowed with wisdom from God and great knowledge but if he is partial in his dealings and do not uphold justice, he is a failure in the sight of God. Solomon must live a holy and God-pleasing life. He had to walk uprightly.

The fourth condition was: "if thou wilt walk to do according to all that I have commanded thee" and this included the next two, "wilt keep my statutes and my judgments". This

injunction was about obedience. Obedience to God has always been the true test of faith. If we believe in God, and who God is, we will and ought to obey Him. God commanded Solomon to obey Him and to keep all His commandments. This obedience is based upon the perfect Word of God. It is not something subjective or arbitrary that is, it is not up to each and every man to decide how he should walk with God. The blueprint for this is the Bible. No matter how sincere a man is, he can be sincerely wrong if his action is against the Word of God.

The Conditions for Punishment– 9:6-9

The next word "then" announces the consequences of obedience. God firmly promised Solomon that He "will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever." The blessings of the LORD from day one have always been conditional. Human responsibility always enters the equation of blessings even as we remember the sovereignty of God. The nature of a conditional blessing is that there is a flip side to it. When the man sins and disobeys the Word of God, he will be punished. There will not be a situation where nothing happens to him when he fails and wilfully disobeys. He will be punished for his disobedience.

Having given His conditions for the fulfilment of His promises, God solemnly warned Solomon. If Solomon and all his successors would turn from following God and worship and serve other gods instead, God would severely punish Israel.

The punishments would affect the land, the temple and the people. God would “cut off Israel from the land” which means that Israel would be separated from the land which God had given to them (9:7a). In other words, God would send them away from the land.¹ God also said that He would cast the Temple out of His sight. Israel sinned and the Temple was destroyed twice. The first destruction of the Temple happened when the Babylonians invaded and sacked Jerusalem. After 70 years of their captivity in Babylon, the first Jewish returnees went back to their homeland led by Zerubbabel, whose initial task was to rebuild the Temple and the altar and to resume the sacrifices and worship. Then in 70 A.D. the Romans under General Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple again. Since, there has been no Temple built. In fact, the Mosque of Omar sits on the site of the Temple today. The people would be “a proverb and a byword among all people” (9:7c). The nations of the world would speak mockingly and spitefully of Israel. They would shake their heads and remarked: “Why hath the LORD (YAHWEH) done thus unto this land and to this house” (9:8)? They would answer: because they had forsaken the LORD their God. It is not that the LORD God is weak or

¹ Israel sinned by worshipping other gods, and in 722 B.C. the Assyrians invaded and carried away the northern tribes. In 586 B.C. the Babylonians invaded Judah, destroyed the Temple, and carried the Jews to Babylon. And in 70 A.D. when they rejected and crucified Jesus Christ, they were dispersed to the four corners of the earth. Jerusalem and the land of Israel were under Gentile rule until May 15, 1948 when the nation Israel was born again.

incapable of saving them. It is their punishment for their rebellion and apostasy.

God’s word to Solomon was timely. He had given wisdom and wealth to Solomon. Solomon was then a rising star, which shone brighter than all the others. The danger of falling into the temptation of pride, forgetting God and being self-serving was real. God’s desire was for Solomon and Israel and all the succeeding kings to walk in His ways and not be disobedient and not to sin against Him. History tells a sad story. For notwithstanding God’s assurances, promises and warnings, they did sin against Him and had to face the consequences.

Solomon Strengthen Israel– 9:10-24

This section describes how Solomon obtained his resources to build fortress cities, store cities, cities for stables for his horses, chariots and his large army. He also built ships and had a navy.

At the end of the twenty years when Hiram had finished building the Temple and the palace, Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee (9:11). It seemed that Solomon could not honour his commitment to Hiram and instead gave him twenty cities. Hiram went to look at the cities, and he was dissatisfied. He remarked after seeing the cities: “What cities are these which thou has given me, my brother?” And he called them “the land of Cabul” (9:13). “Cabul” means “good-for-nothing or sterile”.

Hiram accused Solomon of meanness as the latter had pretended

to offer him cities which were supposed to be more valuable than they really were. Hiram apparently gave the cities back to Solomon and Solomon improved on them and caused Israelites to dwell there. **2 Chronicles 8:2**, *“That the cities which Hiram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there.”* Despite what Solomon did to him, Hiram still sent Solomon 120 talents of gold. Each talent is about 70.4 pounds. Hiram’s gift, calculated at the present equivalent price for gold, would come to approximately \$50,688,000 (U.S. dollars)! Perhaps this money was used by Solomon to rebuild these 20 cities to make them habitable.

Some Bethelites who visited the ruins of this city saw a large model of this fortress city. The city was strategically located at the entrance of the plain of Jezreel. It showed stables, chariot stalls, barracks, and stone walls. Evidently, it was wise military planning that made Israel a prominent world power in that period. The Pharaoh of Egypt had conquered the Canaanite city of Gezer and given it as a present to his daughter whom Solomon married. Solomon rebuilt Gezer (9:17). After building the house for his wife, Pharaoh’s daughter, Solomon built Millo at Jerusalem. It was a very strong fortification for the defence of the Jerusalem.

Solomon needed a large labour force for all his building projects. He conscripted slave-labour from the Canaanites who were not destroyed by the Israelites when they entered the

Promised land. He conscripted slave-labour from the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But for the children of Israel, he did not conscript them. He appointed the Israelites to be soldiers, officers and princes, captains and rulers of his chariots and his horsemen.

King Solomon was also involved in ship-building. He had a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, a place which was near today’s Elat, on the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqabah. Hiram seized the opportunity for trade and he sent his sailors to sail Solomon’s ships. Being Phoenicians they were experienced sailors. There was international trade. In particular, the ships sailed to Ophir (The Septuagint, the Greek translation Bible rendered Sophir the name for India) which was a source of gold. The ships fetched 420 talents of gold and brought them to King Solomon. This amount of gold was three and half times the amount Hiram gave to Solomon. Needless to say Hiram stood to gain from the gold producing city of Ophir!

Solomon’s Religious Commitment – 9:25-28

Three times annually Solomon appeared before the LORD. He offered burnt offerings and peace offerings unto the LORD. These were the three main festivals in the year. They were the Passover (celebrated in the month of Nisan, between March-April); Pentecost (celebrated after seven complete weeks counting from the second day of the Passover, in the

month of Sivan, May-June); and Tabernacles (in the month of Tishri, September-October). These were the three annual pilgrimage feasts.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The first thing to learn about the LORD our God is that He always gives more than we can think or ask for. Solomon, in the beginning, asked for wisdom. God gave him not only wisdom but wealth and honour. Solomon at the dedicatory prayer for the Temple asked that God put His name and “eyes” in the temple so that whenever people prayed towards it, He would hear them. God answered that He would put His name in the temple perpetually, and not only His eyes but His heart! God is faithful in all His promises. He fulfilled all that He had promised Solomon. Solomon’s wisdom was known throughout the world. He was richer than all the kings of the earth (10:23). All the kings of the earth honour him.

God also teaches us a vital truth. All of Solomon’s wisdom, and wealth and honour would be reduced to nothing if he did not walk in the ways of the LORD and worship and serve only Him. He might have done good works and built beautiful and magnificent structures, but they would all come to nought if he were to disobey God. God’s word of assurance and promise, as well as of warning to him (9:1-9) is applicable to us today both individually and corporately as a church. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 1 Kings 9:1-9;

John 14:14-15; 15:7; James 1:5-7.

TUESDAY: 1 Kings 9:10-23; 1 Timothy 6:6-11.

WEDNESDAY: 1 Kings 9:24-28; Deuteronomy 16:1-17.

THURSDAY: 1 Kings 9:1-28

FRIDAY: 1 Kings 9:1-28.

Discussion Questions

1. What promises did God make in His words to Solomon? What conditions were mentioned in connection with these promises? And what warnings did the LORD give Solomon (9:3-9)?

2. Consider the achievements and activities of Solomon. Which of these do you think were the most pleasing and displeasing to God (9:10-28)?

fame (10:14-29). But what was going on in his heart with respect to his affections for God and his relationship with Him?

3. What do you think in God's view is the most important role and responsibility of a king? How can you apply it to the church?

6. In the light of the Lord Jesus Christ's words in Matthew 6:19-24, what do you think Jesus' views on Solomon's wealth and splendour are? What lesson can we learn?

4. Compare Solomon's action in 10:26 & 28, with the rule stated in Deuteronomy 17:16. Was he guilty or not?

5. Solomon was outwardly at the height of his power, wealth and