

## UNIT 12

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**IF YOU WALK**

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**BEFORE ME**

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**WITH A HEART**

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**OF INTEGRITY**

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# “The Lord Will Fulfill His Promise”

by Josh Hayes

“You either die a hero or live long enough to see yourself become the villain.”

These are the words of Harvey Dent, the Gotham City District Attorney played by Aaron Eckhart in the 2008 blockbuster *The Dark Knight*. Though these words apply within the story to Batman, Commissioner Jim Gordon, and Dent himself, this memorable line also applies to the biblical figure of King Solomon.

## THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

Consider the range of descriptions the biblical authors use to describe this beloved yet notorious king:

- Solomon loved Yahweh, walking according to His statutes like his father David did, but he also offered sacrifices and burnt incense on the high places (1 Kings 3:3).
- Yahweh gave to Solomon a wise and understanding heart to the extent there

has never been anyone like him before or since (3:12).

- Solomon led the people in a festival of worship after the dedication of the temple for fourteen days, and the people went home with happy hearts, rejoicing over the goodness that Yahweh had done for his servant David and for his people Israel (8:65-66).
- King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the world in wealth and wisdom. People all over the world wanted to meet Solomon and hear the wisdom that God had granted him (10:23-24).
- In addition to Pharaoh’s daughter, King Solomon loved many foreign women. These women came from the Canaanite nations that Yahweh had forbidden the Israelites to intermarry with because of the likelihood that they would turn the Israelites’ hearts away to follow other gods. Yet Solomon was deeply attached in love to these women, and when he was old, his many wives indeed turned

his heart away to follow other gods. He was not singularly hearted to Yahweh as his father David had been (11:1-4).

- In summary, Solomon was described as doing what was evil in God's sight; in contrast to David, he did not remain loyal to Yahweh (11:6).

A life of renown, a life of compromise, and at times, a life of outright arrogance and rebellion. That is what we see in Solomon—a mixture that, if we're being honest, we sadly and alarmingly see in ourselves.

As image-bearers, we have the capacity to live as wise stewards who seek God's fame and renown with our talents and resources, and yet, we also act as presumptuous tenants who so often squander the Lord's gifts on luxury and self-aggrandizement. Lest we esteem ourselves too highly, we should see ourselves in the Solomon story—the good, the bad, the ugly, warts and all. We see in Solomon a wise king, a worshiping king (sometimes worshiping the wrong thing), and a failed king.

In short, in Solomon's life, we observe not only a wide range of what it means to be a king but also of what it means to be a human. Solomon lived long enough to see himself act as both the hero and the villain. The king who humbly requested wisdom from the Lord for the good of his people was the same Pharaoh-like despot who resorted to mass forced labor in an effort to build the temple and also his own palace, among other ambitious projects (see 1 Kings 5:13-16; 9:15ff; cf. 12:14b). Because of Solomon's pride and waywardness, God would eventually tear the kingdom away from him (11:11). Out of God's forbearance, and according to His faithful regard for David, He nonetheless promised to preserve a Davidic line in some form (11:12-13).

Solomon confronts us with the reality that is human nature this side of the fall—and the fall affects everyone high and low, princes and paupers, CEOs and suburbanites. Mighty kings like Solomon are not the only ones who descend into the villain role. We do too. We, like Solomon, need someone to play the hero for us, someone to rescue us from our own villainy.

*We, like Solomon, need someone to play  
the hero for us, someone to rescue us  
from our own villainy.*

# While we were still villains, Christ died for us.

## WHERE IS DAVID'S GREATER SON?

All parents should want better for their children than for themselves. The same goes for kings. Sadly, this did not happen for Solomon, or at least not with any real longevity. In the covenant that God made with David, He promised that He would establish the throne of David's descendant forever (see 2 Sam. 7:12-16). And at points during Solomon's reign, it looked as if this promise might already be coming true. Indeed, after the consecration of the temple, God spoke to Solomon saying that if he walked before Him as David walked, doing what God commanded, He would establish Solomon's throne forever. Just as Yahweh had promised to David, the family would never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel (1 King 9:4-5).

As we have noted, however, Solomon would not remain faithful to God throughout his life, and this would result not just in the split of the kingdom within a generation but would set the course for the eventual exile of Israel and Judah. In other words, not only would Solomon become the villain, but so would Israel and Judah as collective nations. So what does this mean for God's promise? What about David's descendant?

Thankfully, something greater than Solomon would come (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31). And this descendant of David would remain the hero, even when being condemned to die like a villain (Isa. 53:12). In reading about the downward trajectory of Solomon, we should do so with a view toward the upward ascension of Jesus, the greater Son of David, King of kings and Servant-King, the Hero who died and rose again.

While we were still villains, Christ died for us.



# SOLOMON, THE WISE KING

**+** **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God is generous in giving wisdom to His people.

**+** **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

1 Kings 1–3

**+** **SETTING:**

The crown is falling on your head. You're about to be the leader of a nation that is finally settling into peace and prosperity. Your father is one of the greatest leaders of all time, but you're young, inexperienced, and naive. Your brothers want your position; your father's generals are nervous about your leadership skill. The expectations over you are higher than they have ever been for anyone in your position before. How will you possibly meet and even exceed those expectations? Welcome to the first days of the reign of King Solomon, son of David.

# DAY 1

## READ:

2 Samuel 12:1-25

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

2 Samuel 12:24-25

## NOTES

Many times, we are prone to believe that our sin and failures will only result in bad things coming back to us from God. We can't believe that anything good would be the result of the evil things we've done. For King David, his sin with Bathsheba may have caused him to believe the worst. Would God abandon and forsake him and bring the kingdom into ruin? Was God so furious and full of righteous anger that David would never see a happy day again in his life? Would the promises God made to David in 2 Samuel 7 be abandoned because David had failed so deeply?

The answer was no. God continued to show steadfast love and faithfulness to David, even despite his sin. God's mercy erupted with overflowing power on the lives of David and Bathsheba. After they had mourned the loss of the child conceived in David's sin, God granted to David and Bathsheba another child. This child represented peace again with God (Solomon's name sounds like the Hebrew word for "peace"). This baby was a reminder that God's anger against David's sin had been lifted.

More deeply, however, was the reality that Solomon himself was loved. Of all of David's children, it is of Solomon that the Scripture says, "The LORD loved him" (2 Sam. 12:24). Before Solomon had done anything good or evil, before he had been made king, been made wise, built the temple, or done anything else, God loved Solomon. The Lord gave him a special name: Jedidiah, meaning "Beloved of the LORD" (2 Sam. 12:25).

Our failures may cause us to think that God's love will run out. But Solomon's birth reminds us of the steadfast love of God for us in Jesus Christ. All who trust in Him will never be put to shame but will instead find, as they confess their sin, the mercy and love of God in His forgiveness. All those who trust Christ are "beloved of the LORD" because of what Jesus has done for us. We can know His love today!

**What response do you have to truth that God never forsakes His children and freely forgives them?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

1 Kings 1–2

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 2:1-4

NOTES

Commands and charges have a way of rattling the rust off our will and engaging us in action. As the British people faced the threat of invasion by the Nazi regime in 1940, it was Winston Churchill who issued the charge to the nation. Following the retreat at Dunkirk, Churchill made an impassioned speech that included his famous call to action for the British people, “We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills.”<sup>1</sup>

King David’s charge to his son Solomon had much of the same passion. As Solomon had been named successor to the throne of Israel by his father, he also needed the guiding charge of his father to help him know how to lead. With a call to action and a clear set of expectations and guidelines, David engaged Solomon’s will to be a faithful man of God. David was motivating Solomon to be strong, be a man, and be obedient for two reasons. First, he wanted Solomon to be successful as the king. He had no desire for his son to be a moral or practical failure in the office he was to take.

Second, David was eager to see the promises of God fulfilled in Solomon. David knew God’s promise that he would always have a son on the throne of Israel (2 Sam. 7:11-16). The promise of God was so important that David had to strongly charge and challenge Solomon to be that man. He only wanted what was good and best for his son.

We too need the commands and charges of God’s Word to move and invoke our will to follow Jesus faithfully. The commands of God are for our good. And when we hear them proclaimed or read them in the Scriptures, we should be aware that these commands are for God’s children, and it will be for our good if we will obey.

**What is your attitude toward God’s charges and commands for your own life? Do you see them as threats or invitations of God to experience His good in your life? Why?**

# DAY 3

## READ:

1 Kings 3:1-9

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 3:4-9

## NOTES

If you could have anything you wanted, anything you dreamed of, anything you ever desired, what would you ask for? God's question to Solomon seems to set up exactly this scenario. Solomon was the recipient of the one opportunity that each one of us dreams of—a supreme, all-powerful being offering us anything we want. What would you ask for?

Too often we imagine God on one of two extremes. On one end of the spectrum, we see God as that supreme "genie in a bottle" who is required to give us just what we want as long as we say the magic words. If He doesn't give us what we want, then perhaps we didn't ask the right way or with enough passion. On the other hand, we can see God as a miserly curmudgeon who doesn't give anyone anything good unless He absolutely has to. God withholds His eternal glory and goodness from humanity because we just don't deserve it.

These opposing views of God are both inadequate and incorrect. God isn't a genie summoned by our every whim and desire. Nor is He a stingy being who can't see it through to part with one ounce of goodness.

With God's offer to Solomon, He showed us His heart. He is eager to give to His people what they don't deserve, what they cannot acquire, and what they cannot achieve by their own power. Ultimately, He gives what is good and best for His beloved children, beyond what they could imagine—that gift is Himself in Christ Jesus to His people for His glory (Eph. 3:20-21). Jesus, the Son of God, is the gift of what we need to forgive our sins, reconcile us to God, and secure our eternal future and joy with Him forever. Just as the Lord opened His heart to Solomon to supply what he needed to lead the kingdom of Israel, so He has opened His heart to us in Christ to give us what we need most—His love!

**How do you view God and His gifts? Why? Have you received His love in Jesus by faith in Him?**

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"The name of Jesus is a never-failing passport to our prayers. In that name a man may draw near to God with boldness, and ask with confidence. God has engaged to hear him. Think of this. Is not this encouragement?"<sup>2</sup>

-J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

# DAY 4

## READ:

Romans 9–11

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Romans 11:33-36

## NOTES



### ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #20: GOD IS OMNISCIENT

Scripture teaches that God is all-knowing. He is the One who has perfect knowledge (Job 37:16), and this knowledge extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. His knowledge is complete, and as He is outside of time, He has known from all eternity whatever will come to pass. In response to God's omniscience, we admit our finite knowledge and trust His decisions as wise and good.

Humanity has a problem. We like to think that our collective insight, knowledge, and even wisdom is enough to make life work in this world. We believe we don't need God. We think we have everything we need here on earth, in our material and mental resources, to experience and provide the good life for ourselves. The problem is when we envision a world without an all-wise, all-knowing, omniscient God, we find ourselves in a world full of chaos, bitterness, violence, and division. So we attempt to make God in our image. He's just a better version of ourselves.

God's revelation of Himself in the Scriptures, however, dismantles any view of God that would envision Him as just a better version of me. Paul sang in worship to the God whose wisdom and knowledge are so far beyond us as to be unfathomable (Rom. 11:33). Paul knew that God is far more than just a smarter version of our best human minds. He is infinitely wise and knowledgeable. God's wisdom and knowledge are all encompassing—everything past, present, and future.

This is good news for us! If God were deficient in His knowledge in any way, then there would be no way we could trust that Jesus's life, death, and resurrection on our behalf would be sufficient to save us from our sin. Yet because of God's complete, perfect, and infinite knowledge, His way of salvation proves true. We can confidently place our faith in Christ, knowing that God knows everything necessary to rescue us from our sin and reconcile us to Himself. God's infinite knowledge and wisdom are sufficient to make sure that all things—even evil things—work together for the good of those who love God (Rom. 8:28).

Like Paul, we can rejoice in the glory and greatness of God! He is infinite in His knowledge and wisdom, and this is for our supreme good!

**Where have you seen the wisdom of God exceed your own? How is that good news for you?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

1 Kings 3:10-28

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 3:10-15

NOTES

Waking up on Christmas morning is usually filled with surprise and delight. As we huddle around the Christmas tree and begin to open presents, we may find there are gifts there that we did not expect. Sometimes we receive a gift far beyond what we imagined would be there.

God exceeded Solomon's request with His own grace. Noting that Solomon did not ask for the worldly things, such as wealth, long life, or the destruction of his rival enemies, God was pleased to give Solomon what he requested and more—things he didn't ask for. God's lavish generosity overflowed to Solomon, and the young king's response to God was to worship and give thanks. Immediately, he recognized God's kindness and mercy and entered the presence of God in worship.

When we consider how God has been gracious and generous to us, what response does that invoke? We might be tempted to think that God has given us very little or has withheld the best gifts from us. Yet in sending Jesus for us, who died in our place and was raised to life again on the third day, God has given us the greatest of all gifts. He has not withheld His love but has given to us the most sacrificial and needed of gifts—His Son!

How do we respond to God's gift of His Son for us? Are we apathetic to the gift of Jesus? Do we sit with dejection and despair because we wanted something else, instead of seeing Jesus as the greatest gift? Or do we respond to God's mercy, love, and kindness in the same way Solomon did, with worship and thankfulness?

Every day for a follower of Jesus should be a day of immense gratitude and worship to God for His overwhelming gift of Christ Jesus for us. Thanks be to God for His abundant gifts (2 Cor. 9:15)!

**What is your response on a daily basis to God's gift of grace to us in Jesus Christ? How can you express true thankfulness and worship for Christ?**

# GROUP

NOTES

**POINT 1: A covenant charge is given to a son** (1 Kings 2:1-4).

At the end of his life, David ordered Solomon to be \_\_\_\_\_, be mature, and keep the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord to be \_\_\_\_\_ as king.

**?** Why were expectations for Solomon so high?

Another reason Solomon was to \_\_\_\_\_ in God's ways was to keep the kingly \_\_\_\_\_ in the family as part of God's \_\_\_\_\_ promises.

**?** Why is it important to walk in God's ways?

**POINT 2: A gracious offer is made to a son** (1 Kings 3:4-9).

In telling Solomon to " \_\_\_\_\_," God was demonstrating His infinite love and \_\_\_\_\_ toward the son of David.

**?** Why is it sometimes difficult to ask God for things?

**ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #20:  
GOD IS OMNISCIENT**

Scripture teaches that God is all-knowing. He is the One who has \_\_\_\_\_ knowledge (Job 37:16), and this knowledge extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. His knowledge is complete, and as He is outside of time, He has known from all eternity whatever will come to pass. In response to God's omniscience, we admit our \_\_\_\_\_ knowledge and \_\_\_\_\_ His decisions as wise and good.

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"We are accustomed to admit freely that God is more powerful than we are, but not that He is wiser than we are. To be sure, we may say that He is; but when it comes to a showdown, we do not want to act on what we say."<sup>3</sup>

-Martin Luther (1483-1546)

**POINT 3: A generous gift is given to a son**  
(1 Kings 3:10-15).

God's \_\_\_\_\_ to Solomon was what he requested and \_\_\_\_\_ —discernment and wisdom, and riches and honor. Long life came with a contingency, but all of it demonstrated God's \_\_\_\_\_ .



**Why do you think God blessed Solomon in this way?**

Solomon responded to God's gift with true worship, understanding the undeserved grace and love given to him. When we experience God's \_\_\_\_\_ , we should respond with \_\_\_\_\_ to God and grace to \_\_\_\_\_ .

## MY RESPONSE

Because we have received God's perfect wisdom in Christ Jesus, we depend on His wisdom from above to live as a testimony to our all-wise God.

- **HEAD:** What are some ways we should seek the wisdom God supplies, instead of merely relying on our own wisdom and insight?
- **HEART:** Where have you seen evidence of the grace of God in your life? How are you worshiping and thanking God for His grace?
- **HANDS:** Where do you need God's wisdom in your life right now? Pray now and ask Him for what you need.

NOTES

### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"He that has done so much for us, as to take us out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and put his gospel into our hearts, may be trusted for the rest."<sup>4</sup>

-Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)