

THE GLORY OF SOLOMON

I Kings 9; 10

The important lesson for all classes is that the glory of Solomon could not have been achieved without David's victories and that it could not have been enjoyed except in a state of peace. The teacher should be familiar with the main points in David's reign.

Doctrinal Points

We cannot become good without passing through temptations, and temptations are conquered by means of truth.

Notes for Parents

The lesson today is about Solomon, the last king to reign over the whole nation, the third and greatest of her kings. The children need to hear often the names Saul, David, and Solomon, so that they will know them well. Like the names Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they are landmarks in the Bible story. Not only are they mentioned again and again in the Bible—in the New as well as in the Old Testament—but the two periods of the patriarchs and the kings are the high points of the Old Testament story, as childhood and the fullness of maturity are the two high points in our lives. Jewish history began with Abraham and led up to Solomon. The life of each one of us begins with the beautiful, innocent, trustful state of infancy and, if we choose wisely, culminates in the peaceful and glorious state which is pictured by Solomon.

For Solomon's reign is the picture of a heavenly or regenerate character, and the name *Solomon* means "peace." Most of us know some fine, upright, wise old person whom everyone in the community admires and praises, to whom everyone may go for advice, sure of a sympathetic hearing and wise judgment. The character of such a person has not been developed overnight. It is the

result of a lifetime of effort to learn and do the Lord's will. Our first impulse is to say, "I wish I could hope to be like that when I am old." We can if we are willing to follow the same course. Saul and David were fighting kings. They overcame the enemies and made the glorious reign of Solomon possible.

In Solomon's reign the fruits of victory were enjoyed. All sorts of treasures were brought to him. The few enemies that remained in the land paid the "tribute of bondservice," and all his own people served him, each in his proper station. Kings and queens, like the queen of Sheba in our lesson, came to hear his wisdom. And in his time the temple was built at Jerusalem, the house of God in the heart and mind. This is the picture of the heavenly character which is the true goal of every human life.



Primary

Mention Solomon's wish and show the children simply what an understanding heart is. Also mention the building of the temple by Solomon. Then tell some of the wonderful things Solomon had, as background for the story of the visit of the queen of Sheba. Develop the idea that Solomon's riches and honors were the result of Solomon's wise choice.

After Saul died, David became king. David was a great warrior and conquered all the enemies of Israel. Just before he died, he had his son Solomon anointed to be king after him. The name *Solomon* means "peace." That is easy to remember because Solomon's reign was a peaceful one. He did not have to fight any enemies.

He built a beautiful temple at Jerusalem in which to place the ark.

He also built many other buildings and cities.

He married the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt.

His friend Hiram king of Tyre furnished him cedar wood from the forests of Lebanon.

Solomon had a dream in which the Lord told him to ask for whatever he most wanted, and Solomon had asked for "a wise and understanding heart." The Lord was pleased with this wish and granted it, and He also gave Solomon riches and glory and a long life.

Solomon had a throne made of ivory overlaid with gold, with a figure of a lion on either side of it, and it had six steps leading up to it with a lion on either side of each step. And Solomon had a fleet of ships, which brought him gold and silver from other countries, and ivory and apes and peacocks.

The wisdom and glory of Solomon became so well known that kings and queens came from other countries to see his treasures and to ask him questions.

About what particular queen do we read in our lesson?

Why did she come to Solomon?

What presents did she bring him?

What did she say after she had talked with him?

Junior

The Juniors will be interested in a brief review of David's relations with Saul and the accomplishments of his reign. Make this an introduction to the greater glory of the peaceful reign of Solomon. Have the children do map study and look up the Bible references.

David was a fighting king. Even while Saul was still living, the people came to trust David rather than Saul. This made Saul so jealous that he tried to kill David. But Saul's son Jonathan loved David and helped him to escape. David had to live in exile for many years, but he never worked against Saul. He gathered a band of fighting men around him and won victories for Israel. Finally Saul and Jonathan were killed in battle and David became king. He was crowned first in Hebron and reigned there seven years over the southern part of the land. One of Saul's sons was made king over the northern tribes, but his reign did not prosper and after he was killed the whole country accepted David, crowning him again at Jerusalem. In all he reigned forty years. He brought the ark to Jerusalem and wanted to build a temple for it, but the Lord told him the temple was to be built by his son; so he placed the ark in a new tabernacle. Under David the Israelites conquered all their enemies and became a leading nation.

Who was the third king of Israel?

David had several sons older than Solomon, but he had chosen Solomon to succeed him on the throne; so before he died, he had Solomon anointed. The name *Solomon* means “peace.” The story of David’s reign is full of wars and fighting, but when Solomon came to the throne, the few enemies within the land who had not been destroyed were paying tribute to the king of Israel, and the kings and queens in all the surrounding nations looked to Israel as the leading nation of the district.

Solomon himself was sought out by all for his glory and wisdom. For in the beginning of his reign he had taken advantage of an opportunity to make a very wise choice. Read I Kings 3:5-15. Chapters 5 and 6 of I Kings tell of the building of the temple at Jerusalem, and chapter 7 tells of other structures which Solomon built. In all his building he received help from a friend of his father David, who is mentioned again in our lesson today.

Who was this friend?

What did he furnish king Solomon?

What did Solomon give Hiram?

Whose daughter was Solomon’s first wife?

What did Solomon do with the enemies who were left in the Holy Land?

Read verses 26-28 of chapter 9. This is the first time we have heard of the Israelites’ having ships.

What queen came to see Solomon?

Sheba was a kingdom in the southwestern corner of the Arabian peninsula along the Red Sea, the district now known as Yemen. In those days it was a long journey away from the land of Canaan.

Why did the queen of Sheba come to Solomon?

What did she bring him?

What did she say after she had seen and talked with him?

Read carefully the description of Solomon’s throne in verses 18 to 20 of chapter 10.

What metal is most prominent in the description of Solomon’s treasures?

What is said about silver?

If you think of all the enemies in the Holy Land as picturing the

selfish and wrong things in us which the Lord wants us to fight, you can see that Solomon's reign is a picture of the peaceful, happy, beautiful state of a person who has overcome his temptations. Such a person has a heart full of love for the Lord and the neighbor and is very wise. Everyone goes to him for advice because he has what Solomon asked for: "a wise and understanding heart." The reason gold is so prominent in the description of Solomon's treasures is because gold is the symbol of love.

Intermediate

The general correspondence of the three kings and the meaning and effect of the possession of a wise and understanding heart are the important subjects for this class.

David reigned forty years in all, and his reign was one of constant fighting. You remember that forty pictures a state of temptation. We have to pass through many temptations and to overcome many selfish feelings and false ideas before we reach a state of peace. The name *Solomon* means "peace." Solomon had no enemies to fight because David had conquered them. Solomon was greater than David, but his greatness was founded on David's victories. We cannot jump from ignorance to wisdom without passing through a long period of study, and we cannot pass from selfishness to unselfishness without overcoming many temptations.

Solomon was David's favorite son and was anointed, by David's command, just before David died. Early in his reign the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and offered to grant him whatever he most wished. Solomon asked for "an understanding heart." The Lord was pleased with the wish and said that because Solomon had asked for this instead of for riches and power for himself, he should have a wise and understanding heart and also riches and honor and long life.

Think what a wise and understanding heart means. It means a heart full of love for other people with wisdom to understand and help them. If a person has such a heart, he is not always thinking

about himself, envying other people, and unhappy because he cannot have everything he wants. And because his dearest wish is to be helpful to the Lord and the neighbor and there are always thousands of ways of doing that—no matter what one's own circumstances are—he can always have more and more of what he most wants. And also he is loved and honored by other people, and people come to him with their problems and troubles.

Do you see how our two chapters for today picture just such a life? Solomon did a great deal of building. First he had built the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem and then he built houses for himself and for his wife, who was the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt. And he rebuilt cities which had been destroyed by earlier enemies. A person who is genuinely desirous to help others builds first the temple of the Lord in his own character and then is constantly helping to build happy lives for other people. In this he is able to make use of all the natural knowledges and powers available, just as Solomon used the beautiful cedar wood and the skilled workmen sent him by Hiram king of Tyre. He has all the rational knowledge and principles he needs, as Solomon had horses and chariots. Every faculty of mind and body is able and willing to serve his purpose, as Solomon had his ministers and his attendants and his cupbearers. His judgment is established on a high and firm throne and he has power to maintain it; this is pictured by the lions on either side of Solomon's throne and on either side of the six steps which led up to it. Solomon's navy—the first and the only successful navy of Israel—pictures his ability to procure ideas and services from many other people. And throughout the description notice how often gold is mentioned and remember that gold corresponds to love.

The familiar story of the visit of the queen of Sheba to Solomon sums up the honor in which he was held. She came from a distant country and brought him very valuable presents, just as the magi did who came to worship the Lord when He was born. She had heard even in her far-off land of the glory and wisdom of Solomon, and when she had seen and talked with him, she said that the half

had not been told her. This story teaches us that even those of great attainments have yet something to learn. The riches and knowledges of the world and the human mind seem very wonderful to us at first, but if we “follow on to know the Lord,” as the prophet Hosea puts it (Hosea 6:3), we finally come to know and to possess the true riches.

Basic Correspondences

- Solomon = an understanding of truth based on humility and trust in the Lord
- forty = temptation
- ivory = rational truth
- ships = knowledges which can convey wisdom to the mind



Senior

Stress the unique power possessed by the person who has attained a heavenly character. It is especially important for young people of this age to see clearly the beauty and value of such an ideal. Even to see it as an ideal will often help them to recognize evil for what it is and to reject it.

The reign of Solomon was the high point in ancient Hebrew history. In Solomon’s time all the alien peoples living in the Holy Land paid tribute to Solomon, and the kings and queens of other nations came to Jerusalem to see his glory and to hear his wisdom.

We have seen that the history of the Jews throughout is a divinely directed and recorded picture of the course of our individual lives as well as of the life of the human race as a whole and inmosty of the Lord’s life on earth. Each of us starts, as this nation started in Abraham, from a small ignorant beginning, with a nature full of self-love and conceit, but with a call to follow the Lord and a promise that, if we obey Him faithfully, He will care for us and bring us eventually to all happiness. We go on as they did with many backslidings, many mistakes and failures, many battles, and some victories. But if we keep trying, looking always to the Lord for help, we shall gradually come into an orderly state of life, over-

come our spiritual enemies—first the external and then the deep inner temptations—and eventually attain a heavenly character, which means that our hearts will finally be full of the Lord’s unselfish love, our minds will delight in His truth, and our outer lives will be rich in service to the Lord and the neighbor.

When we are young, we are able to recognize the beauty of such a character, but the things of the world make such a strong appeal to us that sometimes we are not sure the attainment of goodness is worth the sacrifices involved. The picture of Solomon’s glory is given us in the Word as an answer to this doubt. It took a long time to reach the Solomon stage. It takes any one of us a long time to reach the inner peace and beauty of a heavenly character, but it is the only thing really worth the effort of a lifetime. All the worldly successes we may gain will pass away, but heavenly character may be ours to eternity.

Solomon’s reign was a reign of peace—the name *Solomon* means “peace.” When we have learned to love to do the Lord’s will, we no longer have to struggle against evil in our hearts. We are at peace. We still have weaknesses and limitations, but we have control of them (9:20-21); all our faculties give willing and orderly service to our spiritual life (9:22-23). All the things we have learned about the natural world become serviceable to us and find their proper place in our spiritual thinking (9:11). Our minds range over the whole field of learning and bring back treasures (9:26-28). Solomon’s navy was the first and the only successful navy the nation ever possessed. Some sixty or more years later their navy was lost under King Jehoshaphat (I Kings 22:48). Belief in the Lord and in His providence is the only principle which enables us to see things in their true proportions and relationships. When this belief is weakened, our “navy” is lost.

And Solomon’s glory and wisdom made an impression on all the world around him. In I Kings 4:34 it is said, “And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.” The example we know of these visits is that of the queen of Sheba, described in our chapters

for today. Swedenborg says that Sheba represents “the celestial things of love and faith,” and that the gifts which the queen of Sheba brought, “the camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones” (10:2), represent “the things of wisdom and intelligence in the natural man” (AC 3048). And Solomon’s throne is a picture of the loftiness and power of the judgment which is possible to those in true heavenly states. Such people make a deep impression on others by their wisdom and understanding.

The person who has passed through the states of reformation and regeneration to the point of character represented by Solomon inevitably stands out above his fellows and is aptly described in verses 23 and 24 of chapter 10: “So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.”

Adult

The story is familiar to most adults. The class will probably be interested in the development of some of the details of the correspondence, as one is apt to read such chapters as these with little thought beyond the impressiveness of the story in the letter.

For the purpose of our present lesson only two review points need be especially mentioned. One is that David’s reign was one of almost continuous fighting, resulting in the virtual conquest of all the enemies which had been troubling Israel. The other is that, although David brought the ark to Jerusalem, he was forbidden to build the temple there. We learn from I Kings 5:3 that the reason was that he was in the midst of wars, and I Chronicles 22:8 and 28:3 say that it was because he had been a man of war and had shed blood. The reign of David represents the period when we are engaged in temptation conflicts—forty signifies temptation—and, although these conflicts are the necessary preparation which we ourselves with the help of the Lord make for regeneration, they are not regeneration. Regeneration is the inflow of the Lord’s

unselfish love into the heart from which self-love has been cast out. The building of the temple is the building of regenerate or heavenly character, the house of the Lord in the individual, and this is the work of the inflowing divine love. We recall that when the temple was built, the stones were prepared before they were brought to the site “so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.” (I Kings 6:7) The temple rose silently, just as a regenerate character is built in us by the Lord quietly after we make the necessary preparation. David’s conquests prepared the way, but David could not build the temple. “The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation” (Luke 17:20).

The name *Solomon* means “peace.” Solomon’s reign was one of peace, and it pictures the fully regenerate state, the state of glorification in the Lord and its analogue, regeneration in man. It is the state in which self has been so brought under control that the commandments of the Lord are written on the heart, and the life is one of willing and joyous service to the Lord and the neighbor. Solomon, in his dream at Gibeon (I Kings 3:5-15), had asked for “an understanding heart,” and the Lord had granted his petition and promised him also riches and honor and long life.

Our two chapters for today in their inner meaning describe the spiritual riches and honors which a regenerate person enjoys. They begin, we should note, with a solemn charge to be faithful, and a warning against falling away from the high state attained. Then comes the curious incident of Solomon’s gift of twenty cities in Galilee to Hiram, the king of Tyre, and Hiram’s displeasure with the cities; in spite of which he sends Solomon “six score talents of gold.” Hiram represents the external man. In all Solomon’s building Hiram had furnished him with beautiful cedar from Lebanon and skilled workmen. This pictures the fact that our character is built only by making use of everything that is good and suitable and capable in our natural knowledges and faculties. We recall that the tabernacle was constructed of materials “borrowed” from the Egyptians. In return, the internal man, or rather the Lord through

the internal man, gives the external “twenty cities in the land of Galilee,” all the heavenly doctrines needed for use in external living. Hiram’s distaste for these cities pictures the inherent inability of the external man to understand and appreciate heavenly things. Yet the external man, in the regenerate state, attributes all its goodness to the Lord: this is Hiram’s giving of the six score talents of gold.

Solomon is a builder. The regenerate man is not a destroyer; he restores the cities others have destroyed. And some of the cities he builds are “cities of store” where truths and goods are stored up for use in time of need. Solomon also erected other buildings, his own house, and a house for his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh. But we note that the house he built for her was not in Jerusalem. Pharaoh’s daughter represents the affection for natural knowledges, an essential “helpmeet” but dwelling outside the Holy City.

Chapter 9 ends with the account of Solomon’s navy, the first navy and the only successful one ancient Israel ever possessed. The regenerate man is able to communicate with those outside his own religious borders and to bring back treasures from these contacts.

Chapter 10 begins with the well-known visit of the queen of Sheba to Solomon. Swedenborg says (AC 3048) that Sheba signifies “knowledges of things celestial and spiritual.” The fact that this kingdom was outside the Holy Land indicates that it represents knowledges possessed by the Gentiles. And it is interesting to find that the Sheba who was the father of this nation is identified as the grandson of Eber, who is mentioned in Genesis 10:28. Eber, according to Swedenborg, is the first real person mentioned in the Scriptures, the ancestor from whom the Hebrews took their name, and the founder of the second Ancient Church. It is therefore quite natural that there should have been in that country remains of the knowledges of celestial and spiritual things. The queen of Sheba had treasures to bring to Solomon. What is said of the spices she brought is especially interesting, because spices correspond to “interior truths in the natural which are from the good there” (AC 4748). Swedenborg often speaks of the Gentiles as being in

good more than those of the church. But the queen of Sheba also had questions which only Solomon could answer.

Thinking of Solomon as the fully regenerate man, we understand why there is so much mention of gold in these chapters, since love in the heart is the impelling motive of such a man. We can also understand why silver “was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.” It was not because truth was despised but because it was so plentiful and so easy of attainment. Verse 27 expresses this by saying that the king “made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones.” “And cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale, for abundance,” expresses the wealth of rational thought which is possible to the regenerate man. This is also clearly pictured in Solomon’s throne. A throne always denotes judgment. It was made of ivory overlaid with pure gold, the rational truth of the natural man used as a foundation for the expression of celestial good—the wise and understanding heart. It was reached by an ascent of six steps, the successive victories which lead to such a state, and each step and the throne itself were guarded on either side by a lion, the power of mind and heart which the Lord alone can give. Have we not all recognized the power of clear-sighted judgment possessed by a truly good man? His judgment sits enthroned above the confused tangle of worldly ideas and reasonings. “So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.”

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Apocalypse Explained, n. 514⁷: “Although these are historical facts [concerning Solomon’s navy and the loss of the navy under Jehoshaphat] they contain a spiritual sense as well as the prophecies (Isaiah 23:1, 2, 14 and 60:9); “the ships made in Ezion-geber, at the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom,’ signified knowledges of the natural man, for these contain in themselves, and as it were carry, spiritual wealth, as ships carry worldly wealth; for the ‘Red Sea’ and ‘the land of Edom,’ where Ezion-geber was, were the outmost border of the land of Canaan, and the ‘outmost borders of the land of Canaan’ signify

the outmosts of the church, which are knowledges including knowledges of truth and good. ‘Gold and silver’ (I Kings 10:22) signify the goods and truths of the internal church; ‘ivory, apes, and peacocks,’ signify the truths and goods of the external church; knowledges here meaning such knowledges as the ancients had namely, knowledges of correspondences, of representations, and of influxes, and respecting heaven and hell, which especially included and were serviceable to the knowledges of truth and good of the church. ‘Hiram’ signifies the nations that are out of the church with whom also there are knowledges of good and truth; and that the ‘ships’ under king Jehoshaphat ‘were broken’ signifies the devastation of the church in respect to its truths and goods.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. How long was David’s reign? *forty years*
- P. What was the name of the king after David? *Solomon*
- P. What does the name *Solomon* mean? *peace*
- J. What did Solomon ask of the Lord? *wisdom*
- J. What did the Lord promise him in addition? *riches and honor*
- J. What did Solomon build which David had been forbidden to build? *temple*
- J. What else did Solomon build? *houses for self, wife*
- J. Who furnished him cedar wood and skilled workmen? *Hiram*
- J. What did Solomon give Hiram? *twenty cities*
- J. Who was Solomon’s first wife? *Pharaoh’s daughter*
- J. What did Solomon have which the Israelites had never had before? *navy*
- P. What queen came to visit Solomon and why did she come? *Sheba, to prove him with hard questions*
- P. What did she say about him after she had talked with him? *wiser than reported*
- J. Can you describe Solomon’s throne? *six steps, twelve lions, gold-plated ivory*
- I. Why is gold mentioned so many times in these two chapters? *gold = love of wisdom*
- S. What does Solomon as king represent? *fully regenerate person*