

THE WISEST MAN AND A KING



NOW I want to tell you about another king who ruled over the children of Israel—a king who was made very wise by God.

After he became king he had a dream. In this dream God asked him to make a request for something which he would very much like to have. What would you ask for if you had such an opportunity?

This king could have decided that plenty of money would be the best thing for him, or that he needed a very large army to protect the Israelites against their enemies. He may have thought of these things, but he decided that what he needed most of all was wisdom, so he asked God to make him wise. He wanted to be wise in order to rule over God's people in the right way. God was pleased with this request, so he made this king the wisest of all the kings who ever ruled over the Israelites.

I haven't told you the name of this king who was made so wise, have I? Well, his name was Solomon. He was the son

of David, the shepherd boy who became king of Israel. David ruled over Israel for forty years, and during all that time he had plenty of trouble. Enemies were fighting against Israel during nearly all his reign, so David had a very stormy time. But Solomon didn't have nearly the amount of trouble during the time he was king. When David grew very old and knew that he would not live much longer, he gave orders that his son Solomon should be the king. David wasn't a bit jealous, you see. He knew he was too old to be king any longer, and he wanted the Israelites to have a king who could look after them. So he said that Solomon was to be their ruler. That was an easy way for Solomon to become king, wasn't it? All the time that Solomon was king the enemies of Israel didn't fight against them. Thus Solomon was a king of peace, while David had been a king of war.

God was so pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom instead of asking for gold to make him rich that he gave the king both wisdom and riches. Of course God does not make everybody wise, even if they ask him to do so. That was a very special favor to Solomon, to help him rule wisely over the children of Israel. It was David's dying wish that God would give his son Solomon his blessing—that he would be upright and just in all his dealings. And when Solomon showed that his first thought was to honor God by offering sacrifices to him, God told him he would grant his request for that which he desired.

Yes, God made Solomon rich as well as wise. God also helped him to build a temple. The temple was to take the place of the tabernacle which I told you about in a previous story. Now, the tabernacle was God's house! The tabernacle was God's house because it was there that he gave his blessings to the priests, that the priests might give them to the people. You will remember that the tabernacle was built in a very special way so that it could be taken apart and moved from place to place. When it was built the Israelites were wandering around in the desert, and every time they moved, God's house was moved with them. So that is why it had to be made easy to move.

But now the Israelites were no longer wandering in the wilderness. They were in the Promised Land, and had been there for a long time, but they were still using the tabernacle. King David decided that the Lord should have a more permanent house than that movable tabernacle, and God was very much pleased that David felt this way about it. But God didn't let David build the new house for him. David prepared some of the lumber and stones for it, but God told him that the building of the new house would have to wait until his son Solomon was king.

Now it was this new house that was called the temple. It was built to be very sturdy, and put together so firmly that it wouldn't be possible to move it from place to place in the way the tabernacle had been moved. But it was God's house, and it was used in the same way as the tabernacle. The tabernacle was like a tent, but the temple was like a house.

When you go out hiking or fishing for a few days you sometimes live in a tent, and you take the tent right along with you. In that way you have a place to sleep every night. That is very good. But when you arrive home you don't sleep in the tent any more. Then you have a real house in which to live.

Well, it was something like that with the house of God. The tabernacle was fine while they were moving so often, but now they were in their own land, so and Solomon thought a real house should be built for God. And my, what a wonderful house, or temple, it was! When you read about it in the Bible, you will wonder where Solomon found all the gold that he used in building it. First, there were the stone walls. Next, the inside walls, ceiling beams, the floor joists, all of which were covered over with cedar boards. Then these cedar boards were covered with gold; and the floor boards were covered with gold, too. It was really a very beautiful house. You can imagine how wonderful it was when I tell you that it took more than seven years to build.

This was God's house, and Solomon loved God and wanted him to have the very best of everything. That's the way we should all feel

about God. Let us remember this, so that whatever we do for God we will do the very best we possibly can.

When the temple was completed and the priests first entered it to serve the Lord as they had done in the tabernacle, suddenly it was filled with smoke. I suppose you think it caught on fire, but that was not so. No, God caused that smoke to fill the temple. It was God's way of saying to the priests, and to Solomon, and to all the Israelites, that he was pleased with what had been done for him. The Bible tells us that this smoke was the glory of God. When God shows his glory we know he is pleased.

Then King Solomon offered a very long prayer to God, and in this prayer he said many very wonderful things. One thing he said was that God did not really need this new house at all. He said that all the heavens which are above us are not large enough for God to use as a house, and that we could not expect God to live in a house we might build for him, even though we did use millions and millions and millions of dollars worth of gold to build it.

Solomon was right!

God didn't need that temple at all, but the Israelites needed it. They needed God's blessings. The tabernacle and the temple were the places where God gave his blessings to the people. God had asked Moses to build the tabernacle, and now he was pleased with the temple, because it showed how by and by he will give his blessings to the whole world through a temple made of people, instead of stones and boards and gold.

I'll tell you more about that in another story. Just remember this now—the temple Solomon built for God was just like a beautiful picture of a still more wonderful temple, a temple from which good things will go out to everyone all over the whole wide world.

Solomon was certainly very wise and very rich. The whole nation of Israel became prosperous during the time he was king. He built a navy that sailed on the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. He had merchant vessels also, and these brought gold from Ophir, and they also brought spices and horses and mules, and even monkeys and peacocks from distant places.

A very famous queen of another country, known as the Queen of Sheba, heard of the great wisdom and riches of Solomon, but thought it couldn't possibly be true. So she decided to visit Solomon to find out for herself. You know, that's the way some people are about the Bible. They just can't believe that all the wonderful things in it are really true. But, we know that whatever the Bible says is true!

The Bible tells us about a king who is much more wonderful than Solomon. He is King Jesus. King Jesus is wiser than Solomon, richer than Solomon, more powerful than Solomon. And just like Solomon, but in a much better way, King Jesus will be a King of peace.

And what is even more wonderful, all you boys and girls will be living here when Jesus is King. It's interesting to read about King Solomon, but how much better it will be to enjoy all the good things that King Jesus will do for the people! The Bible tells us this, and we know that the Bible is true.

QUESTIONS

- Who was the king of Israel after David died, and why was he so wise?
- What was Solomon's Temple, and why is it called the house of the Lord?
- Do you know of a King who is wiser and richer than King Solomon?