

David and Solomon

Introduction

Saul, David and Solomon were the first 3 kings of Israel. All 3 of them reigned for 40 years. Samuel anointed Saul as king in the year 1112 BC and he reigned till 1072. David succeeded him and reigned till 1032. Solomon reigned from then till his death in 992 BC.

These 3 kings differed greatly in their characters, achievements and most importantly their relationships with God. In another writing I have compared Saul and David, and in this I will compare David and Solomon.

Firstly we must consider the significance of the fact that each reigned for 40 years. As I have explained in my writings Bible Chronology and The Year of Jubilee, Bible time is divided into major periods each of 2000 years. These are subdivided into 40 jubilees or 50 year periods. The first period of 2000 years ran from Adam to the birth of Abraham. The second 2000 years ran from Abraham to the day Jesus died. The third period ran from then to about this present time.

I believe the 40 year reign of Saul is a picture of the 40 jubilees from Abraham to Jesus when God's primary dealings were with the Jews. The reign of David represents the period of 40 jubilees from then till now which has been described as the church age or the age of grace. The time of Solomon corresponds to the age into which we are now moving. If this is correct, a comparison of David and Solomon will help us understand the purposes of God at this present time, and the changes that are taking place in his dealings with his people and the world.

Before we proceed let us look at some of the differences between Saul and David.

Saul and David

Saul and David were both anointed as kings by the prophet Samuel. God clearly chose them both, and both had great military successes. However Saul's life and that of his 3 sons ended in disaster and rejection by God. David became the father of a dynasty that sat for centuries on the throne of Judah, and was eventually replaced for ever by the eternal throne of his descendant Jesus Christ.

Saul speaks of the old covenant which in the end only brings death. Outwardly he was handsome and strong and capable, but his inward heart was not directed towards God. His disobedience and sin eventually brought about his rejection and death. Even his son Jonathan, beloved friend of David, and valiant warrior in battle, died with him on Mount Gilboa slain in battle by the Philistines. David lamented them both with the words: 'How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!'

God made a completely new start by choosing David, a man after his own heart. He could not accept any descendant of Saul or even any of his tribe. Saul came from the tribe of Benjamin, but God turned to the tribe of Judah to choose the man and his descendants who were to sit on the throne in Jerusalem for centuries to come.

So David reigned for 40 years, and became the most famous king in the world's history. He died peacefully in his bed and passed on his crown to Solomon his son.

Solomon's Dream

How did Solomon differ from his father David?

At the beginning of his reign God appeared to Solomon in a dream. This event, described in 1 Kings chapter 3, is a vital key for understanding what followed. The narrative is as follows:

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.' Solomon answered, '... O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?' The Lord was pleased that Solomon had

asked for this. So God said to him, 'Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for -- both riches and honour -- so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.'

Solomon asked God for just one thing - wisdom. God gave him the wisdom he asked for, but he also promised him riches and honour, peace and long life if he walked in God's ways like David his father. We will now consider each of these gifts in turn.

Long Life

God promised Solomon long life, but with a condition attached. 'And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.' In his later years Solomon appears not to have fulfilled God's condition. As we will see, he followed other gods. He was young when he became king, and he reigned 40 years. We could guess that he died in his sixties.

The old testament puts a lot of emphasis on length of life. We even find it mentioned in the fifth commandment: 'Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.' 'A living dog is better than a dead lion!' (Ecc 9:4). Health and long life are among the greatest blessings anyone may have, if we consider only this life.

The new testament scarcely mentions long life once, but eternal life, or more accurately age-lasting life, is mentioned many times. Natural health and long life in the old covenant are pictures of spiritual life and health in the new.

In the natural realm, life and health are the foundations of all other blessings. You cannot enjoy food, drink, possessions, entertainments or anything else after you die, or if your body is wracked with pain. So it is also in the spiritual realm. Unless you have spiritual life and health you cannot hope for further spiritual blessings. At the start of his ministry Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'You must be born again.' We will never have wisdom and riches in the spirit unless we first have life.

Wisdom

Why did Solomon ask God for wisdom? He had come to the throne as the young son of a great father, and he felt a big responsibility. His older brother Adonijah had already tried to take his throne from him. He deeply wanted to rule the people of God rightly. No doubt he had great respect for the many virtues of his father. David had faith and great courage in battle and generosity and forgiveness even for his enemies. He was a poet also and a musician. Above all he had a deep love for God. However it appears he lacked wisdom, and probably Solomon had seen this and its consequences.

Two stories will illustrate this difference between father and son.

David's friend Jonathan had a crippled son named Mephibosheth, who was of course the grandson of Saul. David ignored the standard practice of those times of slaughtering every male member of a rival royal dynasty. Instead he adopted Mephibosheth as his own son, to eat with him at his table for the rest of his life. What grace and mercy to the undeserving! How beautifully we see the loving heart of God for the unlovely manifested in David.

The time came when one of David's own sons, Absalom, rebelled against him, and David had to flee from Jerusalem. Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, joined David in exile, but Mephibosheth remained behind in the palace. When David asked where Mephibosheth was, Ziba replied, 'He is staying in Jerusalem, because he thinks, "Today the house of Israel will give me back my grandfather's kingdom."' David replied to Ziba, 'All that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.'

In time Absalom was killed and David returned with Ziba to Jerusalem. Mephibosheth came out to meet them. David's first question was, 'Why didn't you go with me, Mephibosheth?' Mephibosheth replied that Ziba had refused to help him saddle his donkey, and had then slandered him to David. All the time he had been faithful to David!

David then told them both to divide Mephibosheth's property between them.

I puzzled about this story, and reread all the details and tried to decide which of the two men was telling the truth. Then a much more serious problem struck me. David himself couldn't make up his mind either! He did not have wisdom.

The result was a serious injustice. If Mephibosheth was telling the truth, he was deprived of half his property for no reason, and Ziba was richly rewarded for his lies. If Ziba was telling the truth, then Mephibosheth was guilty of serious treachery and ingratitude to a man who had shown him nothing but undeserved kindness. He did very well only to lose half his property. Added to this David was going back on his promise to Ziba.

Solomon, soon after his meeting with God, faced a far more difficult problem. Two prostitutes gave birth in the same house. One baby was alive and healthy and the other died. Each claimed the living baby as her own, and there were no witnesses. Solomon had wisdom from God. 'Bring me a sword. Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other,' he said. The real mother said, 'Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!'. The other woman said, 'Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!' The real mother soon got her baby back!

Solomon, filled with wisdom from God, solved an almost impossible problem. David failed in a much easier situation. Solomon's justice reflects the justice of God, based on infinite wisdom. David's reflects the feeble efforts of man's unaided resources.

This event at the beginning of Solomon's reign was spectacular, and caused his people to stand in awe of him. However it was only a foretaste of the wisdom that was later to be his. It was like a flash of inspiration or a gift of the Spirit to meet an immediate need. Later he had wisdom on every subject relevant to his day. According to the record: 'God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore' (1 Kings 4:29). His wisdom was so great that people came from far and wide to hear it.

Jesus himself 'grew in wisdom and stature', rather than experiencing a sudden total transformation. At the age of 12 he was wise enough to be able to discuss the law with those who were many years his seniors. At the age of 30 that wisdom had matured to perfection, and he was ready for the work his Father had called him to do.

The church age that is now passing has not been an age of wisdom. Many of the true saints of God have been members of corrupt churches. They have been fed more on fable than on truth. They have battled and prayed and wept like David, and shed their blood for love of their Saviour. Generally, however, they have lacked wisdom.

Jesus told his disciples, 'The children of this age are wiser in their generation than the children of light.' That age was not to be an age of wisdom for the people of God.

Paul himself had remarkable wisdom from God. He received an understanding of the Hebrew scriptures that, seen against the background of the time, was quite incredible. Children eat their food in total ignorance of how it has reached the table. They know nothing of their parents' labours in earning the money, buying the food, cooking it and putting it before them. They take it all for granted. So most people read the new testament blind as to how it came to be there. God had enlightened Paul's mind with heavenly wisdom that he expressed in the letters he wrote. He spoke of this wisdom in Eph 3: 9,10: 'that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his purpose of the ages which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Paul himself experienced this wisdom, but the church did not continue in it, but mostly fell away into blindness, ignorance and folly. His vision of a church displaying the manifold wisdom of God was delayed in its fulfilment. The David age of conflict had to come first.

The world has certainly moved into an age where knowledge has increased beyond all imagination. In many ways also people are wiser than they were. By comparison the people of God often look - and are - foolish.

That is now to end. We have come to the time when, like Solomon, we can ask God for wisdom, and he will give it to us. Jesus was wise with the wisdom of God. He wants to impart his wisdom to us.

What is wisdom and how does Jesus impart it? Wisdom is Jesus, and he imparts it by imparting himself.

Peace

Peace was not named among the blessings that God promised Solomon in his dream. However it was the meaning of his name. Solomon - 'Shlomo' in Hebrew like the word Shalom - means peace, and it was clearly a feature of his reign.

David had definitely been a man of war. At the end of his life David said to Solomon 'But this word of the LORD came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign.'

The prophets Isaiah and Micah both saw a day when people would 'beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more.'

The writer to the Hebrews saw the same reality as the fulfilment of the Sabbath. He wrote, 'There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.' A day is with the Lord as a thousand years. 6 days or 6000 years of Bible time are now complete, and we are now entering the seventh day.

I believe there will be a day when wars will cease and the nations of the world live at peace with each other. But more importantly there will be a day when the people of God enter into their sabbath rest and, ceasing from their own works, live and rest in the power of God.

I have written separately on this subject under the title Sabbath Rest.

Riches

Prosperity and wealth are the natural consequence of wisdom and peace. Wisdom is the foundation of prosperity, just as folly is the foundation of poverty. Without peace, however, there is not much prosperity. Wars bring poverty to most people.

Solomon ruled over a large area, and many of the surrounding countries paid tribute to him. He became massively wealthy. For Solomon, this wealth meant a magnificent palace, large numbers of servants, quantities of livestock, food and drink in abundance, and large amounts of gold, silver and precious stones. What is the spiritual equivalent of this natural wealth?

His palace. Firstly then let us think about Solomon's palace or house as the Hebrew language calls it. It was a huge structure measuring 100 cubits (50 yards) by 50 cubits (25 yards) and was 30 cubits (45 ft) high. Altogether it took 13 years to build. What is a house? Perhaps we should ask the homeless. It's a place where you live, which is yours. It gives you security. It gives you protection from the weather. It's a place where you can keep all your possessions safely. Often a house is the clearest indicator of someone's prosperity.

Jesus told his disciples that he was going to prepare a place (an abode) for them. Later he told them that they must abide in him. He is that place. He is the house. He is where we must live. He is our protection from the storms. Our spiritual riches are safe only in him. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is the great palace where we can live in prosperity and abundance.

His servants. Solomon also had large numbers of servants. What is their meaning for us? In Hebrews 1:14 we read, 'Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?' From Genesis to Revelation the Bible is full of the messages and activities of angels. Yet most of us know very little about them. Sometimes they were the mediators of revelations as with Daniel and John. Sometimes they assisted the Israelites in battle. Sometimes they provided help in time of need. They ministered to Jesus both in the wilderness after his temptation and in Gethsemane. They fed Elijah in his hour of need. Paul speaks of a future time when the people of God will judge angels. Perhaps they will be the spiritual equivalent of Solomon's multitude of human servants.

His animals. Besides servants Solomon had large numbers of animals, especially horses. Animals can do excellent work, but their big difference from humans (as seen in scripture) is that they lack the power of thought. Psalm 32:9 says, 'Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding.' Solomon by contrast, as we have seen, was full of wisdom and had an understanding heart. I believe there will be a place in God's purposes for those who serve God with great strength, but remain without spiritual wisdom and understanding.

His provisions. Food and drink symbolise the word and spirit of God. When God speaks, and we hear his voice, we are fed. His word is the food that nourishes us and makes us strong. His spirit is the wine that makes us happy. We have certainly tasted the good word of God and drunk the wine of his spirit, but the coming feast will be a banquet that makes the previous best seem like plain bread and water.

His treasures. Solomon's treasuries were full of gold, silver and precious stones. Both the Bible and common speech associate riches with wisdom. 'How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!' (Prov 16:16). As quoted above: 'in Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col 2:3). We have seen already that wisdom was the gift Solomon asked from God, and it was this gift that led to all the others.

Humanly speaking, wisdom and knowledge lead to wealth. Knowledge of business, law, medicine or computers can make people rich. Wealth is then the key to other possessions. The gold, silver and precious stones of the spiritual world are wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Wisdom is precious and beautiful and also brings with it all other spiritual blessings.

Till now I believe we have lived in poverty. We have only tasted a small portion of the immense wealth that our Father is waiting to give us.

Wealth lies in the combined (spiritual) possessions of the people of God.

When God brings the body of Christ together and into a maturity and fullness beyond our present imagination, we will then have Solomon's wealth.

That coming together will be the building of Solomon's temple.

Solomon's Temple

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Abide in me, and I in you.' Yes, both are simultaneously true. We live in Jesus, and Jesus lives in us. God is our dwelling place. We are his dwelling place. So Solomon's house pictures us living in God. The temple pictures God living in us. These great truths contradict each other to the natural mind, but can harmonise in the realm of spirit, which is not subject to the laws of time and space.

David had wanted to build a temple, but, because he was a man of war and bloodshed, God did not allow him to fulfil his ambition. He was permitted to make preparations for the temple, but the task of actually building it fell to Solomon.

This temple will be the true body of Christ. It is not the visible church we have seen and experienced in the past and till now. On the contrary, most of that has been the counterpart of Babel or Babylon in the Bible.

God plans to bring his people together. By this I do not mean vast gatherings of Christians in huge buildings or in the open air. Nor do I mean one super-denomination of all charismatic or evangelical or Bible-believing people. These things may begin with good motives, but they end in yet another reconstruction of the tower of Babel. God's true temple will be and is a spiritual bringing together of the body of Christ.

Where should the people of God meet together? Paul names the one and only acceptable place in his letter to the Thessalonians. We should assemble to or at HIM (2 Thes 2:1). Who is HE? Who else, but Jesus? Where two or three are in truth and reality assembled in his name, he is at the centre. This is the unity that God has planned for his people.

The actual construction of the temple took 7 years, but the preparation of the materials began long before that. The stones were hewn and shaped in the quarries before they were assembled at the temple site. 'In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built' (1 Kings 6: 7). So the living stones that are to comprise the spiritual temple are also being shaped with hammers and chisels away from the site of the true temple where they will finally be assembled. That is what is happening now. The glory of God is not visible in those quarries, but when those stones are silently assembled to make God's spiritual temple, the manifestation of his glory will be beyond anything we can conceive or imagine.

When eventually the temple was complete, Solomon summoned the people of Israel for its dedication (1 Kings 8). What time did God choose for that great occasion? It had to be the Festival of Tabernacles. When else would we expect? That festival is the last of the seven that God gave to his people through Moses, and it represents the climax and fulfilment of all his purposes. In all its symbolism it corresponds perfectly to the reign of Solomon.

We read that 'the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.' (1 Kings 8: 11).

Solomon's reign was the climax of Israel's ancient history. Never again while they remained a nation was there such a time of national power and glory. And this moment when the glory of God filled the temple was the great climax of Solomon's reign! What an occasion it was! Who would ever forget it? Yet wonderful as it was it was still no more than a picture of the glory of the spiritual temple that is now to be built.

The day of Pentecost was also a day that no one present would ever forget. The glory of God descended on the assembled company, and the power of God was released in a way that had never before been seen. Many on that day were transformed for life and for eternity. Marvellous and indescribable though it was, that day was only a foretaste of much greater glory to come. It was only the first harvest, and it only lasted one day. The coming festival of Tabernacles will be a much greater harvest of fruit that has taken the whole summer to ripen. It will not just be a day, but a full week of celebration.

There is a beautiful Hebrew prayer and hymn: 'May the house of the temple be built speedily, in our days, and grant us our portion in your law.' We can sing it now with far greater understanding than its inspired writer!

The Queen of Sheba

Solomon's reign is famous for the visit of the Queen of Sheba, described in 1 Kings 10. His fame had spread to her country, but she thought it was all exaggerated. She came to test him with difficult questions, and he answered everything she asked. She saw his palace and his servants and all his wealth, and, translating almost literally, it took her breath away. She said, 'The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard.'

Later in the same chapter we read that 'the whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.'

Zechariah's last prophecy (14: 16), whether he himself knew it or not, perfectly accords with these events. 'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the festival of tabernacles.'

Isaiah and Micah predict even more definitely the coming of the nations to the house of God in Jerusalem: 'In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.'

By contrast Jesus told his disciples to 'go into all the world and preach the good news to the whole creation.'

Why did Jesus not tell his disciples to wait in Jerusalem till the nations (or heathen) came to them? Why did he tell them to go out to the nations?

He had to tell them to go out to the nations because as yet there was no Solomon and no temple for the nations to come to. The David age was a time for the saints to go out. The Solomon age will be a time for the heathen to come in.

Words are inadequate to describe the glories of the temple that God is going to build. And even if they could describe it, like the Queen of Sheba, our hearts would still respond in unbelief. Nevertheless the time will come when like her we will say, 'I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me.'

Transition

I believe that we are in a time of transition from David's age to Solomon's.

Transition can be a time of both difficulty and uncertainty. By nature we cling to the past and fear the unknown future. For Samuel it was a time of great sorrow when God rejected Saul. However God said to him, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.' Samuel had to move on with God.

David also lamented the passing of Saul in beautiful poetry (2 Sam 1: 17-27). Saul was the anointed and chosen of God, and he had done great things for his people. His death with his 3 sons fighting the Philistines was a tragedy.

Paul, once also called Saul, experienced the transition from the age of law to the age of grace. This involved the temporary rejection of his people the Jews. Knowingly or unknowingly no doubt this is one reason why he changed his name from the Hebrew Saul to the Latin Paul. This symbolised both the end of an age and the rejection of a people.

In Romans 9: 2, 3 he pours out his heart: 'I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.' But God had appointed him apostle to the gentiles and he had to move on with God. He could not live in God's past purposes.

David was God's new man, and he served God and loved him with all his heart. He had a wonderful reign over Israel, but he was not immortal, at least on this earth. His death was likewise a time of sorrow. His people loved him deeply, and he had accomplished wonderful things for them. They did not want him to die. When he grew old and weak, to postpone the inevitable, they searched the land for a beautiful young woman to keep him warm! They found Abishag the Shunammite to lie with him in his bed. The scripture records that 'he did not know her (sleep with her)'. Metaphorically speaking their efforts were fruitless. They could not keep him alive. Further more, according to the Hebrew scholar Gesenius, the name Abishag means 'father of error'. If we cling to the past works of God, and try to keep alive the things that are passing away, we too will be 'fathers of error'.

Peter said that, 'David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep.' We also must serve our generation - not Saul's, nor David's nor that of our fathers, but the Solomon generation into which we are now moving. In God the future is always better than the past.

The World

We have considered mainly the spiritual significance of king Solomon and his reign. We will now survey their counterparts in the natural order.

We live at a time when, in many though not all areas of life, wisdom and knowledge have increased far beyond the imagination of previous generations. Science and technology have made spectacular progress. Probably they have advanced more in the last 50 years than in the whole of previous human history.

However this wisdom and knowledge is far from universal. Many human problems are completely unsolved, and in many areas, despite huge progress, people are worse off than before. Also only a minority of the world's billions enjoys the benefits of this vast progress.

Peace also has partially come to the world. The greater powers have been free from war for 50 years. This has never happened before in recorded history. Again sadly this is far from true in many other parts of the world. Terrible wars continue particularly in Africa and Asia, and cause severe suffering to many who already live in poverty.

Prosperity, undreamt of in the past, has come to many in the western world. Large numbers of people live better life styles than kings did in the past. Again it is only the minority in the world that have these blessings. Multitudes world-wide still live in extreme poverty, not knowing when they will eat their next meal.

Even the last blessing promised to Solomon is also having its partial fulfilment. Many in the west are blessed with long life, and are living up to 30 years longer than previous generations. In other parts of the world the average lifespan is probably shorter than in the past. Many do not survive childhood, and people of 50 feel and look old.

In all this we see the beginning and the potential, but far from the completed picture. We look forward to the day foreseen by the prophet Habakkuk when, 'the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.'

Solomon's Downfall

For the sake of completeness we will briefly mention Solomon's downfall.

Revelation chapter 20 speaks of Satan being bound for 1000 years and then set free for a short time. Corresponding to this in 1 Kings 5:4 Solomon says: 'But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster.' In Hebrew this reads as 'there is no satan.' Later in 1 Kings 11 after Solomon turned away from the Lord to worship other gods, we read 'the LORD raised up against Solomon an adversary' - again in Hebrew a satan. For Solomon, Satan was bound and then set free.

It appears that Solomon served the Lord for 20 years before he fell away. 20 jubilees of 50 years is 1000 years, and so the time period also corresponds.

We read in 1 Kings 9:10 that after 20 years king Solomon gave away 20 towns of Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre. Chapter 28 of Ezekiel describes the downfall of the prince of Tyre. From the language of that chapter many Bible students see the prince of Tyre as a direct type of Satan himself. Solomon was giving ground to Satan!

1 Kings 11: 1-3 describes Solomon's downfall: 'King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter -- Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from peoples about which the LORD had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray.'

Solomon placed political expediency before obedience to God. He made alliances with surrounding countries, and took wives from their royal families. Particularly he took the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh as his wife.

The immediate result was spiritual: 'his wives led him astray.'

The long term fruits of Solomon's sins were political as well as spiritual. A generation later, 'in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem, and carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made.' (1 Kings 14:25, 26). Under Saul and David Israel had become a powerful independent country. All this was lost and for several hundred years Israel became a vassal state of Egypt. Apart from a brief period of freedom under the Maccabees, Israel then remained subject to one foreign power after another till May 14th 1948!

Conclusion

The main theme of this writing has been the coming manifestation of the glory of God in his people. With varying degrees of clarity and detail the following 7 things all bear independent witness to it:

- Solomon's reign
- The Sabbath day
- The Manifestation of the sons of God (Rom 8)
- The thousand years of Revelation chapter 20
- The prophecies of Isaiah - especially ch 2: 2-4, repeated in Micah 4:1-3
- The prophecy of Zechariah (14: 16)
- Progress in the modern world

How many witnesses do we need for proof? 'At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses, shall the matter be established.' The Bible says this 5 times (with small variations of wording).

Let us then lift up our hearts and praise God, and rejoice in the wonderful things that lie ahead. In Peter's words: 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade -- kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.'

Let us lay aside our unbelief and let us trust God that he will accomplish the great and wonderful things that he has promised.

Let us be willing to move on with God. Let us cease to lament the passing of Saul. Let us not seek to keep David alive beyond his allotted time. Rather, like the apostle Paul, let us forget what is behind and, straining towards what is ahead, press on towards the goal to win the prize of the upward calling of God in Jesus Christ.