

1 Chronicles 28:1-10 and 20; 29; 2 Chronicles 1:1-12; 1 Kings 3:16-28

Aim of Lesson

To show David's concern that Solomon should find favour in the sight of God, and to show how he encouraged him. To show how God rewarded Solomon for having chosen wisdom.

Background study

Joshua 1:6-9; 1 Kings 3; Proverbs 2:1-11; 3:1-7; 8:11-21.

Suggested outline of lesson

The essence of this lesson is contained in the exhortations and prayers of David and the words of God to Solomon, and it is important to build these profound abstractions into a pictorial narration which will enliven the lesson and help the children to assimilate the teaching. Give a vivid description of the assemblies, and contrast the aged king with the upright young prince. Compare the solemnity of the handing over of the temple plans, and the coronation, with the spontaneous expressions of thanksgiving. Describe the spectacular presentation of the vast quantities of treasure, and the impact of God's communication with Solomon in the stillness of the night. Begin by drawing on the children's knowledge of the previous lessons about David, questioning them about his life and leading on to whether or not they think David was a good king. Discuss the attributes that had proved him to be so - faithfulness, courage and obedience to God. Point out that he was now an old man, whose chief concern, as he came towards the end of his life, was that the son who was to succeed him should continue to lead God's people in the right way, and complete the project so dear to his heart. Explain that of all David's nineteen sons God had already chosen Solomon, one of the youngest, to be the heir. Bring out the close relationship between father and son, and the natural inclination of any loving father to advise his son about his future.

It was time for David to declare publicly that God had chosen Solomon to be the next king and to build the temple. He therefore assembled all the influential men in the land, including all his sons, so that there would be no doubt or controversy about his wishes and the will of God. The crowd fell silent as the king rose slowly to his feet and addressed them. He told them all that was in his heart, and exhorted them to remain faithful to God and loyal to the chosen king. Then he charged Solomon to serve God wholeheartedly and courageously (his words are reminiscent of Moses' counsel to Joshua). He handed over the plans and instructions for the temple, the building of which was to be Solomon's first task. David stressed that it was God himself who had drawn up the plans, and he assured his son that God would continue to guide the work.

The old king reminded the people that he had contributed a great deal of his own treasure for the house of the Lord, and he encouraged the people to do the same. Their response was both enthusiastic and generous. The people then expressed their feelings in songs of rejoicing and David led the assembly in prayers of gratitude and worship. Throughout his life David had been constantly in touch with God, in bad times and good, and as a result he was able to speak to Solomon and the people with the conviction and confidence born of his experience of God's providence. In his psalms David referred constantly to his total trust in God and his dependence upon him.

It is interesting that the coronation of Solomon took place in the presence of David and not after his death, when Solomon was probably about twenty years old.

After the death of his father, Solomon was very aware of his own youth and inexperience and of the enormity of the responsibility that was now his. He knew that if he were to be as great a king as his father he must dedicate his life to God as his father had done. He began well by holding a service of thanksgiving to God and called together a large assembly of his people, not at Jerusalem where the coronation had taken place but at Gibeon where the tabernacle had remained. There Solomon offered sacrifices and performed a public act of worship. This was pleasing to God, who longs for men to seek him and serve him.

That night God spoke to Solomon in a vision and asked Solomon what he desired from him. Solomon was very conscious of his father's greatness, the daunting task that had been placed upon his young shoulders, and the special theocratic nature of this kingdom, and he knew that his greatest need was for a wise and understanding heart. Solomon's request pleased God. There were so many things he might have asked for. Ask the children for some suggestions and consider the possible results. God mentioned several alternatives - riches, wealth, honour, victory over his enemies and long life for himself - and because Solomon had humbled himself and sought God's help for the sake of the nation, he promised the other blessings also, the last of which was conditional upon his continuing to live aright. Solomon was greatly encouraged by this experience, and returned to Jerusalem and worshipped again, this time before the ark of God.

Explain how necessary it was for a king of Israel to be wise, since he had very real responsibility for making decisions for God's people, ensuring that laws were carried out and acting as a judge in difficult situations. In relating the emotive story of the two women, show how Solomon's wisdom was soon put to the test. The case was presented in such a way that it would have been impossible, on the evidence given, to decide to whom the baby belonged. The problem had been brought to Solomon because the other counsellors had been unable to make a judgement. Make use of the scholars' reaction to Solomon's order to explain the reaction of the real mother; the expression on her face and movement of her hands betrayed her concern and horror. Do make it clear to the class that it was never Solomon's intention to harm the child, but that the threat was deliberately harsh in order that the effect could be seen upon the two women. The king's counsellors were overawed by Solomon's immediate perception of what was needed to reveal the women's true feelings. They recognized that this was no human judgement, but God-given wisdom. Thus Solomon was blessed by God, highly esteemed by the people and became a very great king.

Relevance to the children's lives

In a prayer to God, Solomon asked for something special. When we pray, what things do we ask God for? (Toys, fine weather, ability to pass exams, new clothes, etc.) Are there things that we could ask God for which would please him more, and that would be of more value to us? What might those things be?

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, the God of David, the God of Solomon, and our God, please forgive us when we ask you for the wrong things, and guide us to know what we should ask for. We can see that only you know what is best for us. Amen.

Memory verse

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously ... and it will be given him" (James 1:5).