

# A Letter to My Son

JLSParaphrase  
by Jerry L Simms

## Chapter 2

### The Reign of Solomon

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Gregory,

Although there is nothing in Scripture that directly discusses Solomon's childhood, there is plenty that deals with his adulthood and reign. Follow along as we get a glimpse of what Solomon experienced. Be sure to notice the times he did things right as well as the times when he made mistakes. Hopefully you will learn from both.

## David requires Abishag.

1 Kings 1:1-4

Hi Zabud. I'm sure you've heard about the search for a nurse for my father, but have you met her yet? Her name is Abishag. She is a beautiful young woman, and she is already caring for my dad. I feel sorry for him because he is so old he cannot stay warm at night. Abishag sleeps with him to keep him warm, but they don't have sexual contact. She is not only beautiful on the outside, but she is a beautiful person on the inside. I am convinced that she really cares about his welfare. I don't understand why he didn't just have one of his wives or concubines sleep with him for warmth, but I guess he knows what he is doing. I know he is in his late sixties, but I am still amazed that he has aged so much over the past few years. Because of her relationship with my dad she will probably never be given in marriage to anyone. I really feel sorry for her in one sense: she will never know the love of a husband or hold children of her own. Too bad too, because she would have made a good wife—maybe even a good one for me!

## David is old, and Solomon is made king.

1 Chron. 23:1, 1 Kings 1:5-53

Hi Zabud! Things don't look good around the palace these days. Dad seems to be totally oblivious about the affairs of the kingdom, and the people of Israel are extremely anxious about their future. They are looking for a new king who will rule the kingdom better. My mom was reminding me just today that I am going to be king someday, but we don't have any idea when dad will decide to step down and put me on the throne. I do have some serious concerns about my half-brother Adonijah though. He has been acting strangely the past few months. I hope he doesn't do something stupid like Absalom did and start an insurrection to place himself on the throne instead of me. I know him all too well, and he just might try something so bold. I still remember the time when Absalom attempted the same kind of stunt many years ago. The big problem with an insurrection is that once it gets started it is awfully hard to stop. My mom is planning to talk with my father soon to see if there is any way she can persuade him to step down and put me on the throne. I know it will be hard for him to let someone else take control of the kingdom after all these years, but his usefulness has long since passed. He's not even aware of important matters of the kingdom nor does he care about all that is going on in and around Israel. He is just too old. I hope he doesn't wait too long to decide.

## Later that day:

Oh Zabud, I'm glad you came along, because I really needed to talk with someone, and you are just the right person. A lot has happened since we talked this morning. Joab has decided to join Adonijah in order to help make him king in my place. Joab always has been a man of action, and I guess he cannot bear to see the kingdom fall apart through my dad's apathy. Even Ahithophel, dad's trusted counselor for all these years, has joined with Joab in support of Adonijah's bid for the throne. Adonijah has gathered two hundred men of Israel to meet with him so they can plan their strategy for this campaign. These people don't really understand what they are getting into, but Adonijah knows full well. As we speak, your father, Nathan, and my mom are trying to persuade my dad to let me take my place on the throne before Adonijah succeeds. Hopefully they will be able to convince him that I need to be crowned today, because

with all that Adonijah is doing, tomorrow may be too late. Besides, if Adonijah succeeds in becoming king he might have all of his brothers put to death, including me. He may not, but I have good reason to be concerned. Will you stay with me today while I wait to find out what is going to happen? Oh, thanks a lot. You are such a good friend. I do appreciate your help and concern, and your being here is a real encouragement.

Within the hour:

Zabud, did you hear? Dad has actually told mom and your father to make me king today. Would you like to come along and see the festivities? Great. I am looking forward to having you there. To be quite frank, I'm a little scared about being in front of all those people. I won't be considered a man for ten more years, and since I am so young I'm not sure how the people of Israel will receive me. Please pray that Jehovah will help me during the inauguration. Thanks. We'll talk more after it is all over. Come to my room tonight, and we'll talk about all that transpires.

Late That evening:

Well, what did you think of all the proceedings? The people seemed pleased when your dad led me around the city in the King's clothes, wearing his crown, and riding his donkey. I was also pleased with the peoples' response when they took me to the palace and formally made me king. It was somewhat of a private ceremony, but dad told me there would be a grand public inauguration in a few days so all the people can feel like they had a part of the festivities. I know I'm just a young man, but I will do my best to fulfill all my responsibilities. Adonijah must have been totally devastated when he heard that I had been crowned king, but I am glad he humbled himself instead of fighting against me. I really did not want to have him executed, so I allowed him to live. Even though he is my brother, I will have no choice but to have him put to death if he gives me even the slightest impression that he is trying to take the throne away from me again. Hopefully he won't be so stupid as to try such a thing in the future. But for right now, let's revel in the thrill of my being king. Thanks so much for being there for me during all this. You are such a good friend, and I appreciate you.

A Few Days Later:

1 Chron 28:1-29:20 David prepares the people for Solomon's reign. 1

Chron 29:21-30 The people made Solomon king a second time.

1 Kings 2:1-11 David's charges Solomon to act according to his wisdom.

Hello, my friend. Were you among the crowd when my dad addressed the elders and the rest of the people? Oh, that is unfortunate. Let me tell you what happened. My father knew that he needed the peoples' approval to make me king, so he prepared the people for the transition by rehearsing with them how God had said I was to be the next king and I was the one God had chosen to build the temple of Jehovah. He told them how God had said that dad couldn't build the temple because he had shed too much blood. Instead, God wanted me to build it. Dad told them of all the preparations he had made and encouraged all of them to fully support me throughout the project. It was a masterful presentation, and he must have said the right things, because the people were very glad to publicly inaugurate me and install me as their king. It was a beautiful ceremony, and I am humbled at the privilege of leading this people. Actually, I am a little apprehensive about being their leader because I am so young. Be that as it may, I will do my best to lead these people well.

After speaking to the people he took me aside and told me all that I would need to do in order to build the temple. What he told me was very detailed and sounded like an immense project, but he assured me that I can do the job. He also instructed me to use my wisdom to repay Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei for the wrongs they had done against him. I will have to be very careful when I deal with them,

because they turned against dad when circumstances were convenient for them. I don't want them turning against me too. But, for tonight, let's revel in the way Jehovah has worked on my behalf. Dad's God has certainly been good to Israel and to us. Good night, my friend.

Several weeks later:

Hello Zabud, come in my friend. Have you heard that my dad is about to die? We are sure he will not last many more days. He is seventy years old now and has lived a long and full life. He has such a sweet confidence in Jehovah and seems ready to meet his Lord. I never have trusted Jehovah to the extent dad trusts Him, but I wish I did. I am a religious man, and I have tried to live a good, moral life. I am always ready to offer the sacrifices the law requires, but I don't feel the same closeness to the Lord. Maybe someday I will gain the kind of relationship with the Lord like dad had. Do you have that kind of relationship with the Lord? Oh, you do. I envy you. Well I do know this much, dad can't last much longer. I guess we'll just have to wait and see.

The next day:

Thanks for coming, Zabud. I assume you have heard that dad has died? There will be a big funeral service, and all the people will want to be a part of the ceremony. I am going to miss dad. He has been such a good example to me as a leader. With him gone I am completely on my own. It will be hard, but I think I can do it. Well, my friend, let's go to the service for my dad.

Months later:

## 1 Kings 2:12-46 Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei rewarded

Hello, my friend. I am so glad that the hard decisions of the past few days are behind me. Adonijah talked my mother into asking me if he could marry Abishag, but when she asked me I immediately recognized his plot to gain the throne. If he had been allowed to marry a woman that belonged to the king he would have had grounds to show the people that he should be king. I couldn't let that happen, could I? No way. Well, enough is enough. I had Adonijah executed. Then I dismissed Abiathar from the office of priest for his part in Adonijah's insurrection, and had Joab executed for his support of Adonijah. Now I can rest easier. Oh, I also had Shimei brought before me, and I told him that if he ever crosses the brook Kidron I would have him executed. He said that was fine and agreed to stay in Jerusalem. We'll see whether he keeps his part of the agreement. If not, he will sign his own death warrant. Like I said, I'm sure glad all those things are out of the way.

## About Three Years Later: Thus the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon. (2 Chron 1:1-12)

Hello, Zabud. You came just at the right time. Sit over there and watch what happens next. Shimei has crossed over the brook Kidron, and he has been summoned to come before me. Ah, here he comes now.

Shimei, did I not tell you that if you ever crossed the brook Kidron that you would sign your own death warrant? Well, you did so, and now you will have to pay for your sin against my father. Guards, take him away and put him to death.

Zabud, come here. You have just witnessed justice being performed speedily. I am convinced that judging the people with truth and justice gives the nation stability. I am going to do my best to be a just and fair ruler. Now that the kingdom is firmly in my hands I do not anticipate any more opposition. Well, goodbye for now. Oh Zabud, I may not have much time to spend with you for a while, because before

long I must start building the temple, so take care, my friend.

(4 Years into His Reign) 2 Chronicles  
Solomon marries Pharaoh's daughter.

Song of Solomon 3:11

*"Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and gaze on King Solomon with the crown with which his mother has crowned him on the day of his wedding, and on the day of his gladness of heart."*

1 Kings 3:1-4

*"<sup>1</sup> Then Solomon formed a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> The people were still sacrificing on the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days. <sup>3</sup> Now Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. <sup>4</sup> The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar."*

Well my friend, welcome to my wedding ceremony. This is the happiest day of my life. Isn't she beautiful? Oh, you are concerned that she is not a Jew. Don't worry. I know the Scriptures teach that we should not marry foreign women, but this is different. I am a wise man, and I am a king. As you can see I am wearing the crown my mother gave me as a wedding present. I am confident that I have enough wisdom to handle my new wife so that she won't cause me to turn away from the living God. Trust me, Zabud, I know what I am doing. Besides, I love the Lord, and I obey His command to worship and sacrifice to Him on the required days. Now, my friend, relax and enjoy the festivities. This should be a day of rejoicing, not one of sorrow.

## God Grants Solomon Wisdom and Riches:

2 Chron 1:1-12, 1 Kings 3:5-15 (God Speaks to Solomon the 1st Time)

Hello again, Zabud. Hey, I'd love to talk, but I'm getting married today. Can you come back tomorrow? Thanks. I'll see you then.

Oh, hi Zabud. I'm glad you could come back today. I wish you could have been there to experience what it is like when God talked to me personally. Last night while I was sleeping, God came to me in a dream, and He asked me what I desired from Him. I told him I needed wisdom to lead the nation of Israel in justice and righteousness. In response He told me that since I did not ask for long life nor for the life of my enemies, He would give me long life, riches, and honor far above any ruler of Jerusalem. He also said He would make me the wisest man ever to live in Jerusalem. I am so excited I can hardly stand it. The future looks so bright, and I am eager to see what the Lord has in store for me.

1 Kings 3:16-28 Then two women arguing over one baby.

1 Kings 4:29-34 Solomon's wisdom surpassed everyone of his day.

Hi Zabud. Hey, I'd love to talk, but I'm getting married today. Can you come back tomorrow? Thanks. I'll see you then.

Oh, hi Zabud. I'm glad you could come back today. Wait a minute. What is this? Excuse me Zabud, there seems to be an urgent matter that needs my attention. Come with me, and you can watch the proceedings. Ladies, ladies, quiet down, and state your case in order. Well, you both say that you are the

mother of this one child. We shall see. Guard, bring a sword to me at once. Now, use this sword to cut the baby in half, and give half to each of the women. Ah, as I suspected. One of the women does not wish to see the baby die while the other does not seem to care. Therefore, give the baby to the one who could not stand to see the baby die. She is the real mother. Now, go, and say no more about the matter.

Well Zabud, were you sufficiently impressed with the wisdom the Lord has given me? Did you see the response of the people standing around the court? They were amazed at my wisdom. I am thrilled with the understanding Jehovah has bestowed upon me. Now I am not afraid to judge the people of Israel. I am glad you were here to witness the whole event. It has been good for you to be here.

2 Chron 1:13-17 Solomon amassed horses, chariots and stuff.

1 Kings 5:1-6:38, 2 Chron 2:1-4:22 Solomon Started Building the Temple

Hello again, Zabud. Hey, I'd love to talk, but I'm getting married today. Can you come back tomorrow? Thanks. I'll see you then.

Oh, hi Zabud. I'm glad you could come back today. What do you think of all the wealth and possessions I have gained? They are quite impressive, are they not? Well, my friend, you always have been frank with me, but you needn't be concerned about how the Scriptures state that I should not gather large numbers of horses for myself. After all, God Himself said he would bless me with riches and wealth beyond anyone who lived in Jerusalem before me. I am an extremely wise man, and I can handle it. Trust me, I will do okay. Oh, by the way, I have started working on the temple, so I'll be so busy we probably won't be able to spend much time together for a long time. Take care, my friend. Goodbye for now.

For purposes of discussion I suspect that Solomon may have gone on with his life without his friend. Later in life he worshipped the gods of his wives, and God told him that he would lose everything he had worked so hard to gain. It was then that he called for his old friend Zabud. Solomon had reached the peak of his glory, and as a result of abandoning the God who made him great, that same God was going to take everything away from him. Here is the account of his life as he might have told it to Zabud. He was an old man now, and he realized too late that he had truly been a failure. Unfortunately, the regret he harbored had pushed him into depression and despair. His condition and confession is recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Hello Zabud. It hard to believe that it has been almost 30 years since you and I have had a serious talk one-on-one as friends. I have been a foolish man, and now I must live with the results of my foolishness. Please allow me to ramble on and explain what has transpired in my life since I turned my back on you as a friend. I really hope you can forgive me for doing so. I realize now that it was a poor decision on my part. Will forgive me? Oh thank you so very much.

2 Chron 5:1-6:11

The temple is finished (11 years into his reign)

2 Chron 6:12-42, 1 Kings 8:1-66

Solomon's prayer of dedication

2 Chron 7:1-11

When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven.

As I recall, it was right after I started building the temple that I thought I was really somebody special. I got so immersed in the work of building that didn't need or have time for anyone else. I had my wives and concubines, and I thought they were all I needed. Man, was that a big mistake. Anyway, I worked hard to finish the temple, and it was completed in seven years. I held one tremendous dedication service and prayed a really good prayer for the people. After the prayer was finished fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. That incident should have caused me to realize realized I needed to spend my energies serving the Lord instead of seeing what I could get out of life, but I was already starting to feel puffed up because of my glory and honor.

7 Chron 7:12-22, 1 Kings 9:1-9 The Lord appeared to Solomon the Second Time

After the dedication was completed and the sacrifices were offered, the Lord appeared to me a second time in a dream. He reaffirmed His promise to keep my descendents on the throne if I would remain faithful to Him, but He said he would take away all I have if I abandon Him. I should have taken more stock in what He said, because God always keeps His word.

2 Chron 8:1-18, 1 Kings 7:1-12 Solomon 13 Years in Building His Own House (24 Years into His Reign)

Well, years passes, and I had acquired a lot of things and experienced a lot of pleasures. I finished my house and the temple by the twenty-fourth year of my reign, and I was really something to behold. The Lord had made me wealthy beyond anything I could have dreamed; He made me wiser than any man alive in my day; and He made me desired by women. In fact, as I look back, it seems like for a few years I was getting married every few days. Man, I had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Even the queen of Sheba traveled all the way to Jerusalem to hear my wisdom. I'll tell you about her visit in a few minutes. I was really living. These things were nice, but there was always this nagging emptiness deep down inside of me that that no one knew about but me. Everyone else thought I had it all together, but I knew something was missing. I thought if I learned more I would be contented. It didn't happen so I started acquiring more and better possessions. They didn't bring contentment, so I threw my whole self into experiencing life's pleasures thinking they would make me happy. Nothing I did for myself brought joy and contentment. Oh, I gained some temporary happiness, but it never lasted long. Then it wasn't long began I started looking for something new to experience or own. I now know that my life has been wasted. I wrote the book Ecclesiastes to share what happened to me so that others won't have to make the same mistakes I did. I'll get a copy of it for you to read. I worshipped the Lord three times a year, but it was mostly out of obligation. I still don't fully understand how my dad could worship the Lord every day like he did.

2 Chron 9:1-12, 1 Kings 10:1-13 Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon (Probably Near Year 30 of His Reign)

2 Chron 9:13-31, 1 Kings 10:14-29 Description of Solomon's great Wealth and Greatness.

Somewhere near the peak of my greatness the queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem to visit with me. She was so impressed with my wisdom and the wealth of the palace that she praised the Lord. She said, "How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. Blessed be the Lord your God who delighted in you, setting you on His throne as king for the Lord your God; because your God loved Israel establishing them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness." Here again, I should have given God the glory, but I was too busy giving myself the glory to be concerned with God. If I had it to do all over again I would live my life for the Lord and help other people. As it was, I lived my life for myself alone and for what I could get out of it. It was kind of dumb, wasn't it?

1 Kings 11:1-13 Now king Solomon Loved many Foreign Women (Probably Around Year 35 of His Reign) He Worshipped Their gods with Them. The Lord Appears a Third Time.

All of the things I have mentioned so far are bad enough in themselves, but I did something that was far more devastating. Do you remember the warning you gave me about foreign women when I married Pharaoh's daughter? I certainly do because that warning haunts me today. Well, I developed such a taste for beautiful, foreign women and sexual pleasures that I threw caution to the wind. Had I heeded your warning in the beginning I could have avoided the disaster in which I find myself today. You see, after I

had reached the peak of greatness I became complacent. I had forgotten Who it was that made me what I had become. My apathy caused me to start listening to my wives when they asked me to build places where they could worship their foreign Gods. In my complacent state I allowed my wives to convince me to build places of worship for their foreign gods. I had not succeeded in converting them to the one true God, but they finally succeeded in converting me to the worship of their foreign Gods. The Lord had said in the Scriptures that it would happen, but I thought I was stronger and wiser than the average man. I really thought I could handle it. I now see that I am a mortal man with all the weaknesses of other men. God was right after all. I was just too blind to see it. Zabud, I've been a fool.

God saw the way I had abandoned Him by worshipping the false gods of my wives, and He came to me in a dream to tell me that since I had rejected Him, He was rejecting me. He said He was going to take away from me everything I had worked so hard to gain throughout my lifetime of labor. I was devastated and still am. My life is ruined and all of my efforts to become someone great have been wasted.

1 Kings 11:14-43 The Lord Raises Up Adversaries to Solomon.

In addition to all of this trouble, God has raised up three men who are reaping havoc on my kingdom. All three of them want to take my throne. I lived at peace while I was faithful to the Lord, but as soon as I turned my back on Him, He allowed these evil men to surface and become my adversaries. Oh, my sin has carried such a high price tag. Now Hadad, Rezon, and this Jeroboam are all trying to take my kingdom from me. It takes a lot of my time just trying to stay on the throne. In addition, God is going to give most of my kingdom to my servant, not to my son. I can't bear the thought of giving all my hard earned possessions to a man who probably will not appreciate their value and may squander it all. It bothers me so much that I want to die. Zabud, when I die will you preach my funeral? Oh thanks, my friend. That makes me feel better.

Thank you for being such a good listener. I know you cannot do anything to make my situation better, but it did help to talk about it. I feel better just getting it out in the open. Well, my friend, it is late in life, but I have finally learned what is really important. It is to love and fear God and keep His commandments. These are the things that really matter. I wish I had done this throughout my life, but it is too late for me to do anything to salvage my dilemma. I only hope that you will do your best to teach young people what I have learned so that they don't have to experience the same hurts and heartaches I have endured. So for now, my friend, goodbye.

2 Chron 9:13-31 Solomon Dies (Year 40 of Solomon's Reign)  
Zabud's eulogy of Solomon

Hello. My name is Zabud, and I would like to tell you about my friend Solomon. He is now dead and gone, but his memory will live on for generations to come. He will not be remembered so much as the great man that he was, but he will be remembered as the man who had all the wisdom and wealth this world has to offer and then lose it by rejecting the God who gave it to him. Throughout his life he sought to teach others the truth, but unfortunately he didn't learn the truth he taught others. Had he done so he would have loved the Lord with all his heart and lived his life with eternity in mind. As it was, he lived for what he could get out of this life and enjoyed the little bit of pleasure those earthly things afforded. In the end he experienced the unhappiness and dissatisfaction that every worldly person feels when they approach death. His was such a tragic life, but you can learn from his mistakes so that you don't have to make the same mistakes he did. You can choose to live your life for the Lord and for the benefits you will receive in eternity. I hope you will do so. Choose to serve the Lord. He will never let you down.

Goodbye my friend. I will miss you.