

May 21-27

Week 21

This week we enter the reign of Solomon in the Bible's grand story as we approach the end of Act 2, scene 5. Read this section in light of both God's role as the main actor and his faithfulness to his covenant with David. Note again the transitional elements in the story, observing how they establish Solomon's rule as king. Notice especially the key role wisdom plays in the narrative.

We will also read poetic literature on four of six days this week. Psalms 111–119 are somewhat unique, so pick up on the special place these psalms had in ancient Judaism.

Song of Songs should be read as love poetry; be sure to note the keys to reading it. At times in the history of the church, the theme of sexual love between a man and a woman caused discomfort, so the church opted to read the Song as allegorical, a word picture of Christ and the church. The Song should be read for what it is: a celebration of God's gift of romantic love.

Day 1

Read Psalms 111-118

Act 2 - Scene 5 - Reading 50

These are psalms of praise to God. Psalms 113–118 are known as the Hallel (“Praise”) in Judaism and even today are recited by devout Jews during times of special celebration. This section of the psalms was recited at Passover during the time of Jesus and was likely sung by Jesus and his disciples on the night before the crucifixion (see Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).

Identify the verses in Psalm 118 that would have been especially meaningful to Jesus on the night of the Last Supper.

Speak these psalms as prayers to the Lord.

Day 2

Read 1 Kings 1-2; Psalms 37; 71; 94

Act 2 - Scene 5 - Reading 51

The key to 1 Kings 1–2 is the last sentence in the final verse of chapter 2: “The kingdom was established in Solomon’s hand” (2:46). Here David, under the prompting of Nathan the prophet and Bathsheba, subverted a plot by Solomon’s older brother, Adonijah, to become king in David’s place. Once David named Solomon as king and Solomon was anointed and seated on the throne, Adonijah’s plot fell apart.

In David’s dying instructions to Solomon, he instructed his son to follow the Lord faithfully and to take revenge on David’s enemies, which was a key step in firmly establishing Solomon’s reign.

These chapters begin with the young woman Abishag being brought to King David. Her place in the story is significant because Adonijah’s ultimate downfall was tied to his desire for her.

As you read the psalms today, reflect on God’s judgment on the wicked and his faithfulness to the righteous, though sometimes flawed, person even through old age.

What role does God’s covenant play in this part of the story?

Day 3**Read Psalm 119:1-88****Act 2 - Scene 5 - Reading 52**

Psalm 119 celebrates God's Word, expressed variously as his law, his commands, and his precepts. Notice all the benefits the psalmist spoke of in relation to God's amazing Word. Also notice that there is no hint here of God's law being a "yoke of bondage" or old way that limits our freedom and we would be glad to be rid of now that we are "under grace" (Galatians 5:1).

Just as a point of interest, each section of Psalm 119, in the original Hebrew, begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in alphabetical order, beginning with "aleph" and ending with "tav."

Circle several word pictures (uses of figurative language) that stand out to you most powerfully.

Identify the benefits of God's Word that mean the most to you now.

Thank God for the blessings given by his Word.

Day 4**Read 1 Kings 3-4; 2 Chronicles 1; Psalm 72****Act 2 - Scene 5 - Reading 53**

In the two narrative books today we read about the wonderful beginning of King Solomon's reign. Solomon loved the Lord and walked in God's ways. When asked by the Lord, "What should I give you?" (1Kg 3:5) Solomon answered, in essence, wisdom. God liked that answer, responding that he would give Solomon wisdom, as well as riches, long life, and dominance over his enemies.

As 1 Kings 3–4 develops, we first see an example of Solomon's wisdom, then examples of his organizational ability, his great wealth, and even his literary skills. Second Chronicles 1 gives a summary of these chapters.

Psalm 72, labeled as Solomonic, offers a prayer for the king. Notice that the psalm ends with a prayer that God's glory would abound as the result of the king's rule and life.

How might you pray for a leader of your church, your government, or the like in ways that parallel the words of this psalm?

Day 5

Read Psalm 119:89-176

Act 2 - Scene 5 - Reading 54

Today we read the rest of Psalm 119. As you read, notice how inextricably connected God's Word is to God's character. The psalmist trusted God's Word because he trusted God.

In what areas of your life today do you need to draw on God's Word and trust God?

Also note that the psalmist said he would do certain things to interact with or respond to God's Word.

How do you need to respond to the Word today?

Day 6**Read Song of Solomon 1:1-5:1****Act 2 - Scene 5 - Reading 55**

Song of Songs presents us with an extended love poem, containing several episodes and primarily in three voices: the young man, the young woman, and the friends of the young woman (“daughters of Jerusalem”). Often these different speakers are marked with headings in modern Bible versions.

Several interpretations of this book have been offered through the ages. An allegorical interpretation sees the Song as depicting the relationship between God and his people; there were Jewish and Christian versions of this interpretation from early on.

Other interpretations see the Song as a two-character drama depicting Solomon’s love affair with a woman who became his wife or a three-character drama in which the woman, destined for Solomon’s harem as a concubine, expressed her love for a shepherd boy from whom she had been separated.

Others see it as simply a collection of love poems.

Today we read the first three movements of the book. Song of Songs celebrates appropriate, sexual love between a man and his wife. Thus, it needs to be read as a celebration.

If you are married, thank God for romantic love and use the Song to remember that you need to cherish and nurture romantic love with your spouse.

If you are not married, celebrate the depths of God’s love for you.

Day 7

Reading Summary for Week 21

The generational change from David to Solomon was without doubt as pivotal as the transition from Moses to Joshua. The Lord abundantly honored the young king's request for wisdom. We've read the first part of his exuberant romantic poem, a celebration of marital love. And in Psalm 119—by far the longest chapter in the Bible—we've experienced supreme delight in God's law, as the psalmist celebrated the Word alphabetically from Aleph to Taf (that is, "from A to Z" in the Hebrew alphabet).

Prayer/Meditation

O God, help me to remember as Solomon did that real wisdom comes only from you. Let me never be content with wisdom from the world or my experiences. Instead, may I thirst for wisdom from your Word! I confess that your Word is delightful, for "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105). Let me become more like the psalmist who declared, "I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). Amen.
