

Solomon's Economic Model

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Introduction

Scripture revealed that King David had prepared the way¹ for his son Solomon to perpetuate the divinely promised Davidic Dynasty, saying, *“And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: ⁸ But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. ⁹ Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. ¹⁰ He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.”* (I Chr. 22:7-10). David's warfare conquered the nations around Israel and fostered peace for his heir, again as Scripture declared, saying, *“For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him”* (I Ki. 4:24). The kingdom extended from the Euphrates to Egypt and from the Jordan to Philistia. The name Solomon (*shelomoh* [sh-l-m = *shalom*]) means peace, and his reign pre-figured the millennial reign of the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). Furthermore, the Apostle Paul revealed that within the prophecy of Nathan about the Davidic Dynasty (II Sam. 7:14), the reference to *“my son”* was not to Solomon, but to the Lord Jesus Christ, saying, *“For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?”* (Heb. 1:5).² Solomon and his reign of peace foreshadowed the Lord and His millennial rule.

Certainly, Solomon's forty year reign prefigured the LORD's theocratic and economic model for the Millennium. The purpose of this essay is to focus on the principles of Solomon's economic policies, albeit they are inextricably linked to the theocratic government of the Lord Jesus Christ. His model is presumably the best economic model for mankind in a fallen world. As Solomon reigned over the Jewish people, he implemented policies that benefitted the people nationally, so that they were, in the words of the Queen of Sheba, *“Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom”* (I Ki. 10:8).

¹David not only challenged Solomon from his death bed to obey the LORD (I Ki. 2:3-4), but he also taught him, as Jedidiah testified, saying, *“For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. ⁴ He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. ⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. ⁶ Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. ⁷ Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding”* (Prov. 4:3-7).

²*“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here”* (Mt. 12:42).

Solomon and the People

The Scripture recorded in two parallel passages that the Jews were “happy” (*‘esher*)³ under the leadership of Solomon (I Ki. 10:8 and II Chr. 9:7). Presumably, the people were happy because they experienced the happiness that Solomon promised in his Proverbs, relating to their relationship to wisdom (3:13, 18), their extended mercy to the poor (14:21), their trust in and fear of the LORD (16:20; 28:14), and their keeping the law (29:18). The Jewish people’s blissful contentment came from their confidence in King Solomon’s wisdom⁴ and in his leadership undergirded with wisdom and righteousness (I Ki. 3:6-10). Solomon loved and honored Jehovah God (I Ki. 3:3, 15; 8:14 ff.), and gave the people the righteous goal of building the Temple.⁵

The righteous reign of Solomon benefited the economy of Israel.⁶ The LORD gave the people protection and personal opportunity. For instance, they had peace all around (I Ki. 4:24; 5:12), and the Scripture revealed that each man had personal responsibility to till his own plot of land, saying, “*And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon*” (I Ki. 4:25),⁷ and that “*they lacked nothing*” (I Ki. 4:27). Solomon affirmed the importance of work, saying, “*In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury*” (Prov. 14:23). This national safety⁸ and personal opportunity⁹ eliminated any social programs that fostered the ultimate dependent entitlement mentality. Solomon knew the reality of his proverb, which stated, “*Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase*” (Prov. 13:11).¹⁰ He opposed any system that produced idleness, saying, “*He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster*” (Prov. 18:9). Finally, he employed foreigners for his building projects, but he used Israelis for his military (to continue

³The Hebrew is translated 27x as “blessed” (cf. Ps. 1:1).

⁴“*And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment*” (I Ki. 3:28).

⁵“*Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.* ² *And he began to build in the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign*” (II Chr. 3:1-2; I Ki. 6:1-2).

⁶“*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Mt. 6:33).

⁷This blessing pre-figured the Millennial conditions, as the prophet Micah predicted, saying, “*But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it*” (Mic. 4:4; Zech. 3:10).

⁸Paul declared that Christians should pray for national peace so that their assemblies can carry out the Great Commission: “*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;* ² *For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* ³ *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;* ⁴ *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (I Tim. 2:1-4).

⁹In the perfect pre-lapsis world, the LORD gave Adam the personal responsibility of tilling his garden, as the Scripture stated, saying, “*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it*” (Gen. 2:15).

¹⁰Those that are dependent on government to help them out of poverty will be perpetually weakened and enslaved by and to that very social system.

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military dominance), as Scripture revealed, saying, *“Their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bondservice unto this day. ²² But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen: but they were men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen.”* (I Ki. 9:21-22).

Solomon and Economic Principles

With his vast wisdom (I Ki. 3:11-12; 10:23-24), King Solomon implemented several economic principles that enabled him to finance his building projects while allowing the Jewish people to enjoy life. The nation did eat, drink, and make merry (I Ki. 4:20) because they had abundance through national safety (I Ki. 4:24) and personal opportunity (I Ki. 4:25). Domestically, the king instituted equitable giving¹¹ to his projects from the peoples' surplus¹² (4:27). Second, he required foreigners to supply the manpower for his projects. Ezra revealed this truth, saying, *“And Solomon numbered all the strangers that were in the land of Israel, after the numbering wherewith David his father had numbered them; and they were found an hundred and fifty thousand and three thousand and six hundred. ¹⁸ And he set threescore and ten thousand of them to be bearers of burdens, and fourscore thousand to be hewers in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred overseers to set the people a work”* (II Chr. 2:17-18). Third, he may have explored natural resources for mining and refining.¹³

Internationally, the wise king implemented beneficial relationships with other nations. First, he secured a strong political relationship with Egypt by marrying Pharaoh's daughter (I Ki. 3:1; 7:8; 9:24).¹⁴ This enabled Israel to have peace on their southern border, and to be involved in the thriving market of selling horses from Egypt.¹⁵ Second, King Solomon expected and received presents from all of the nations that he ruled.¹⁶ From these foreigners he secured trade agreements that benefited Israel's economy. For instance, he had a profitable relationship with King Hiram (I Ki. 5:1-11) evincing great and advantageous business acumen.¹⁷ He expanded

¹¹*“And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision”* (I Ki. 4:7).

¹²*“And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing”* (I Ki. 4:27). The nation recoiled when Rehoboam increased tribute (I Ki. 12:13-14), presumably for the following reasons: 1) they could no longer trust the leadership after Solomon's fall, 2) they ceased in personal and national righteousness, and 3) they lost their economic surplus.

¹³Although Scripture does not state explicitly that he had copper mines, he certainly would have exploited all possibilities for economic advantage (*vide* I Ki. 7:45-47).

¹⁴His vast harem no doubt included many “political wives” which ensured peace with hundreds of national leaders (I Ki. 11:1-3).

¹⁵*“And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. ²⁹ And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means”* (I Ki. 10:28-29; II Chr. 9:28).

¹⁶*“And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life”* (I Ki. 4:21).

¹⁷Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities which needed significant upgrading. Apparently, Hiram did not necessarily appreciate this sagacious deal. Scripture states, *“(Now Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees*

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his navy and worked with Hiram to encompass the Mediterranean Sea for lucrative merchandizing.¹⁸ He took advantage of his superior military's past, power, and placement among the nations to acquire successful trade deals with his neighbors. In short, Solomon was the world's wisest business man.

Summary and Application

The LORD set up Solomon for great prosperity as the ruler of the Jewish nation, pre-figuring the millennial reign of Christ. Through David's military prowess Jehovah gave Israel national peace and protection. The people followed the righteous worship of Jehovah by their wise leader Solomon. With the ideal national set-up, Solomon made wise decisions regarding the financing of his economy with the principles of equity, taxation from surplus, foreign inscription, and foreign trade deals. He rejected all welfare entitlement programs and insisted upon individual responsibility for personal opportunities.

It behooves nations in this fallen world to approximate Solomon's economic principles, of course based on reverence for the Jehovah God of creation. Wise nations will strengthen their military, protect the safety and prosperity of their people, make sagacious foreign trade deals, utilize foreigners for the benefit of nationals, and demand personal economic responsibility, thereby eliminating dependence on welfare programs which always result in the entitlement mentality of the citizens. The best model incorporates a strong religion (Christianity), a strong military, a strong foreign policy on immigration, a strong and equitable tax policy, and a strong foreign trade practice. In the broad perspective of national economic systems, capitalism is vastly superior to socialism,¹⁹ because the former allows the middle class to flourish whereas the latter destroys it, leading to the ultimate economic collapse of any nation.

and fir trees, and with gold, according to all his desire,) that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. ¹² *And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not.* ¹³ *And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day.* ¹⁴ *And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold" (I Ki. 9:11-14, cf. II Chr. 8:1-2).*

¹⁸*"And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Eziongeber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom.* ²⁷ *And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon.* ²⁸ *And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon" (I Ki. 9:26-28; 10:11, 22).*

¹⁹Economic Socialism leads to totalitarian Communism, wherein the citizenry is enslaved economically and religiously.