

## Comedy and Horror

### In the Bible

It is what it is: 1 Kings 3 (The trial of the two prostitutes)

Should we cut their baby in half

**T**he **s**tory **P**art **o**ne:

I could imagine that inheriting a kingdom is wonderful. Who would not want power, majesty, popularity, and riches. To sit on “the” throne are things dreams are made of. The other side of the coin is that once you’re on the throne, someone will always want to take you down. The throne is majesty and a target all rolled into one. That is where we find King Solomon in the first few chapters of 1 Kings.

We talk about Solomon as having riches and wisdom, but that is not the whole story. Today I want to bring us to the trial of the two prostitutes, but first as always there is back story. The history is not about the women but the King. Nobody wants to fill the shoes of a great person. Usually the first person who follows a great leader is not so great. King David is considered the King of Kings. Solomon on the other hand is a momma’s boy.

It would be nice if Solomon was well liked. Unfortunately, other boys in the family were picked to be king. David wanted Absalom and Bathsheba his mother considered Adonijah. Either way Solomon liked kingdom life. I bet he grew up in the mist of the women and servants. He was not a warrior. As it happened Absalom died and so did his father David. That left this weak King in a dangerous place. It was not uncommon to be overthrown on those days.

Solomon in 1 Kings 2 makes sure that his kingdom stands in the aftermath of his father’s death. One by one he gets his henchmen to pick off possible overthrowers. Each man who did not side in King David’s corner was killed. Even his mother tried to save the life of an adversary

Adonijah. Solomon put him down too. To say Solomon was a ruthless King is a stretch. What I do think is that this boy knew how it went when the Kingdom is changing hands. There are many who wanted a hand in it. I believe King Solomon had wisdom and smarts all along. He used that to kill several men.

Right after he cleaned house of his enemies, Solomon asks God for wisdom. God appears to be impressed and gives this King great wisdom. As with everything, it comes with intent and a price. I think that Solomon wanted more cleverness and cunning than he had before. To say he wanted to be a wise King does not fit with his actions before and after our main story of the two prostitutes. Solomon exposed his land to foreign powers and grew a vast kingdom overflowing in wealth. He became so great that people traveled far distances just to see if the stories of great wealth were true. Later on, we find they were really scouting the place.

Still, Solomon was known for the wisdom he gained. Our two prostitutes benefited from this knowledge. Solomon grew the kingdom further than his dad. He won wars and caused peace. I guess his smarts helped him reign. It also caused him to be top heavy and careless in his judgments. The horror in this story comes in two ways. One is that we see what happens when a person gets over confident. We also see that two friends can become enemies. Only the cutting in two of a child will save the day. Let's cut into this story next week.

### **The story Part two:**

Imagine living with a good friend. You were so close that you worked together, ate together, and shared life together. You were two brothers or sisters in friendship. Let's take that a step deeper. Suppose you were two girls that found themselves in prostitution. Your society did not value you as a woman. Were you both abducted, sold, or given into the sex trade. That is the

world of the two prostitutes. Women in King Solomon's day were of little value. Fathers and families treated the women almost worse than slaves. Prostitutes existed in this world not by accident.

So here we find two women caught up in a horrible situation. As it was they succumbed to the worst possible outcome. An outcome that probably was not that uncommon in those days: they were both pregnant. It's so easy to blame them for their own troubles, but how do you escape a sex trade that was legal? Most of their society never cared that they were abused, poor, or pregnant. They were women. More than that they were prostitutes.

I find it would be easy to blame the deceiving woman in this story. You see both were pregnant but one accidentally smothered her child in a crib death. These girls did not have all the luxuries that we have like cribs, blankets, and security in a home. Each mom probably had to sleep with her baby to keep it warm and safe. Imagine waking up and finding out your baby is dead. Possibly smothered by your own body. You might have lost your mind.

The story continues that the grieving mother still wanted to be a mom. She devised a plan to switch her dead baby with her roommate's alive one. They look similar so who would know. The horror of this is gut-wrenching for a Bible story. In the morning, the roommate wakes up to a dead baby. At first she is grieved and horrified. Then upon a closer look she realizes this is not her child. Across the small room is her sister in prostitution claiming the alive baby in her arms is not yours.

So, we now find ourselves at the trial of the two prostitutes. Before us is a setting much like Judge Judy on TV. It's too bad we could not have the View and Dr. Phil as well. The scene is set. There is the grieving mother of an alive child and the grieving mother of a dead child. In-

front of them is the King Solomon and his newly granted wisdom from God. It was common for the leader to a country in those days to be King, Judge, and executioner. It seems odd to us that a King would hear a small claims case between two prostitutes. However, Solomon has cornered the market on wisdom.

He listens to the two moms give their argument. I suspect he puts his hand to his chin and ponders the situation. Then it hits him. Bring me a sword. He takes the weapon and brandishes it openly before the two prostitutes'. I wonder if the child has been placed before them. In those days, a contract was cemented by the cutting in half of a sacrificed animal. I wonder if this in in play somehow. He looks closely at these two ladies and makes his play.

Solomon decides to cut the baby in half and give each of them a half. I get it this is horrible wisdom. I don't think this will work. I love the play on words. Solomon draws out a sword. I think he draws out the truth. The real mother blurts out to save the baby. The distraught grieving mom does not really care because her baby is dead. To kill the remaining child will leave them even just like a cut in half contract. The ruse is exposed. The King then orders the child returned to the rightful mother.

There is so much to learn from this story. Don't be a prostitute? Maybe, but in those days, that was easier said than done. Ask for wisdom from God? Maybe, but be careful for what you ask for. This is a horrible story from the grieving mom to the lives they were forced to lead. Imagine them going home in the same room. How would that go down. The chances of them remaining prostitute's and being pregnant again were likely. If this is not horror, then what is. An impossible life between two women of little real fault. Next week lets slice up some wisdom from this story.

**W**hat we can learn:

I sound like a broken record. All my writings talk about my divorce over 15 years ago. Can't I let it go? I have the wisdom I gained from it and that is worth sharing. Two people thinking totally different about a relationship. In a way, it is a dead baby. To court we went and the judge cut it up piece by piece. It was humiliating, gut-wrenching, and extremely painful. I pleaded to save the baby (marriage) but the Ex wanted it dead. The Judge wanted it solved at any cost. Sound familiar? The trial of the two prostitutes is the same story in my heart.

What can we learn from these two women and the King? Let's start with Solomon. Like I said in part one, this is really about the King. He is the unwanted boy in the Kingdom. He is the forgotten lad nobody saw as a leader. He had smarts and wisdom since birth. Of course, he asked God for more. That is how he had survived under the weight of his King father and warrior brothers. Wisdom is not half as sexy in the public realm as wearing a crown or sword.

I believe Solomon felt in his heart "I'll show you." He asked for more wisdom. He concurred more territory. He gained and stored more wealth. God asked Moses that a leader in his kingdom should not gain wealth and collect it. That was a rule. Solomon broke all the rules to be the best of the best. In the end, he became the very thing he hated. How often does that happen to us. We say we will never be divorced again but suffocate the next one with guarded hearts. We refuse to give away the one thing that was hurt: our hearts. We say to the Ex "I'll show you."

We gather but never share. We gain but are unconcerned with who we ran over to get it. The consumer world is crushing our ability to share. It's all about me. Solomon made a kingdom that displayed his splendor. He would say God did it but his heart knew he did it. Are we like

that? Who makes our bed and butters our bread? Humbleness is a tough road. Pride is a chain that is tough to break. He asked for wisdom but I fear he asked for power. Would you?

The other lesson comes from the two prostitutes. One is that we are stuck in impossible spots sometimes. We see people stuck in tough places. Don't think you're stuck. Don't believe their stuck. There is always a way out. To grieve is natural, but to acquire happiness is not. We are happy, sad, angry, and tired. We are many things all in one day. To seek only one is to ignore the rest. We need all our emotions to make us complete. That does not mean we seek anger, but being angry can provide wisdom and perspective.

Two: don't judge people. It's good that Solomon would hear the case of two prostitutes. I am glad he did not shun them. We see the poor and destitute every day. They are always in our lives hiding in the fringes of our lives. Every angry person is a wounded animal. Every poor person has a story. Solomon did the right thing. He never intended to chop up the kid. He did expose their motives. What are your motives in what you believe and fight for? Are you willing to run someone over to get what you want? Will you guard your heart and get angry deep inside?

To me this whole story is about running from a less than stellar life. It's about wanting something more at any cost. It is about deceiving others to gain happiness. We are on trial in this story. What do you want from God? Who are you willing to sacrifice to get it? The Bible is never boring. There is always something that will challenge us to be better for others. It's about character. Do we want better for ourselves? Do we want better for others? What wisdom could you gain that could set yourself and those around you on a better road. A road less traveled.