

## Solomon – How the Mighty Have Fallen 1 Kgs 10-11

We've looked at Solomon's great wisdom, at the blessings God gave to him, and the great start he had of honoring and serving God. It would appear that these blessings lasted about 20 years, until he allowed it all to go to his head. That's a funny thing about our fallen human nature. The better things are, the more we tend to forget about God. In the opening years of his kingdom, Solomon acknowledged that he needed God's help to rule, and God was pleased to give that help. At the dedication of the temple, 7 years into his reign, he acknowledged that it was God's faithfulness which put him on the throne and allowed him to build the temple. He knew that both he and the people of Israel needed to remain faithful and obedient to God if they were to see His continued blessings, and he stated that they would need God's forgiveness when they sinned – when they came and confessed that sin to God.

Now we move forward a few years. Once the temple was finished, Solomon built his palace, as recorded in ch. 9. He built a fleet of ships at Ezion-Geber on the Red Sea (the modern Israeli port of Eilat), which brought gold, peacocks, apes, precious stones, etc. from Ophir (possibly modern India). We read in ch. 10 about the visit of the queen of Sheba. She had heard of his great fame, wisdom, and wealth, and came to see for herself. What was her observation? (v. 6-9) "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness."

Her high praise may have been genuine, or it may have been intended to enamor his heart. The Bible doesn't tell. What it does say is that (v. 13) "King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked besides what was given her by the bounty of King Solomon." A very ancient legend from Ethiopia says that she stayed for six months, and on her last night, he lay with her and she became pregnant, returning home to give birth to his son, Menilek, who founded the royal dynasty of Ethiopia, which ruled until Haile Selassie I was deposed in 1974. Is this a reasonable possibility? When we read in 11:1, "Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, 'You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.' Solomon clung to these in love." This seems entirely likely. Solomon turned his heart to pursue pleasure, and thus turned away from the Lord.

Similarly, we read in this same section that he began pursuing wealth. Back in ch. 10 verse 14, "the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, besides that which came from the explorers and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of the west and from the governors of the land." His throne (v. 18-20) was a great ivory throne, overlaid with the finest gold. It had six steps, with carved lions flanking each step and the armrests of the throne. "The like of it was never made in any kingdom." All of his drinking vessels were pure gold, and "silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon." Silver was as common as stone in Jerusalem. If ever there was a real life king Midas, Solomon was it. Riches beyond your wildest imagination, and the lifestyle that went with it.

What was the result of this lavish, hedonistic lifestyle of Solomon? Look with me at 11:3-8. "He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods."

As you read this, don't get the wrong impression that it was all the fault of his women – he's the one who pursued them all. He pursued pleasure rather than God, and it caused him to fall. God warns us in Pr 21:17 "Those who love pleasure become poor..." Solomon's own confession later, found in Ecc 2:1, "I said in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.' But behold, this also was vanity." What he thought would fill him led to emptiness. God had granted him wisdom and blessing, but he squandered it by pursuing selfish pleasure.

What was the result? In 11:9 it says, "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the Lord commanded. Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, 'Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.'" God's judgment brought adversaries against Solomon, both internal and external. When we turn from God, we invite His wrath and judgment. His intent in that is to bring us to repentance, to turn away from our sin and back to faithful obedience to Him.