

The Reasons for King Solomon's Downfall

1 Kings 11:1-13

1 Kings 11:1-8 - *"But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites— from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods."*

Background Notes

King Solomon had *"700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines."* Can you believe it? That's a lot of women! How did Solomon even keep track of them? Did he even remember their names? And what about remembering the names of all the children? But since Solomon was the wisest man that ever lived, presumably he had no problem remembering the names of all his wives, concubines, and children.

But for all of Solomon's wisdom and knowledge and his presumed ability to remember names, he was not wise in his actions, because he willfully disobeyed the Lord in this area. God's Word had clearly and specifically said that kings were **not** to marry many wives. Deuteronomy 17:17 - *"He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray."* And that's exactly what happened. His wives led his heart astray.

Not only did Solomon disobey the Lord in the **number** of his wives, he also disobeyed in the **kind** of women he married. *"King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites— from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods. Solomon clung to these in love" (v1-2).*

God's Law clearly said that His people were not to intermarry with people from foreign nations. Deuteronomy 7:1-4 - *"When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly."*

For obvious reasons, God did not want His people involved in the pagan ways and worship of the foreign nations, but Solomon willfully disobeyed the Lord in this area. And he reaped the consequences of his sins.

Solomon's **wisdom** was one thing. His **will** was another.

What a lesson for us! You may have a lot of knowledge, you may even know a lot about God and the Bible, and you may be gifted with wisdom – but where is your will? Is your will submitted to the Lord? Are your decisions made in line with His Word? Or is your will like Solomon's - disobedient to the clear teaching of Scripture?

Doctrinal Points

1. Disobedience to the Lord results in departure from the Lord.

"And his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David" (v3-4). And verse 6, *"Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David."* David wasn't perfect, and David was guilty of some very serious sins - but David never departed from the Lord. David never turned away from the Lord.

Solomon not only allowed his foreign wives to bring in their foreign gods, but he actually built high places for these gods. Then he began to follow the pagan religions of his wives, and even promoted them by building places of worship for these pagan gods. These foreign religions involved all kinds of grossly immoral and idolatrous practices, including child sacrifice to the pagan gods Molech and Chemosh. *"Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon."* No wonder we read, *"Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord" (v6).*

How could Solomon commit such sin, after all that the Lord had done for him, and all the Lord had given him? The Lord had even appeared personally to Solomon - twice! This is the king that wrote in Psalm 127, *"Unless the Lord builds the*

house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” And think of the proverbs that Solomon wrote about following the Lord. How could Solomon, of all people, turn away from the Lord?

Answer – **disobedience to the Lord results in departure from the Lord.** It didn’t happen overnight. It happened little by little. Notice verse 4: *“For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods.”*

One of my promising Bible students disobeyed the Lord in this same area - he married an unbeliever. She was a nice young woman, but her gods and her goals were worldly, and little by little she turned his heart away from the Lord. At one time this young man was on fire for the Lord, but disobedience to the Lord resulted in departure from the Lord.

And this doesn’t happen only in the area of marriage. There are many sad cases of folks who have gradually strayed from regular church attendance and fellowship with believers, for example. Where are they now? Little by little, the disobedience of not gathering with the Lord’s people (as Hebrews 10:25 exhorts us) has led to their departure from the Lord. Disobedience to the Lord results in departure from the Lord.

2. Disobedience to the Lord results in discipline from the Lord.

1 Kings 11:9-13 - *“So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD 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 had commanded. Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”*

Verse 9 says that the Lord was angry with Solomon for his deliberate sin, and as a result God pronounced judgment upon Solomon and his kingdom. Solomon would suffer the consequences of his disobedience. *“Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant” (v11).* This future “servant” was Jeroboam, who became King Jeroboam I, the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel.

In verse 13 the Lord said, *“However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”* Solomon’s son was Rehoboam, who became the first king of the southern kingdom of Judah after the kingdom was divided. The southern kingdom of Judah consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, so most likely the one tribe promised here to Solomon’s son would be the tribe of

Benjamin. This would be in addition to the tribe of Judah. Jerusalem, with the Temple and the king's palace, was located in the tribal territory of Judah.

Solomon's disobedience to the Lord had far reaching effects. The resulting discipline affected the whole course of Israel's history.

God must discipline His people when they sin – both then and today. 1 Corinthians 11 says that some of the Corinthian believers were sick, and some had even died - because of disobedience. This was God's discipline of His people. *"But when we are judged, we are chastened [or disciplined] by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:3).*

So God does judge and discipline disobedient believers.

Let me ask you - are you a disobedient believer? Are you a disobedient Christian? Are you ashamed of some areas in your life? Have you refused to forgive a fellow believer? Are you hiding something from those who have a right to know? Are you disobeying the Lord in some secret way? Disobedience to the Lord results in discipline from the Lord.

Practical Application

Remember Solomon's downfall!

Whenever you begin to think you're a spiritual giant, remember Solomon's downfall. Whenever you think you're a mature Christian and that you're immune to committing serious sin, remember Solomon's downfall. If Solomon could fall, we too can fall.

Think of the spiritual heights from which Solomon fell. God had granted Solomon wisdom and wealth. The Lord had personally appeared to Solomon twice. Solomon wrote the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. He wrote Psalm 72 and Psalm 127. Read those Psalms and notice Solomon's reverence and love for the Lord!

So at the beginning of his reign King Solomon walked with the Lord and had everything going for him. And yet Solomon's heart turned away from God. Solomon's heart strayed away from the Lord. Little by little, his disobedience in the area of his passions caused him to turn away from the Lord - more and more.

This could happen to any believer. It could happen to you. It could happen to me. Remember Solomon's downfall!