

## Solomon: From Success to Failure

Solomon's father, David, had already made plans and preparations for the building of the temple, yet Solomon was the one chosen to actually build it. The temple project was indeed impressive, and it took Solomon 7 years to build it (1 Kings 6:38). God had made the promise to Solomon: "Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel" (1 Kings 6:12-13). Solomon had started out on the right foot and it was up to him to keep it going in the right direction.

Solomon was also warned that if he turned aside from covenant, there would be consequences: "But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot you from My land which I have given you, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples" (2 Chron. 7:19-20).

Solomon also built his own palace, and it took him thirteen years to do so (which may indicate a problem itself in proportion to the



time spent on the temple). Much of the work that Solomon had done was through the use of forced labor, which would also be a problem on its own.

The wisdom and wealth of Solomon were well known far and wide:

"So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart" (1 Kings 10:23-24). Sadly, this would not inoculate Solomon against that which would turn him against God.

There is an interesting connection in the story of Solomon that helps explain this turn. From Birth, the Lord loved Solomon (2 Sam. 12:24). Initially, Solomon loved the Lord (1 Kings 3:3). But the turning point for Solomon is seen in 1 Kings 11:1: "Now King Solomon loved many foreign women..." (1 Kings 11:1). Solomon's love for these women put him in severe spiritual danger. With 700 wives and 300 concubines, he was bound to compromise the covenant principles, and he did.

"For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.

Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord fully, as David his father had done” (1 Kings 11:4-7).

Solomon’s sins would have serious consequences. Instead of unifying the nation as David had done, Solomon’s actions would hurt the nation and create a divide that could never be fully healed (apart from Christ, that is). He was beginning to do the very things that were warned against in Deuteronomy 17:16-17: “Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall never again return that way.’ He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.” Solomon multiplied both horses and wives, and even took for his first wife a princess of Egypt. The irony abounds, and his heart was turned away.

“Now the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was 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 observe what the Lord had commanded. So the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant’” (1 Kings 11:9-11).

God was talking about Jeroboam, the one who would become king of the northern kingdom. Solomon even sought to put Jeroboam to death, to no avail. Other enemies rose up against Solomon as well, and what had been so peaceful would be disturbed by rebellion. Sadly, the legacy of

Solomon would be remembered, not for his wisdom, but for his failure to stay true to God. This, of course, represents a great irony, for there is no greater wisdom than staying true to God.

Solomon surely teaches us that wisdom and wealth can only be truly valuable when harnessed within the boundaries of doing God’s will.

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