

December 3

Scriptures: Read 1 Kings 11

Key Verse: “So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel.... Therefore the Lord said... ‘I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant’.” (1 Kings 11:9, 11)

Overview

Solomon’s glorious reign was marred by sin and came to a tragic end. He who was so greatly blessed by God abused the position God had given him. He knowingly violated the regulations set down by Moses that prohibited the king from amassing horses, silver, and gold, as well as wives, “lest his heart turn away” (Deuteronomy 17:16-17). He did not heed the warning, and as predicted his heart was indeed turned away from the Lord because of the influence of his many foreign wives (11:3-4).

The major reason for Solomon’s marriages with many foreign women must have been for political alliances. Solomon was known to be a wise politician, but in this area he took diplomacy too far. Pleasing God should have been more important than pleasing the kings of the surrounding nations, and more important than pleasing his many heathen wives.

As well as violating the command not to have many wives, Solomon violated the Law forbidding Israelite intermarriage with idolatrous people. The reason for this command was because such marriages would influence Israel to worship other gods (11:2; Deuteronomy 7:3-4), and Solomon fell into this trap. During his later years, he was influenced by his heathen wives to actually build shrines to their gods. It is hard to imagine that the man who had built and dedicated the Temple of God and who exclaimed “the Lord is God; there is no other” (8:60), could be led to do such evil! Although he may not have worshipped these gods himself, as did his wives, Solomon nonetheless compromised his faith and disobeyed God’s orders, allowing the worship of these gods to go on in Israel and take place on the hill (11:7). The location was probably the Mount of Olives, right across the valley from the Temple. The judgment and punishment of God for Solomon’s sin was inevitable. The glorious age which David had ushered in and Solomon had enjoyed began to decay; all because of sin.

The Lord revealed His anger with Solomon and his punishment, probably through the prophet Ahijah (11:29). Because God honoured and loved his father David, the great punishment of rending and dividing the kingdom would not come about during Solomon’s lifetime (11:11-13). God did, however, bring immediate punishment upon him through the external and internal adversaries raised up against him.

Two external adversaries were Hadad, an Edomite of the royal family, and Rezon of Damascus. We are not told how they plagued Solomon, nor do we read of any open warfare with them. However, it is likely that both of them posed a constant threat to Solomon’s caravans. Rezon of Damascus was to the north and controlled the major trade route to the east. Hadad, to the south, probably caused much trouble raiding Solomon’s shipments from the port of Ezion Geber on the Red Sea.

The internal adversary God raised up was Solomon's own servant Jeroboam, an Ephraimite (11:13, 26), whom the prophet Ahijah foretold would take the kingdom away from Solomon's son. Yet, because of David, God would permit Solomon's son to rule over the tribe of Judah. Despite Solomon's sin, God would be faithful to the Davidic Covenant and raise up his righteous king through the line of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

Solomon died at about the age of sixty, ten years younger than his father. He did not have the long life God had promised if he had been obedient (3:14). How tragic that a man so promising would come to such an end. His life serves as an example of what the love of money, luxury, and sensual pleasure can do to a person who was once a true and humble servant of God. It shows clearly the dangers of compromise with the world and lowering the standards of God.

Prayer

O Lord God, we turn our hearts toward You for this new day. We worship You alone. Help us to serve You fully, not compromising with the world, the flesh, or the devil. In the name of the One who was totally true we pray. Amen.