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Solomon

I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go. 1 Kings 2:2-3

1 Kings 1-11; Key verses: 1 Kings 2:1-4

Timeline, about 970- 930 BC. During the time of the early Israelites, the areas were ruled by Israel and also Egypt, Phoenicians, Dorians, and the Assyrians were coming up, the Iron Age is at hand, bronze is still the majority of weapons and farming tools. Hinduism's main writings--the Vedic texts--are being formed; China becomes more unified and develops organized armies while massive earthquakes destroy most of the cities in the Mediterranean.

Key personalities: David, Solomon, Rehoboam, and Nathan.

The reign of David is considered the golden age of Israel with the takeover of Jerusalem, the massive building campaigns, the expansion of the territory and finally getting a handle of the evil peoples in the land. This sets up Solomon to carry on at the height of it all, and he does exceedingly well. Solomon builds the Temple and magnificent palace, further expands the kingdom, and even does far better than David. By his faithfulness, he creates unprecedented alliances with Egypt, Tyre, and others as God gave him extraordinary wisdom and wealth. However, he falls to sin. His downfall was pride and lust; he becomes seduced by foreign women and their evil ways--they lure him away from God and lead him willingly to pagan ideology and evil. This sets up Israel for a big fall--a Kingdom divided—with a succession of wicked and evil kings and God's responding judgment and captivity.

This all started with David's older son, Adonijah, who decided to jump the gun, pull off a coup (just as Absalom did), usurp his father and God's call, and take the kingdom away for himself from the trusted Joab who betrays David. This is all by David's following Eli and Samuel's error by not disciplining or disciplining his sons, so they did as they saw fit. In the chaos, Nathan the prophet and David make Solomon king, and he is charged to walk with God so that the Lord can fulfill the Promise (1 Kings 1:1-27; 2:2-4).

- 1 Kings 1-10: Reign of Solomon
- 1 Kings 11-16: The Divided Kingdom
- 1 Kings 16: Evil Ahab and Jezebel
- 1 Kings 17-18: Elijah challenges evil
- 1 Kings 19-22: Ahab does not listen

1 Kings depicts the glory of Israel in its golden age of promise fulfilled, wealth, expansion, and the great wisdom of Solomon. This is also the illustration of how such greatness was undone and broken apart by shifting focus from Holy God to the shameless self and the resulting sins of pride, lust, and greed. This and the second part, 2 Kings (originally one scroll or book is the sequel to 1 and 2 Samuel). This Book covers the end of David's life, and Solomon through Jehoshaphat.

Key Happenings: The golden age before the fall

The people of Israel, instead by being ruled by God and His Judges and priests, wanted to be like the other nations around them and have a king. They were warned not to do this, but they insisted; God placated them and used this as a forerunner to the Messiah to come. A lesson for us all: Never lose sight that God is our King! The first three kings have long reigns. Each started off good and went Bad. Saul fell and refused to repent. Next, David reigns. He is the man after God's heart and our model of what it means to be intimate and trust the Lord. He was good, even great; then, he fell to sin. However, unlike Saul, he repented and left the legacy to his son, Rehoboam, whose megalomaniac pride will divide the country and leave a legacy of dysfunction.

David's key to success was his passion and confidence in our Lord; such trust existed because God proves over and over again that He loves us, He is unfaithful, He cares continually, and He constantly watches over us. Solomon got this right in the first half of his life; unfortunately, he fell to lust and failed to train his children in the Lord, and they repeated his mistakes. The irony was that Solomon may have been the only child of David that was properly trained up. He saw what his bothers Absalom and Adonijah does. The question is why did Solomon perpetuate Eli, Samuel and David's sin and not disciple Rehoboam (Psalm 4:8)?

Solomon was the Third rightful king of Israel. He is called by God, David, and Nathan to be good, obedient, and unlike his wayward brothers or Saul. He responds with faith; God asks him what he wanted and Solomon responded that he wants to be a good king, and he needs wisdom--God blesses him. The first half of his reign was remarkable as he held a deep conviction to God and His Truth. He becomes the wisest and richest man who ever lived. He did not ask God for riches, yet, He gave them anyway. Solomon showcases the personal relationship and blessings we can have with God when we are humble and trust Him. He also shows how easy it is to fall to Pride and lose it all. This is a testament to all who will lead: You can have it good and be a blessing if you follow God's call and precepts and have character, or you can lead others astray and cause evil if you fall to pride. Yet, Solomon authors some of the Psalms and most of the Proverbs, the Books of Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes (1 Kings 11:1-43).

Pharaoh's daughter. Solomon uses his wisdom to not seek vengeance but rather he chooses reconciliation and creates a prime military and trade partner with Egypt. This also showcases his wisdom as with the babies' and the mother's dispute (1 Kings 3:5-13; 4:29-34).

Temple. This represents God's presence on Earth, the *Temple of God*. This is not where He lives, as He is omnipresent and thus cannot be confined to a mere place or time; rather, it is His representative and a place where people can worship Him. The Temple was David's vision of a permanent home for the Ark and a central place of worship, the Temple. This is a major shift from the portable Tabernacle as this IS a place for God's dwelling. Solomon built the Temple and dedicates it to God's Holy Glory. *Temple* also means "God is our refuge". (Lev 26:11-13; 1 Kings 5-6; Psalm 121:5-6; Isa. 4:5-6; 49:10; Rev. 4:6-7).

Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place. The small 15 x15 foot *inner shrine* of the Temple and the Tabernacle is where God's presence dwells, not the campus or main, outer building. This had a thick curtain that will be ripped when Jesus is Crucified. The temple is a precious image in Scripture of God Who Dwells Among His People. This is also an image that God is our Leader, Lord, and Shepherd. He is the One who leads; He is the One we look toward to lead us. Erroneously, some ancient kings considered themselves to be the shepherds of their kingdom (Gen. 48:15; 49:24; 1 Kings 5-8; Psalm 23; 80:1; Micah. 7:14; Matt. 2:6; Matt. 27:51; John 10:11-18; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 4:1-5:14; 7:13-17; 11:1-3, 18-19).

Altar. This refers to the central place of worship in *God's Temple*. This was made for His presence and was made known to all. God's Temple contrasts the pretentious dignity and prestige of worldly ways of the other nations with God's supremacy and the actuality that He is and will be forever seated on His Throne in eminence and power. God is an understandable and approachable, as He "condescends" to us. This means that God "descends" to our level to make Himself known; He actually lowers Himself--makes Himself accessible--and gives us insight according to *our* level of understanding so we can perceive Him from our aptitude to recognize what is otherwise incomprehensible. This is also a metaphor throughout Scripture that refers to God's preeminence and/or where God dwells, like in the New Testament, not necessarily an actual corporeal structure (throne). (Ex. 24:9-11; 25 (25:40)-40; 1 Kings 5-7; 22:19; 2 Chron. 2-4; Is. 6; Ezek. 1; 10:1; Dan. 7:9-10; Heb. 8:5-6; 9:1-14; Rev. 3:12; 4:2; 7:15; 14:15-17; 15:5-16:1, 16:17; 21:22).

Ark. Here Solomon led the people in worship to God's Holiness. This is the *Ark of His covenant* that represents the presence of God, His faithfulness, and atonement in keeping the covenant He made with His people even when they disobeyed Him. This refers to the main Jewish icon--the box chest, made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold--which held the tablets of the Ten Commandments and was placed behind the sanctuary curtain in the inner sanctum where the presence of God dwelt. It went missing after Nebuzaradan (meaning: "the captain of the guard" who invaded and captured Jerusalem and destroyed the temple for Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:8-20; Jer. 39:11; 40:2-5). Here it is to display God's dwelling and power and our reverence of Him. Now, the Covenant is in, with and through Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who paid for our sin (Ex. 25:10-22; Lev 26:11-13; Duet 10:1-2; 1 Kings 8; 2 Kings 25:8-10; Matt. 27:51; Heb. 9:23; 10:19-20; Rev. 3: 10-13; 4:6-8).

Queen of Sheba. She is a mystery. We know only that she is rich with wealth and wisdom and seeks someone greater than herself. She was to test Solomon and was also curious about this Lord and Temple—what an early epic evangelism opportunity! She was probably from southwest Arabia, now Yemen. (1 Kings 10:1-29; Job 1:15; 6:19; Psalm 72:10).

The decline and fall of Solomon! Solomon went from success to heinous sin by the destructiveness of sensuality that led to the divided kingdom and led them into captivity. The second half of Solomon's reign was appalling as he fell to idolatry. He allowed the influence of pagan women and lust for such women to distract him from faith and devotion to the things of God. Thus, his heart was turned away from God and towards himself, the flesh, and idolatry. His veracity to build the Temple turns to building pagan shrines and honor their evil gods. The kingdom was torn apart; it was put asunder.

This is a timeless tale and a lesson to all who hold power and authority: Be good and have character. Solomon started off great, seeking to know God, and he worked to be his best for God; just as he got off track, so can we. Solomon got distracted with women, a fast and loose lifestyle, and forgot what made him good--good discipleship and learning. He even failed to instruct his sons. They rebelled, divided the Kingdom, and the sons offered a series of bad kings with the occasional good one (1 Kings 11).

Key Takeaway: This is a stern warning to make sure our hearts do not stray. Too many Christians forget this lesson. We are not destroyed by a mad devil in a red suit and a pitchfork; we are destroyed by sin in all of its forms—neglect, busyness, idolatry, lusts of the flesh, laziness, and cynicism. We are apt to neglect the basics of the faith, the study of His Word, and the growth of our faith; we repeat Solomon's mistakes. Just like Solomon, we tend to replace God's Truths with new teachings and call it "social equality", "interpretation", or neglect good Bible teaching all together. We can easily forget who God IS and who we are IN Christ. If we do not know who God is and our call and responsibility, how in this world can we lead others in the direction that God calls? We cannot. There is no way around this truth. The opposite of maturity is immaturity, and this is the result of lack

of direction brought on by lack of knowledge. This leads us in rebellion against God, and as leaders, we will lead others away as well. If we choose our truths—our agendas—over the Only Truth, God's Word, we will be leading people in hopelessness and despair, because we have purposely misinformed our brothers and sisters for our own will. Many people cannot discern the differences between worldly truth and personal agendas and God's Word; good Christian leaders who seek God's Word without prejudice and pride are beyond blessing. It is the leader's responsibility to lead prayerfully and humbly with correct knowledge (not personal interpretation to suit societal, cultural, or personal concerns) based on God's Word.

The foreshadow of Jesus Christ? Never lose sight that God is our King! The *Veil*-- meaning people did not have access to God without a high priest--is torn *top to bottom* by God's divine intervention! We have access to Him! This Holy of Holies points us to Christ and that this Temple will be destroyed, and several after this one, and Christ will replace the Temple as God demonstrated that the reign of sacrifice and Law was over; grace was now at hand. As Christians, we have complete, whole, and unobstructed access to the Holy of Holies. This is also a rebuff to the pious, fraud religious leaders who were tearing their clothes prior (Ezek. 10-11; Matt. 26: 65; 27; 27:51; Heb. 9:1-25; 10:14-22; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Questions to Ponder

1. Why is it that the reign of David and Solomon's first half considered the golden age of Israel?
2. Solomon made an epic request to God. What was it? What would your request be?
3. How do you contrast Solomon's responses to God throughout his life? How about your's?
4. What was David's key to success? How does our passion and confidence in Christ as Lord help?
5. What does it mean to you that Christ cares and His watching over you?
6. How does Solomon demonstrate how one's heart can easily wonder away from God, His plan and call for us?
7. How is this section in Scripture a lesson for us all to never lose sight that God is our King?
8. Why is it important in leadership that one stays good, obedient and not be led to pride?
9. What happens when people succumb to the fast and loose lifestyle? What can you do to not forget what makes you a good (Christ does)?
10. How do you feel that God is now understandable and approachable, as He "condescends" to us?
11. What can we learn from Solomon indiscretions and their consequences? What do you need to do?
12. What can you and your church do to make sure our heart does not stray? Why do so many Christians forget this lesson?