

JUNE 13

1 Kings 11:1-12:19

1 Kings 11

The issue here is not that Solomon fell, it is how he fell and what he fell into. He disobeyed and we all disobey, but what happens here is in a class by itself.

Vs. 1-8 Notice that it mentions the foreign women. This number of wives is beyond excess. Of course, it seems limiting to even try to think of a normal marriage in this kind of harem; but if Solomon were to have gone through the wives, spending a day and a night with each, it would have taken him three years to have made the rotation. In reality, Solomon had no wife as we understand a wife and as God planned Eve for Adam. What a lonely guy. You might have thought having so many wives would have tamed his sexual appetite, but actually, I think that "appetite" might have been all Solomon really had. He certainly did not have a soul mate and he died an empty, lonely man.

V. 4 So, how old was Solomon when this happened? We know that David was 30 years old when he became king of Judah in Hebron. That means he was 37 when he moved to Jerusalem as king of the entire nation. David reigned for 40 years: Seven in Hebron and then 33 years in Jerusalem. Solomon had to have been younger than 33 when he became king. David needed some time to lose perspective, have the first baby with Bathsheba that died, and then to marry Bathsheba and have Solomon. Let's say all of this took 3-5 years. Solomon would then have been made king when he was 28-30.

It took Solomon four years to begin building the temple, and we know that the Lord spoke to Solomon after he had spent 20 years building. Those were the first 24 years of his reign. Solomon reigned for 40 years and this happened somewhere in the final 16 years. So Solomon, like David, would have died when he was about 70. If Solomon began the slide toward idolatry in his last 16 years as king, he had to be in his mid to late 50s. These are the years when you would think a man would be mature and wise.

I would suspect that after Solomon stopped building, he had no more goals in life. The redemptive mission of Israel wasn't a burning passion for him, so what do you do in midlife crisis? In the beginning of Ecclesiastes, which are the reflections of a backslidden and bitter Solomon, there is a progression of Solomon "trying out stuff." I'll bet that was his 50's. If so, his 60's were his ruin. Like his father before him, Solomon's faith was "alive" when he was young, but he fell when he was older and stopped building.

Vs. 5-8 When I was younger, I was often very puzzled about what could have made Solomon leave God in such a repulsive way. I don't think it had anything to do with his reason or logic. We are much more emotional/need-driven than mind-driven. When it says that Solomon *clung to these (his wives) in love*, my guy sense tells me, with this kind of harem, it was probably a very hormonal, fantasy-driven "love." I think that the more Solomon worked, the further away from God he drifted until he was emotionally empty. Ashtoreth was a fertility goddess, and the worship thereof was very X-rated. These wives had no inhibitions and gave Solomon more than he asked for. They lavished him with unrestrained sex, just what a spiritually drifting guy in midlife crisis didn't need. Solomon wouldn't be the only man in service for God who walked away from God because of his emptiness and his sexual needs. Milcom, Chemosh, and Molech were practically the same demon with different names. These monsters received the babies born from the fertility rites, as the parents sacrificed the unwanted children in fire, basically throwing them into a furnace. Today we've "cleaned it up" and call it abortion.

I know this is weird, but with as many wives as Solomon had, don't you think he might have had two or more sons? Yet we only hear of one. David had many sons and we have the record of their names. It may just be that no other sons are mentioned. Most of the other kings do not have

any sons mentioned other than the one that succeeded them. I think Solomon must have had lots of kids. I doubt he would have sacrificed all of them, but we do know that he must have sacrificed some children.

V. 5 makes it clear that Solomon was involved in the worship himself. It would have been horrible enough to have allowed his wives to do this, but he was part of the proceedings. Solomon became bent, and then was broken.

V. 6 This is a place where we can define David's devotion to God and why he is called "a man after God's own heart," because of this contrast with Solomon. David always followed the Lord, except in the situation with Uriah and Bathsheba. David always worshiped the Lord only. David's heart was always undivided. David never flirted with any pursuit that became a god to him or forced him to dishonor God, except in the situation with Uriah and Bathsheba. Solomon, on the other hand, went after horses, gold and foreign women and all those things they represented. From now on, David's devotion to the Lord will become the godly measure of all of the other kings.

Vs. 9-13 Now, with all we have read, isn't it amazing that God didn't just strike down Solomon? For the sake of the promise God made to David, God showed him mercy and grace.

Vs. 14-40 Notice that two of these foes who afflicted Solomon during his last years were hidden and helped by Egypt. So much for the usefulness of that "wise" marriage alliance with Egypt. It still makes me wonder that Solomon made that alliance without God's direction, and yet God never judged him for it. I don't think God's silence is a comfort.

Vs. 26-40 You would think that this would have caused Jeroboam to have considered himself honored by God and that he would have responded to God with devotion and obedience. God made him a pretty amazing promise, but sin is a pretty awesome and powerful thing.

V. 31 The math seems off here, but the tribe of Benjamin was within the land allotment of Judah, and by this time, considered as almost one with Judah. It is interesting that both were "royal" tribes, both having had kings of Israel.

V. 40 It seems that Solomon knew of the promise to Jeroboam and tried to kill him to somehow short circuit God's plan. That's just what Saul tried to do to David.

Vs. 41-43 We are not leaving Solomon for good. We'll revisit him in Chronicles, the Song of Solomon and in Ecclesiastes. But before we move on, we need to reflect on this terrible end to his life. Was he a man of God? Yes. Did he stray from God and dishonor Him? Yes. Was Solomon saved? I think so and I think he'll be in heaven. Even today, the harvest field is filled with ruined and broken harvesters, disciples of Christ, who, at one time, served fearlessly and rescued many in the harvest. All of us have something in us that can and will ruin us. If we let down our guard long enough or if we live in isolation from the Word and others who love us, that "something" can become dysfunctional and draw us away from our Lord.

There is the lesson, "there but for the grace of God go I," or *let anyone who thinks that he stands, take heed lest he fall* (1 Cor. 10:12). But there is another lesson too. God still loved, reached out to, and restored David; and, if Ecclesiastes is the last thing Solomon wrote, maybe that bitter man was restored too. Later we'll meet a king who trumped both David and Solomon, who was totally evil, who reigned the longest of all the kings, who did utterly irreparable damage and whom God redeemed and restored. Where there is true repentance, there must be forgiveness and restoration. We cannot be the army that shoots its own wounded. We all have the same disease, and though there is a volitional element to our sin, there is a power in sin that is beyond us, even if we are indwelt by the Spirit. Our only hope is in our weakness, being led by the Spirit, cleansed daily by the Word and following Christ in the harvest.

Our challenge as disciples, working in the harvest, is to shake the stuff off of us that seems to gather in the course of a day, week, month or year. We need to be cleansed in the Word and

constantly focused on our love for Christ, keeping our hearts, souls, spirits and desires undividedly fixed on Him.

1 Kings 12:1-19

The first part of the book of Proverbs is written from Solomon to his son. As I mentioned earlier, I would think that Solomon had hundreds of sons, but Rehoboam is the only one mentioned. So knowing how Solomon ranked as a husband, how do you think he ranked as a father? It is interesting to think that we have a book written by a dad to make his son wise, but in the end, neither truly was. How tragically sad. The truth of Proverbs stands as inspired by the Spirit, but so do God's words, *Whatever one sows, that will he also reap* (Gal. 6:7).

Vs. 1-5 It is interesting that Jeroboam was the spokesman and was willing to let the will of God play out.

Vs. 6-11 Verse 8 has to be one of the saddest verses in the Bible, especially after all we've read in Proverbs.

Vs. 12-19 What did Rehoboam expect? Israel would never again be united until after the exile.

Acts 9:1-25

Vs. 1-9 One question is why God waited until now to stop Saul. By this time, Saul had been involved in the deaths and beatings of many Christians. In his later testimony in Acts, Paul will claim personal responsibility for these deaths and will say he punished Christians, trying to force them to blaspheme or renounce Jesus.

V. 4 Can you imagine Jesus being this gentle with Saul? In Acts 26:14 we learn that Jesus spoke to him in Hebrew and observed that it was hard for Paul to kick against the goads. This means that Saul was under conviction, yet he kept on going. Deep in his heart he knew something was wrong. I tend to think it was because of the testimony of the people he was persecuting and beating. These people stood up to Saul with a devotion to Jesus, which more than matched his zeal for the law. That reality of faith and conviction, in the face of death, as they were beaten and humiliated, and as they died, must have begun to shake him. Now Saul was ready to listen.

V. 9 Everything you do during intense emotion is remembered. Anger is like pressing the "record" button. If you are in an argument, you can replay the audio and video for years, maybe for the rest of your life: every shout, every scream, every slap, every expression. Imagine Paul, blind for three days. I'll bet he played back every beating, every crying woman, every man pleading for his wife, and every refusal to renounce the name that Saul had hated. Imagine realizing he had been killing and beating the wrong people. At the end of Paul's life, he still called himself the chief of sinners. Paul was forgiven, but I think he still had all the memories and lived as a man humbled by God's grace to him. I think this is why God waited until this point.

Vs. 10-19 This was a tough assignment for Ananias.

V. 16 The Lord not only selected Paul, but the Lord announced very clearly that Paul was actually called to suffer for Him.

V. 18 I wonder if Paul put those in a scrapbook?

Vs. 20-25 Paul's natural passion was immediately redirected. Now that he really knew the truth, he pursued it as deeply as he, thinking he had the truth, had fought against it.

Paul's early Christian life is a bit of a riddle. He says some things in Galatians that are hard to fit into Luke's writing. Notice that in v. 25, Paul has disciples. That would take some time. It is usually thought that there is a time gap between vs. 22 and 23. Galatians 1:17 says, *nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus*. So apparently, Paul worked in Damascus and left for three years to pray and study alone. Then he returned to Damascus, and *then* they tried to kill him. From

Damascus, Paul went to Jerusalem and met and stayed with Peter for 15 days, meeting only James, Jesus' brother, but not the other apostles. Too bad, I think he would have liked John.

What's interesting to see in Paul is that Jesus will always lead him into trouble and suffering. That was the Lord's design. It looks like it happened because Paul was so deeply passionate. The fire in Paul attracted disciples and it inflamed enemies. It wasn't that Paul didn't have social skills; it was that he was so fully convinced of the message and the urgency of the mission, that people didn't respond with indifference to him or his message about Jesus.

Psalm 131

This is a song written by David for those coming to Jerusalem to worship to prepare their hearts in humility and quietness to learn from God. I know that isn't always my attitude in walking into a worship service. But even if we mastered that on Sundays, for a disciple, worship is 24/7, in spirit and in truth.

Vs. 1-2 Humility is very hard for us to manage, especially in public.

V. 3 Hope actually means complete dependence. Complete dependence in faith is also hard for us to manage.

Proverbs 17:4-5

We all know deep inside, that there is a God and that He keeps track of stuff like this. God is not mocked. Respecting Him in humility and dependence helps us care for those who might be dependent on Him and us.