

Solomon's Heart Turned from the Lord; The Kingdom Divided

1 King 11:1-12:24

Key Verse: 11:9,10

“The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command.”

Solomon's early life as king was glorious. He loved the Lord and was filled with God's wisdom. So God blessed him and his kingdom abundantly. Everyone envied him. But in his latter days, he became miserable. It was because he turned away from the Lord. He became an idol worshiper and the cause of division of the kingdom. In his early days he was good. But his end was tragic. Everybody wants to be like Solomon in his early days. But no one wants to be like him in his latter days. So almost no one names their son Solomon. There is a saying that to obtain God's blessing is hard, but to maintain God's blessing is harder, and more important. To start well is good. But to finish well is more important. This is something that we all need to learn how to do. Through Solomon's failure we can learn the secret of maintaining God's blessing. Let's learn so that we may finish well.

I. Solomon's heart turned away from the Lord (11:1-13)

In this part we can find the reasons for Solomon's failure. We can divide this section into three parts.

First, Solomon held fast to many foreign women (11:1-3). Look at verses 1-2. "King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter-Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from the nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love." The seed of compromise had already been planted in Solomon's heart when he married Pharaoh's daughter (3:1). In that case, he had a political motivation to strengthen his nation by aligning with Egypt. Perhaps it became his habit to establish treaties with foreign nations by intermarrying with princesses from each nation. This political strategy may have seemed expedient. However, Solomon did not follow the Biblical teaching for establishing a godly family. Furthermore, the phrases "loved many foreign women" and "held fast to them in love" show that he was also motivated by romantic desire, as the Song of Songs reveals. Romantic desire seems to be good. But his romantic

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desire led him astray until he became an international playboy. This did not happen in a day; it happened gradually. These foreign women must have been seductive and "hot" to the point of being irresistible. Once Solomon laid eyes on them, he could hardly look away because they were sexually attractive. Solomon was a wise man who could discourse about many subjects. But he did not really know the power of a woman, or a woman's mind. He also did not realize that Satan could work through them to make him stumble. Soon he found he was holding fast to foreign women in love. The words "held fast" imply a power struggle. A tug-of-war took place in Solomon's heart between the Lord and foreign women, and the foreign women won.

Here we see that whom we love in our hearts is an important matter. If we love someone or something more than the Lord, then the love of the Lord cannot dwell in our hearts (1 Jn 2:15). Moreover, our spiritual eyes become blind and our ears deaf to God's word. The Lord had said plainly in the Law of Moses not to intermarry with foreign women (Ex 34:6; Dt 7:3,4). Deuteronomy 17:14-20 was God's word to the king specifically. The king was to write down God's word and meditate on it daily and learn its meaning until he obeyed it from his heart all his days. God specifically said not to take many wives or they would lead his heart astray. Solomon did not listen to the word of God. He thought he was a special person, that he could handle it, that he was so wise that he could succeed without God's word. So he didn't depend on God or seek God's help. In a word, he became proud.

When a man is poor, his heart is humble. So he earnestly depends on God and asks God's blessing. God blesses him because he humbly asks. Then when he receives God's blessing, he becomes proud and neglects fellowship with God and tragedy follows. When Communism threatened to take over the world, Americans humbly asked God's mercy and put the words "In God we trust," on our money. Later, Communism disappeared. It was a golden time for America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But in the time of blessing, Americans decided to remove prayer from public schools, legalize abortion, and condone no-fault divorce. We abused our freedom and prosperity and became indulgent, immoral, and corrupt. Recently, economic disaster has fallen upon us and spread to other nations.

What was the cause of Solomon's failure? It was his pride. The main source of his pride was his wisdom. When he prayed for wisdom, God gave him wisdom that was superior to any other person on earth. Due to his wisdom, his fame spread far and wide. The whole world sought audience with Solomon. Solomon could defeat any other human being in three seconds with his superior wisdom. However, as

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time went by he forgot that God was the source of his wisdom. He forgot that the purpose of his wisdom was to govern his people well. He did not glorify God or serve others, but exalted himself as though he had manufactured his wisdom. He fell into the trap of the devil. Then he lost the habit of asking God for help.

When Solomon's heart was proud, he did not study the word of God from his heart. When he ignored God's word he became foolish. He loved ungodly foreign women more than God, and his love for the Lord became cold. He loved not only one or two women, but many women. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines (3). To love even one wife properly is very hard. How could he possibly love 1,000 women? His household was bigger than many corporations. At first, he must have been confident that he could handle all these women and lead them to become worshipers of God. He was proud of his identity as a man of God and of his record of offering 1,000 sacrifices at the beginning of his reign. He was sure that he would defeat these women and win them over to God. But it didn't work that way.

God blessed Solomon so much materially and spiritually. When he was blessed, he should have served God all the more, denying himself. He should have studied the word of God more. He should have taken care of God's people more diligently. Then God would have given him real joy, hope, spirit, and power in his soul. That is what happens when we love the Lord wholeheartedly. However, if a person indulges in the pleasures of the world, even tiny things, he loses his spiritual desires. Then the word of God can seem burdensome, and mission becomes a yoke. It is natural for our sinful hearts to turn away from the Lord. So let's pray that we may love the Lord more than anything else, restoring our first love.

Second, Solomon became an idol worshiper (4-8). When Solomon turned from the Lord, what kind of person did he become? Look at verse 4. "As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been." When Solomon was young, he seemed to handle the foreign women, because he had strength and wisdom. However, he did not know how great the influence of women is. Samson, the strongest man in the world, was finally defeated by his enemies when he came under the influence of a woman. Solomon, the wisest man in the world failed to bear God's blessing when he came under the influence of women. Man looks strong and seems to rule the world. But in reality women strongly influence men. So in essence, women influence the world. That is why we must pray earnestly for many godly women to be raised in North America. A woman's devotion and sacrifice are amazing; so when they love God, God uses them greatly. However, ungodly women have a jealous tendency and possessive desire. In addition they

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have undying persistence; when they want to obtain something they never stop until they get it. When Solomon was young he could resist their possessive desire. But man cannot be forever young and strong. The time comes when he becomes old. Though he is young at heart, he is not young in body. As Solomon became old and weak, he became vulnerable to the possessive desire of his wives and began to join them in the worship of their gods. When Solomon had first brought these foreign women to Jerusalem, they did not dare worship their idols openly, but only secretly. However, when Solomon became old, they became bold enough to worship their idols publicly.

These were detestable idols before God's eyes. Ashtoreth was the goddess of the Sidonians, and the wife of Baal; she was a seductive goddess of love. She became Aphrodite to the Greeks and Venus to the Romans. The worship of Ashtoreth involved lascivious practices. The detestable god Molech required people to offer their sons and daughters as burnt offerings (2 Ki 23:10). Chemosh may have had the same origin as Molech. These idols corrupted people with sexual immorality and idolatry. Therefore Solomon should have removed these idols. However, he was influenced through his wives, and began to worship them. He built a high place for Chemosh, Molech, and all the gods of his foreign wives. Then they burned incense and offered sacrifices to these false gods. Solomon, once known for his sparkling wisdom, had become a fool and an idol worshiper (Ro 1:21-23).

Verse 6 says, "Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done." Solomon had the best role model as a man of God and king of Israel in his father David. David followed the Lord wholeheartedly all his days. David was not perfect. Once, David fell into the sin of adultery and murder, and grieved God. But when Nathan the prophet rebuked him, King David repented his sin with tears and restored his love relationship with God. It was the time for Solomon to do the same. Human beings are weak. So we make mistakes and commit sins. But the real problem is what we do when we make a mistake. Do we turn to God? Or do we turn somewhere else? If we turn to the Lord, God will forgive us and make us a blessing as he did for David. If we turn away from the Lord we will become fools and idol worshipers who end in tragedy.

Third, Solomon ignored God's warning (9-13). Look at verses 9-10. "The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command." In the world, when someone makes a critical mistake, he is fired without mercy. However, the Lord does not cut off his people so easily. The Lord loved Solomon

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very much. The Lord had named Solomon "Jedediah," which means "loved of the Lord" (2 Sa 12:25). God loved Solomon so much because he was the fruit of David's repentance. The Lord had appeared to him twice--a very special privilege (3:4-5; 9:2). The Lord had poured his grace upon Solomon, until Solomon had experienced God most vividly and personally. So he should have had a more intimate love relationship with God. However, Solomon abandoned God. Solomon abused God's grace and his heart turned away from the Lord. Furthermore, Solomon did not keep the Lord's commands. God's first commandment is "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3). God's second commandment is "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything..." (Ex 20:4). At least Solomon should remember the first and second commandments. But he totally disobeyed them. So the Lord became angry with Solomon.

What does it mean that the Lord became angry? It does not mean that the Lord blew up at Solomon emotionally and began to punish him without mercy. Rather, it is the expression of true love. God's love is based on the truth. God becomes angry when his children violate the truth. 1 Corinthians 13:6 says, "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth." Love is not just a feeling, but it is based on the truth. If we drift away from the truth, God is not pleased. This principle is also true in relationships among people. If a parent really loves his child, he becomes angry when his child does evil.

Look at verse 11. "So the Lord said to Solomon, 'Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.'" Solomon's attitude toward God had totally changed from intense love to cold indifference. Then what happened? Nothing? Many people think that if they abandon God and ignore his word nothing will happen. This is not true. It is the beginning of disaster. God gets angry when his people abuse his grace and disobey his word. When God gets angry he takes action to discipline his people and he gives a warning. God said he would tear the kingdom away from Solomon and give it to one of his subordinates. This should have gotten Solomon's attention. Solomon's lifetime of achievement would be lost in a day and his descendants would suffer greatly because of his sin. God's anger is not merely punitive. God's anger comes from his love and it is intended to lead men to repent. God warned Solomon out of his love. But Solomon ignored God's warning. It was a tragic mistake. Proverbs 29:1 says, "A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed--without remedy." When we receive a warning from God through God's word, we have to take it very seriously and return to God. If we

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remain stiff-necked, we will suddenly be destroyed. So we need neck exercise to soften our necks. Let's exercise our necks. And let's take God's warning seriously.

God showed his great mercy in the midst of his warning. Look at verses 12-13. "Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen." God was merciful toward Solomon for the sake of David. Ultimately, God would keep his promise to bless David's offspring by sending Jesus Christ.

II. The kingdom divided (11:14-12:24)

In this part we can see the result of ignoring God's warning. Many people think that if they ignore God, God will ignore them. But it is not so. Let's see what happened.

First, the Lord raised adversaries against Solomon (11:14-43). Look at verse 14. "Then the Lord raised up against Solomon an adversary...." If God is with us, even the adverse situation can be turned into a favorable one. However, if God is against us, even a favorable situation can become an adverse situation. When God was with him, Solomon's kingdom was one of peace and prosperity. Suddenly the situation began to change. The Lord began to raise adversaries against Solomon. It was not just one person, but three persons, one after another. The first was Hadad the Edomite. As a boy, he had escaped the war with the Israelites in which his people were defeated. He went to Egypt and found favor with Pharaoh and lived a privileged life. Yet he may have harbored a desire to avenge his father and his nation for their defeat by Israel. One day, he suddenly left Egypt and went to Edom. His mission was to be a troublemaker for Solomon. The second enemy was Rezon. He was a mafia member who took over the city of Damascus with a gang of lawless men. Whenever possible, they caused trouble for Solomon, adding to the trouble caused by Hadad.

The third enemy was Jeroboam, an Israelite, one of Solomon's officials, personally appointed by Solomon to oversee the labor force of Joseph's house (28). He was a man of standing who did his job very well. One day, through the prophet Ahijah (31), the Lord revealed his plan to make Jeroboam king for ten tribes. The reason was given in verse 33, "I will do this because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molech the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in my

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ways, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my statutes and laws as David, Solomon's father, did."

In verses 37-38 the prophet explained why the Lord appointed Jeroboam as king of the ten tribes. The Lord wanted Jeroboam to walk in his ways and do what was right in his sight, so that he could restore the spiritual condition of the kingdom as in David's time. God gave the same blessing to Jeroboam that he gave to David. Nevertheless, for the sake of David, God reserved one tribe so that they may keep the lamp of God according to God's promise. David was the exemplary king of Israel. David loved God and he loved God's word from his heart. David obeyed God's command. If Jeroboam walked in God's way and did what was right in God's eyes by keeping God's command as David did, his kingdom would be prosperous.

God tore the ten tribes from Solomon and gave them to Jeroboam according to his will. God is the sovereign ruler. God deposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. When adversaries arose against Solomon, one after another, both outside and inside of his kingdom and from among his faithful subordinates, he should have realized that it was God's warning to him to repent. He should have taken this sign seriously and turned to the Lord. Instead, he tried to kill Jeroboam (40). Finally, Solomon died without solving this problem. There is no evidence that he repented. This is tragic. However, here we see God's great patience. The Lord could have destroyed Solomon and his kingdom immediately when he turned away from the Lord. But God was patient in the hope that Solomon would realize his sin and turn to the Lord. God wants us to repent our sins and turn to the Lord so that we may have peace and prosperity and enjoy God's blessing. But if we ignore the Lord, turning our hearts away, the Lord gets angry. He warns us patiently to repent and come back to him. But if we do not, there will be a real consequence. So let's remember God's patient love and come to God humbly, instead of fighting with enemies.

Second, the Lord divided the kingdom (12:1-24). After Solomon died, his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king. Jeroboam returned from exile in Egypt and went with the whole Israelite assembly to Rehoboam and said, "Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you" (4). It was a golden opportunity for Rehoboam to win the people's hearts. At first he consulted with the elders who advised him to humbly accept this request. We don't know exactly why Rehoboam rejected the elders' advice. But he may have thought that if he followed their advice, he would have appeared to be weak rather than strong. It seems that he wanted to establish a hierarchy of power instead of serving the people as a shepherd. So he rejected the

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advice of the elders. Then he consulted with the young men who had grown up with him. They said, "Tell them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions'" (10-11). Rehoboam was a spoiled son. As far as we know, he was the only son of Solomon. Though Solomon had many wives, he had only one son. God did not bless his unions with foreign women. Solomon could not discipline his only son. Maybe he had no time to discipline him due to the demands of his many wives. So Rehoboam became a proud and useless person. He should have listened to the elders, who had wisdom through experience. But he would not listen to them; he took the young men's arrogant advice.

Rehoboam's pride led to the division of his nation. Look at verse 15. "So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the Lord, to fulfill the word the Lord had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite." The consequence of Solomon's unfaithfulness came upon his son, and the nation was divided. The Israelites turned away from Rehoboam and they made Jeroboam their king (20). Only the tribe of Judah remained under Rehoboam's reign. At first, Rehoboam became angry and wanted to exercise his kingly authority. He raised 180,000 soldiers to wage war against Jeroboam. But the Lord told him, and all the people, not to do so because the division came from him. So they obeyed the Lord. In this way the kingdom was divided as the Lord had warned Solomon.

In this passage we can learn how to bear God's blessing. **First, we must keep our first love for the Lord to the end, as we learned through Dr. John Jun's message last week.** However, it is very easy for us to lose our first love in the time of blessing. We have to love the Lord first, not only in the time of adversity, but also in the time of blessing. In the time of blessing, we need to struggle harder to keep our first love. We can love the Lord by listening to God's words first in our hearts and obeying them. In addition, we must love God's people as Jesus commanded us. To love the Lord, his word, and his people is the secret of maintaining his blessing.

Second, we can learn from the examples of David and Solomon. We find a great contrast between David and Solomon. Solomon received abundant blessing from the Lord, but failed to maintain it. His heart was not right with God. He would not listen to God's word or keep God's command. Even though he experienced the living God vividly he didn't fear God from his heart. However David feared the Lord and loved the Lord and kept God's command absolutely to the end of his life. When he made a mistake he repented and came back to God.

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When God warned him, he listened to God's word. So David became the shadow of the Messiah. Keeping God's command is not just a matter of one-time obedience. It is not enough to do so only in our early days. We must keep God's commands to the end of our lives. Then we can be a blessing to our descendants.

Third we also learn the importance of marriage. The main cause of Solomon's downfall was his attraction to ungodly foreign women. To marry a godly person is not an option, but precisely God's will for his children. The alternative is tragedy. Let's pray that many young people may not marry ungodly spouses, but marry godly spouses, and be a blessing for the next generation. Most of all, we must turn our hearts to the Lord by loving the Lord, fearing the Lord, loving God's word, and loving God's people.