

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 6
THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS
CHAPTER 11**

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, the divinely inspired author gave a glowing description of Solomon's wisdom, wealth and power. He was praised by the Queen of Sheba who took a long trek to Jerusalem to see for herself what she had heard -- the greatness of Solomon and the LORD God whom he worshipped. This chapter begins with the conjunction "but". It is an important conjunction that suggests a dramatic turn of events, and intimates a warning of impending disaster.

Solomon had fallen into spiritual decline. The divine author does not hide the faults of God's people, especially of leaders and heroes. This is a striking characteristic of the Word of God. In most secular historical records where the noblest leaders are portrayed the authors, more often than not, tend to "soft pedal" the bad and evil things about them and overtly exaggerate their accomplishments. But the Bible is different. It describes its leaders with absolute honesty documenting all their faults as well as

their virtues, to the glory of God and for the edification of the saints.

God had appeared to Solomon on two previous occasions (6:11-13; 9:2-9). On both occasions God promised to bless him if he would walk in His ways like David his father, in integrity of heart and in uprightness to keep God's commandments and statutes. Solomon had a choice either to remain in God's favour or to opt out of it. This chapter narrates Solomon's choice. The first part of the chapter relates Solomon's slide into waywardness (vv. 1-8). The next part relates God's response to Solomon's waywardness (vv. 9-13). This is followed by a series of opposition to his rule which is brought about by God as a result of Solomon's many sins (vv. 14-40) and finally, a statement of the length of his reign and his eventual death (vv. 41-43). It was a sad end for such a promising and great man who was so richly blessed!

COMMENTARY

**Solomon Followed Not the LORD
Completely – 11:1-8**

The opening statement reveals Solomon's weakness for women ("strange" means "foreign"). Why Pharaoh's daughter is specifically mentioned is not revealed by the author. The other women whom he took for his wives included the Moabites, the Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites. These were inhabitants of the land whom the LORD specifically forbade His people

from marrying¹ “for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods”. They were probably married more for political expediency than the lust of the flesh. An adoption of such a method to stabilize one’s country might be acceptable for other Gentile nations but not for Israel. Israel was a nation of God where she must trust in God alone for stability and safety. Solomon had sinned against God by what he did. Solomon’s polygamous lifestyle and political compromises made him the king that divided a united nation.

But Solomon loved them. He had seven hundred wives, who were princesses, and three hundred concubines! And just as the LORD said, they turned Solomon’s heart away from the LORD. Why did he want to have so many wives and concubines? Some sceptics think that the number is fictitious. It is not. The King of Saasanid Persia whose name is Chosroes II (lived 590-628 A.D.) had 3,012 concubines. Mulai Ismail, the ruler of Morocco (1672-1727) had 2,000 wives and 800 concubines, and hundreds of sons and daughters. So it was not strange or untrue that Solomon had as many wives and concubines as stated. The Bible is the perfect Word of God and these examples are merely cited to demonstrate the commonality of such

kingly practices. Even if there were none of these examples, the Word of God still stands.

There are a few possible reasons why he married them. One was that these marriages were political marriages, which he contracted to obtain a friendly relationship with the neighbouring countries thereby, strengthening the nation of Israel. Secondly, he wanted to keep up with the times. He wanted to be like the other kings. In those days, it was common for the kings of the ancient Near East to have a harem of wives and concubines. Then it was a measure of the greatness of a king. Solomon wanted to be great. Another reason is that he loved women, period!

Solomon reaped what he sowed. When he was old, his wives turned away his heart to worship other gods. His heart was not perfect with the LORD, his God. Did God really expect perfection from Solomon? Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians and after Milcom, the god of the Ammonites. Solomon worshipped these gods as the text indicates. He “went after” these gods of which the LORD had warned him to refrain from doing. Solomon’s heart was not fully after the LORD. He worshipped the LORD God as well as the gods of his foreign wives. He built “a high place” (an altar) for Chemosh, which is the national god of Moab in the hill that was before Jerusalem. In addition, he built another high place for Moloch (or Molech) the god of the Ammonites (v.7). The hill that was before Jerusalem is the

¹Exodus 34:15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; 16 And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

Mount of Olives which was directly opposite the Temple. Solomon pleased all his foreign wives and did likewise for them. When crowds of people came to worship the LORD at the Temple, they could see the pagan altar on Mount Olives and be tempted to imitate the royal princesses' practice of worshipping their gods. This was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Solomon's wives should not be blamed for turning away his heart from God. The responsibility was solely and fully Solomon's. He had no one to blame but himself. He was very conversant with the Mosaic Law which forbade intermarriages of differing faiths, as well as the sin of polygamy. Moses clearly declared in Exodus 34:15, 16 that the Israelite men should not marry the daughters of their neighbours. Moses repeated this commandment twice in Deuteronomy 7:3, 4 and 17:17.² This comment of the LORD on Solomon in verse 6 is very revealing. **1 Kings 11:6** says, "*And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.*" God did not expect perfection from any of His children, only obedience and genuine repentance. David was far

2. Deuteronomy 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. 4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

Deuteronomy 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

from perfect but he was a man after God's own heart. Solomon was compared with his father, David.

The LORD Was Angry With Solomon – 11:9-13

The LORD was angry with Solomon because he had become idolatrous. He worshipped the LORD as well as the idols of his foreign wives and concubines. The divine author makes it unquestionably clear that Solomon could not plead ignorance for the LORD appeared to him twice. If the LORD appears to someone to give His promise and warn him once, it should be sufficient to make him heed His Word. . In Solomon's case, the LORD appeared to him twice to make sure that he clearly understood. Though Solomon worshipped the LORD, he also worshipped the pagan gods. This was not acceptable. The LORD God, who is the living and true God, deserves everything, all or nothing—not even 90 percent for the LORD as against 10 percent in favour of the other gods. The LORD must have spoken to him through a prophet, for it is not mentioned that the LORD spoke to him directly. For his sins, the LORD prophesied that He would divide the kingdom of Israel into two parts; and one part was to be given to his servant. That was His judgement. But God would not let it happen in Solomon's lifetime for David's sake. It would only happen after his death. Moreover the covenant He made with David would not be broken. The other part would be given to Solomon's son for David's sake and also for that of the city of Jerusalem which He had

chosen. The covenant that the LORD made with David would run its full course.

We see that the LORD is ever faithful to His Word. Sin has to be dealt with and the one that sins is responsible for his actions. God will give His judgement because He is a holy and righteous God. His love does not preclude His holiness and righteousness as many have misunderstood it to be. In this case, He judged Solomon for his failure to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments. This is true biblical love. If God had continued to bless Solomon for his idolatry, then God would be a derelict Father, which He definitely is not. Instead, Solomon trusted in his own wisdom, wealth, power and international fame. God showed Solomon grace despite his terrible sin of idolatry. God allowed him to live out his days as the king of Israel. Subsequently, his son would be allowed to rule part of the divided kingdom. God will not negate His covenant which He had made with David. The Davidic dynasty would continue through the tribe of Judah. Ultimately, the Messiah, David's Greater Son, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, would come and rule Israel. We can take comfort and assurance in the Word of God!

The LORD

Is Sovereign – 11:14-25

The text declares that “the LORD stirred up an adversary” against Solomon in the person of Hadad, the Edomite. The word “adversary” is the Hebrew word “Satan” which literally

means “an adversary” or “opponent” or “enemy”. It is the descriptive name given to the Devil, Satan. But its use in this context is in its general sense as an adversary, or one who opposes or rebels.

A historical background is given concerning Hadad. As an Edomite, he was somewhat related to Solomon. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the elder twin brother of Jacob. In Genesis, we learn that even before the twins were born, they were struggling inside their mother's womb.³ When they were born, Esau came out first but Jacob had a grip on his brother's ankle as if to take his place.

David had subjugated Edom, and Joab his army commander had slain every Edomite male. But Hadad, then a young child, had escaped with some Edomites and his father's servants. He fled to Midian and then to Paran. When Hadad grew to be a young man, they settled in Egypt. The Pharaoh welcomed him and gave him a house, provisions and land. Hadad must have acquitted himself very well. Pharaoh was so pleased that he gave him the sister of his wife, Tahpenes the queen, for a wife. She bore Hadad a son whom they named Genubath, whom Tahpenes the queen weaned in Pharaoh's palace. When Hadad heard that David and Joab were dead, he asked Pharaoh to let him return to

³ Genesis 25:23 And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

Edom, his homeland. Pharaoh reluctantly let him go. Precisely what his adversarial activities against Solomon were is not revealed. He might have carried out periodic incursions into Israel.

Then God stirred up another adversary against Solomon. He was Rezon, the son of Eliadah. He fled from his master Hadadezer who was king of Zobah. Zobah was situated not far north of Damascus (today's Syria). The explanation behind his flight is that when David defeated and slew his master Hadadezer, he fled to Damascus. He settled in Damascus and reigned in that city. He hated Israel and became its adversary all the days of Solomon's rule. Once again, we are not told the nature of his adversarial activities against Israel except that he and Hadad made trouble for Israel.

The LORD Gives to Jeroboam Ten Northern Tribes – 11:26-40

Jeroboam was the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda. Jeroboam's father died and he was raised by his mother Zeruah. The Ephrathites were a proud people. It was one of the largest tribes in the north of Judah. Why did Jeroboam rebel against Solomon? Solomon had imposed heavy taxes on the people to finance his building projects, which were concentrated in and around Jerusalem.

Jeroboam was a "man of valour". This phrase means that he was a man of ability and wealth. His wealth could have been an inheritance from his father. Solomon noticed that he was

an industrious man and appointed him to be ruler over the conscript slaves of the house of Joseph, the Ephrathites (or Ephraimites). One day as Jeroboam made a trip out of Jerusalem, he was met by the prophet Ahijah, the Shilonite. Ahijah was wearing a new garment and they were together alone.

Ahijah took off the garment that he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. He then said to Jeroboam: "Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee" (11:31). The prophet continued and explained that it was because the people had forsaken the LORD and had worshipped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon. They had not walked in the ways of the LORD to do that which was right in His eyes. Ahijah further explained that the LORD would not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand for David's sake. But the LORD would give ten tribes of the kingdom to Jeroboam, and one tribe to David whose descendants would continue to rule in Jerusalem. Ahijah then charged Jeroboam that he could rule over Israel (the ten tribes) as he desired.

The condition was that he must keep the commandments and statutes of God and walk in all His ways and do that which was right in His sight, as David had done. God promised him that He would be with him and build him a sure house (dynasty) just as He

had built for David, and would give Israel (the northern ten tribes) to him. Jeroboam who would rule the northern tribes would afflict “the seed of David” that is Judah with Benjamin. It would not be forever. This means that Jeroboam or his descendants would not rule for ever. God’s punishment of “the seed of David” would end at His appointed time.

Ahijah’s distribution of the twelve pieces torn from his garment seems to have a mathematical discrepancy. He gave ten to Jeroboam and mentioned that one tribe was to David. That adds up to eleven. Where is the missing piece or tribe? There is no missing piece or tribe at all. The one tribe was given to Judah itself. **1 Kings 11:31-32** reads, *“And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)”* NOTE that Jeroboam was given the same charge as those that were given to Solomon.

Solomon’s Last Days – 11:41- 43

Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam knowing that Jeroboam would rebel against him. Jeroboam fled to Egypt, to Shishak, the Pharaoh of Egypt, and he was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. Once again, Egypt was a place of refuge for the Israelites. Solomon ruled the united kingdom of Israel for forty years. It is sad that the last mention of his works is that he

sought to kill Jeroboam. This is a great contrast to his great achievements in his earlier years. His activities were now reduced to the level of vengeance, murder, protecting his own interest, womanizing, and idolatry and trying to delay the inevitable.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The wisest man of all men can also fall. There is no guarantee that a person who is endowed with godly wisdom, wealth, power and international fame will continue to be humble, trusting God and doing what is right before Him according to His Word. Solomon is the example. His God given blessings had turned into a curse. He became proud and self-exalting, trusting in his own ability and resources. He turned himself away from God, the very Person who had raised and blessed him. It is very easy for a man to succumb to temptation when he is rich and powerful. When pride sets in, His eyes will shift from the LORD to mammon and self. The love of money is indeed the root of all evil and those who crave it will suffer great spiritual losses. Fame and fortune were causes of Solomon’s downfall.

Once again, it is revealed to us that obedience to God will bring God’s approval and blessings. Walking in all His ways and doing what is right before Him is the way to success and blessings. Turning away from Him and sinning against Him will incur His anger and His judgement. Yet we thank God that He is always faithful to His promises and His Word.

Chastisement will be for a time. We ought to realise that sometimes, when we experience troubles and tribulations, God may be drawing our attention to examine ourselves and to confess and repent if we have sinned. God is righteous and just to forgive our sins. Solomon learned his lesson. The Book of Ecclesiastes describes his life of regret and shame and has a word of warning that no one who professes to be a Christian should ever follow in his regrettable footsteps. But many Solomons have come and gone and have not listened. Sadly, they will also not be the last.

The quality of our evening years in life on earth depends on whether we have been living in accordance to the Word of God and doing His will. If we walk in His ways, He will bless us. If we disobey Him, we will incur His anger and displeasure and will suffer the consequences of our own sins. **Proverbs 3:5-6** is what every Christian needs daily, *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”* AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 1 Kings 11:1-8; Matthew 6:24; James 1:6; Psalm 86:11.

TUESDAY: 1 Kings 11:9-13; 1Corinthians 15:58; John 14:31; Philipians 2:8.

WEDNESDAY: 1 Kings 11:14-22; Genesis 25:22-23.

THURSDAY: 1 Kings 11:23-39; Psalm 135:5-6; Acts 4:23-30.

FRIDAY: 1 Kings 11:40-43; Eccl 2:11; Eccl 12:13; Matthew 16:26; 1 John 2:17.

Discussion Questions

1. If our life-partner has such great influence in our life (especially of men) what practical lesson can we learn from Solomon’s experience?

2. What does it mean by Solomon’s heart was not “perfect” with the LORD in 1 Kings 11:4? See 1 Kings 8:61; same word is used there. The Hebrew word is “Shalem”.

3. How would you feel if God were to say to you that the reason you do not live to see the punishment was for your father's sake?

4. What remarkable promises did the LORD make to Jeroboam? What spiritual lesson can we learn from it? If you have learned from it, state some practical applications in your life?

5. Did God deal justly with Solomon? Why should the nation of Israel be judged for the sins of Solomon?

6. What do you think is the cause of Solomon's slide to apostasy? How can we prevent the same from happening to us?

7. What would you say are the most useful and important lessons to learn from Solomon's mistakes in this chapter?
