

STUDY OF FIRST KINGS (LESSON P-09)

REVIEW

I. UNIFIED NATION

- A. SOLOMON'S ASCENSION TO THE THRONE
- B. THE WEALTH AND WISDOM OF SOLOMON
- C. SOLOMON'S BUILDING ACTIVITIES
- D. THE GOLDEN AGE OF SOLOMON [10:1-29]

CURRENT LESSON

E. SOLOMON'S APOSTASY, DECLINE, AND DEATH [11:1-43].

1. SOLOMON'S UNFAITHFULNESS TO GOD [11:1-13].

11:1-3] - It seems that Solomon disobeyed several Mosaic regulations such as the amassing of horses, of foreign women, and of gold; and although these three sins of the monarch taken separately, or even weighed together, may not be nearly as "glaring" as the one big sin of his father David; yet it seems that they are the sins that drew his heart away from the living God. It is significant that there is no written indication that he ever repented of these sins (remember, the terms of his prayer at the Temple Dedication demanded repentance for God's Forgiveness).

Solomon's extraordinary gift of wisdom was not sufficient to preserve him from falling into grievous and fatal errors. He had it all at the beginning of his reign; and lost it all at the end!

Later Scriptures spoke of this: "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? (Gal 3:3) and "Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Rev 3:17).

It was a love of the world and an endless round of pleasure that senselessly corrupted his heart. It actually looks as if Solomon was in a state of mental darkness. The Grace of God had deserted him. The son of King David and Bath-Sheba, and pupil of Nathan, instead of showing the stability of sound principle and mature experience became at last an old and foolish king: "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished" (Ecc 4:13).

His fall is traced to his "love of many strange women" and of many others things. While a number of wives is reckoned as an indication of wealth and importance, just as a numerous stable of exotic cars and big houses are among us. The sovereign wants to

11:9-13] – No doubt about it; the die was cast, and Solomon's Kingdom was now hurtling pell mell towards a division; and God announced the extent of His chastisement: The Kingdom was to be torn and divided. Israel would lose her political unity. Solomon's sun, which had risen in such splendor, was now about to set behind the darkest cloud.

However, David was still to have a "lamp" in Israel; and the Kingdom would not be totally taken away.

God's appearances at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:5) and Jerusalem (1 Kings 9:2), with the warnings given him on both occasions (1 Kings 3:11-14) (9:3-9), had left Solomon inexcusable. It was proper and necessary that on one who had been so favored by The LORD, but who had grossly abused the privilege, a terrible judgment should fall.

The divine sentence probably had a measure of mercy co-mingled with judgment so that it should not be inflicted on Solomon personally; and that a remnant of the kingdom should be spared "for David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, which had been chosen" to put God's name there. It was not that a partial bias was involved; but that the divine promise might stand (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

Later, Rehoboam is said to have received the southern area (Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, and Levi) (2 Chronicles 11:12-13); and multitudes of Israelites, who, after the schism of the kingdom, established their residence within the territory of Judah to enjoy the privileges of the true religion (1 Kings 12:17). These were all reckoned as one tribe.

2. ADVERSITIES AND IMPENDING DIVISION [11:14-40].

Although the division of the kingdom did not occur until after the death of the King, Solomon was to experience punishments, as God, in His displeasure, raised up external and internal enemies against him.

11:14-25] - Hadad, a prince of the royal House of Edom, had escaped Joab's massacre and fled with some of his followers to Egypt, where he had been treated kindly by the Pharaoh. Now, apparently for no valid reason (except the provincial leading of God), he requested and obtained permission from Pharaoh to return home.

Rezon of Damascus, the son of Eliada, became a guerrilla with a party of bandits that harassed the northern countryside. Shortly after David's death, he seized the city of Damascus, and Solomon could not expel him. Little by little, Rezon became an increasing threat as he dominated the trade routes to the East.

Jeroboam the son of Nebat of Ephraim, became the internal adversary of Solomon. He had been a young man of considerable ability and talent and Solomon noticed him and made him overseer of his public works.

Hadad seems to have offered his services to Rezon (1 Kings 11:23-25).

These hostile neighbors, who had been kept in check by the traditional fame of David's victories, took courage; and breaking out towards the latter end of Solomon's reign, they must have not only disturbed his Kingdom, but greatly crippled his revenue by stopping his lucrative traffic with Tadmor and the Euphrates.

11:26-36] – The prophet Ahijah, in order that he might not be known, wrapped himself up to conceal himself in a new garment which he afterwards tore in twelve pieces. The purpose of this illustration of giving Jeroboam ten pieces while retaining two was to announce that God was about to rend the Kingdom of Solomon, giving 10 tribes to Jeroboam while leaving only two for the House of David.

Even though this was a "private meeting", the narrative and its prediction probably reached the King's ears; and Jeroboam became a marked man (1 Kings 11:30-40). His aspiring ambition, impatient for the death of Solomon, led him to form plots and conspiracies, in consequence of which he was compelled to flee to Egypt.

Though he was chosen of God, he would not wait the course of God's providence, and therefore incurred the penalty of death by his criminal rebellion. The heavy taxes and forced labor (1 Kings 11:28) which Solomon had imposed upon his subjects had prepared the greater part of the kingdom for a revolt under so popular a demagogue as Jeroboam.

Despite the unfaithfulness of man, God was faithful and preserving the seed of David "until he, whose right it is: and I will give it to him".

The House of David would be disciplined but not destroyed. Solomon indeed had proved to be a sinner; yet through the line of David, Christ, the Savior of sinners, would appear.

11:37-40] - Not only did God pledge Himself to be faithful to the house of David, but He also promised, conditionally, to extend His mercies to Jeroboam.

We can only wonder how different it might have been if he had obeyed the Lord's voice! This man gained the enviable epithet "who caused Israel to sin". The prophecy of Ahijah was not immediately fulfilled, but all that he foretold came to pass in due time.

3. THE DEATH OF KING SOLOMON [11:41-43]

11:41-43] - The actual time of Solomon's reign was 42 years although part of this must be reckoned as the time of his co-regency with David.