

Greetings, my dear friends and family. It is Monday morning, and Devotions time. We need to get into God's Word, and spend some time with Him in prayer! Today I am beginning a series of Devotionals focusing on the lives of some of the great Old Testament people. If you were reading my Devotionals earlier this year you met Benaiah and Shammah from 2 Samuel 23. Today I want to share some thoughts from the life of King Solomon. It is a little sad, but an important warning for all of us. God bless you.

WHEN PRIDE BLINDS A GOD-GIVEN VISION

A Devotional prepared by Dr. Robert L. Morris

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"At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask! What shall I give you?' and Solomon said: 'You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You. You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?'" (1 Kings 3:5-9, NKJV)

"And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand of the seashore. Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men." (1 Kings 4:29-31a, NKJV)

Solomon was the son of King David and Bathsheba. Though not the eldest son of David, he was destined to become the King of Israel. When David was elderly, and obviously incapable of caring for the affairs of the kingdom, his eldest son Adonijah declared himself to be the king. This being unknown to David, Nathan the prophet of God went to Bathsheba, and a plan was put in place whereby David would be informed of Adonijah's self-exaltation. Upon hearing this, David instructed his servants to bring Solomon to the Gihon spring where Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed him to be king. David's instructions included the words: "For I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah." (1 Kings 1:35, NKJV)

Becoming ruler in approximately 967 BCE, King Solomon was known throughout the world for his wisdom, his wealth, and his writings. His reign was immediately faced with serious opposition. Two of David's closest advisors, Joab the son of Zeruiah and Abiathar the priest aligned their loyalty with Adonijah. Very soon after Solomon became king, Adonijah approached Bathsheba with the request that she ask King Solomon to give to him Abishag the Shunammite for his wife. (1 Kings 2:17, NKJV) Solomon saw through Adonijah's thinly veiled threat to take over the kingdom. He had Adonijah killed, along with Joab and Shimei, two of David's enemies. (1 Kings 2:24-34, NKJV) By this Solomon rid himself of the potential threats to the kingdom, and appointed some loyal friends to key positions throughout the kingdom.

King Solomon's wealth was enormous. He controlled a very large region west of the Euphrates River. He administered the kingdom through twelve governors whose responsibilities included providing food for the king and his household. (See 1 Kings 4:7ff, NKJV) He owned 40,000 stalls of horses for his 1,400 chariots and these were manned by 12,000 horsemen. (1 Kings 4:26; 10:26) He attempted to strengthen his position through marital alliances. The Bible states that he had "seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines." (1 Kings 11:3, NKJV)

More important than all his amassed wealth was the wisdom granted to him from the LORD God of Israel subsequent to his request. People from surrounding nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. He

composed 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. (1 Kings 4:32) Most of the Book of Proverbs, the Book of Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs are attributed to King Solomon.

Undoubtedly the greatest physical accomplishment of King Solomon was the building of the great Temple in Jerusalem. The seven-year project was built of stone, cedar, carefully crafted, and overlaid with pure gold. When completed, Solomon dedicated the Temple in a public service of prayers and sacrifices. One of the truly great prayers is the prayer of dedication. (1 Kings 8:22-53) When the prayer was finished, "fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple." (2 Chronicles 7:1, NKJV)

The tragedy that must be sadly recognized, is that all that begins well does not necessarily end well. The Scriptures are clear: "Solomon followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the detestable idol of the Ammonites. Solomon did what was evil in the LORD's sight, and unlike his father David, he did not completely follow the LORD." (1 Kings 11:5-6, NKJV)

No one knows all the reasons for Solomon's downfall. It is probably best if we let Solomon himself provide some information. In fact, I believe he should have listened to himself when he wrote: "Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall. Better to be lowly in spirit with the humble than to divide plunder with the proud." (Proverbs 16:18-19)

Maybe he should have thought more carefully on another of his proverbs: "A person's pride will humble him, but a humble spirit will gain honor." (Proverbs 29:23, HCSB)

This is a Biblical principle from one of the Old Testament Prophets. The Prophet Obadiah stated it clearly: "The pride of your heart has deceived you." (Obadiah 3, NKJV)

Sometimes there are people with whom we may be related in one way or another, but whose influences are detrimental to our relationship with the Lord. Here we need the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit to hold us steady in the pathway of righteousness. But the life of Solomon is an example of one who allowed his life to be influenced in a way unpleasing to the Lord.

I am running a great risk in even referring to this next matter. And, I do NOT want any of the women who read this Devotional to think I am against a woman to whom one is married! I was blessed with what I consider the most wonderful wife anyone could ever have. But there is dear old Solomon. Listen to what happened to him:

"...his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David." (1 Kings 11:3b-4, NKJV)

Did his problem lie in the fact that he had too many wives? I do not know. I so easily recall when as a young man, I desired to have ONLY ONE wife, and God blessed me with that one! But I also know what the Scriptures state about King Solomon, as noted above. I am not certain that it should be considered a factor in the downfall of King Solomon. There are two entries in the Scripture that have the possibility of pointing us accurately in the direction of his downfall. When King Solomon built the great Temple, as described in Scripture, (See 1 Kings 6:1-38), one is fascinated with the detail that describes the amazing architecture, and the obviously high cost of this magnificent structure. But the chapter ends with these curious words: "So he was seven years in building it." (1 Kings 6:38) The next chapter begins with the words: "But Solomon took thirteen years to build his own house; so he finished all his house." (1 Kings 7:1, NKJV) I wonder! Is there a message there? Priorities? Pride? Perhaps ... or even probably so! Let it speak!

In summary of the life of King Solomon, the Bible says: "So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart." (2 Chronicles 9:22-23, NKJV) After 40 years of reigning over Israel, "Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place." (2 Chronicles 9:30-31, NKJV) Pride led to his downfall, his empire was lost and his kingdom divided into two parts, Israel and Judah.

Whatever our accomplishments may be, let us guard our hearts against any evidence of pride, while keeping our priorities focused on our beloved Savior and the work He has called us to do. God declares in His Word: "He gives grace to the humble." (Proverbs 3:34, NKJV) This is quoted by the Apostle Peter, and followed by his Spirit-anointed admonition: "'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:5c-7; see also James 4:6)

Finally, I need to close this Devotional with the words of Jesus: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12, NKJV) Thank you, Lord, for showing us Your truth through the record of King Solomon!