

DECLINE IN THE KINGDOM

TEXT: 1 Kings 9 -11

INTRODUCTION: For the first 20 yrs. of his reign, Solomon knew the priorities God had set for his kingdom and he lived according to them. At the dedication of the temple, when the Ark of the covenant was brought in, the glory of the Lord descended into the Holy of Holies.

However, **after the completion of the temple and his own palace, Solomon began a steady decline in his faithfulness and obedience to the Almighty.** His own downward slide would be a tragic enough tale, but the fact that he pulled the whole nation of Israel down the slippery slope to the pit of mire with him is all the more tragic.

The proximity of great spiritual triumph with serious spiritual decline should serve as a warning to us. **The very point of our victory is often the point of our vulnerability.** Such it was for Solomon and Israel.

Pastor Warren Wiersbe offers a good alliterated outline of this portion of Scripture (Whole Bible Study Course):

I. DIVINE ADMONITION (9:1-9)

- A. Solomon was on the throne by grace as a result of the Davidic covenant.
- B. God would keep the covenant regardless
but...
- C. If Solomon or his descendants did not keep the commandments of God, Israel would be cast out of the land and the temple destroyed.

APPLICATION

We come into the Kingdom of God by grace, and God keeps us by grace; but happiness and success in the Kingdom of God comes by the character of Christ being developed in our lives.

Mt. 5:3-10 offers a good checklist.

Matthew 5:3–10

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

- ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.
⁷ Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.
⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.
⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.
¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Many Christians have little joy and exuberance in their Christianity because they are still babes in Christ and have never grown in His likeness, and therefore have not come to know many of the joys and victories available in Christ that come as these qualities of Christ are developed in them;

or

They ceased to grow and began to backslide, thus decreasing the happiness and victory they once knew.

You are either growing or backsliding; you never stay still for long.

II. DANGEROUS ALLIANCES

A. With Hiram of Tyre (9:10-14)

1. traded 20 cities in Galilee (Hiram called the "good for nothing")
2. for 120 talents of gold

B. With Egypt (9:24)

C. With others (9:28-10:29)

1. Traded with Ophir, possibly as far away as India
2. With the African Queen of Sheba who upon her personal visit to Solomon was at once impressed by both his wisdom and his wealth.

Solomon seems mindless in these diplomatic contacts with the heathen nations around him **of the responsibility of Israel to be a kingdom of priests to the nations of the world.** He was more intent on impressing them, receiving their praise, and profiting from his contacts than with giving glory to the God who put him on his throne, made him wise and gave him wealth.

APPLICATION

We are likewise warned in Scripture about our alliances and entanglements in

2 Corinthians 6:14 "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"

- marriage, dating
- business (especially partnerships and contracts that could influence you)
- close friendships (where influence is mutual)

These alliances were dangerous for Solomon because they drew his heart away from God and the things of God to love the world and the things of the world. And so they will do to us!

III. DESTRUCTIVE AMBITIONS

1 Timothy 6:9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

A. Solomon was not content with the abundance of blessings the Lord freely gave in the first 20 years of his rule while he served God, **Solomon wanted to accumulate wealth, treasures and luxuries for himself.**

1. gold without end
2. shields of gold - just for decoration, large and small
3. ivory throne, covered with gold
4. carved lions on sides of steps leading to throne
5. drank only from solid gold vessels
6. every extravagant import, even exotic animals like apes and monkeys

B. In the first half of his life, Solomon gave his best to God; but in the last half, Solomon sought the best in life for himself.

APPLICATION

Where is the desire of your heart?

What is the ambition of your life?

The answer is revealed in how we spend our time and resources. Consider the time in your life beyond the provision of basic life needs for yourself and your family, your resources beyond food, necessary clothing, basic shelter.

- Is it time spent or resources used to worship, give to or obey God

- Or is it used to please self, to indulge self?

It is easy for us to look at Solomon's self indulgence and condemn it as destructive and sinful. But consider those destructive ambitions at their beginning and not just their end. For in the early years, self indulgence was mixed with brief times of dedication to the Lord. **Solomon slid down the slope of destruction, he did not fall off a cliff.**

And ask yourself if you have begun the slide. Do not ask merely whether you have hit the bottom of the self indulgent pit or not, ask if you are on the way.

- Has the importance of the things of God lessened or grown in your life this year?
- Has the importance of things you like for your own pleasure and joy lessened or grown this year?

Beware destructive ambitions!

IV. DELIBERATE APOSTASY (11)

A. The progression of Solomon's decline

1. **dangerous alliances exposed him to the things of the world**
2. **he nurtured destructive ambitions** and fell in love with the things of this world rather than the things of God
3. **these things led Solomon into deliberate, knowing sin against God**

B. The deliberate sin was threefold (11:1-3)

1. **Marrying multiple women**
2. **Marrying heathen women**
3. **Idolatry**

A wife is like a good pepper sauce: the right one in the right amount makes for a delightful dish. But too much will burn you up. God's plan for one man and one woman to start one family was certainly a part of God's wisdom Solomon knew. But his desire to be like the world, to have the things of the world, and to live sexually like the pagan world caused him to put the commandment of God aside.

APPLICATION

And while I do not know a man or woman who practice polygamy today, I know plenty who have put away God's plan for lifelong marriage to one partner for the same reasons Solomon did: to be like the world, to have the things of the world, and for illicit sex.

Further **Solomon married heathen women, lost women, who knew not God and who worshipped other gods.** And did he turn their hearts to the living God? No they turned his heart to worship idols. The most influential of all the yokes is the marriage yoke. Do not put it on with a lost person.

Solomon turned away to worship idols (11:5-8)

CONCLUSION:

I have a question for you in closing tonight. It is not where are you. It is where are you heading? Which direction. I am not as concerned with your location as I am with your direction. Are you on the slippery slope of destruction?

- wrong alliances or relationships
- wrong ambitions and desires
- deliberate sin

all of it moving you further and further from God.

If so, you can change direction this evening. Will you?