

THE STORY OF SOLOMON

The Splendor of His Vanity



Stephen Gunawan



1 Kings.

Picks up after 2 Sam.

David is old, to the point of being unable to keep himself warm.

- Abishag a Shunammite. Intended to be given as concubine.

But David did not sleep with her.

Writer intentionally wrote that she was very beautiful.

1. David, at his old age, showed he was repentant of his sexual sin.

Because the writer wrote that she was very beautiful.

2. David was already too old to even be sexually active.

Now comes Adonijah. In terms of birthright, the kingship was his because his elder brothers had died.

1. Amnon, David's firstborn had raped his own sister Tamar (Absalom's sister) in 2 Sam. 13. And because of David's disciplinary action, Amnon was finally killed by Absalom, the second in line of succession.

2. Absalom revolted against his father and succeeded temporarily. He was finally killed by Joab, David's commander, despite direct orders not to - 2 Sam 18. Although understandable, David's softness toward his children was evident.

Adonijah vied for the position and started to act like a king (a bad king). 1:5. His description mirrored that of Absalom; that:

1. Both Absalom & Adonijah were both extremely attractive physically (comp. 2 Sam 14:25 & 1 Kings 1:6)

2. Both Absalom & Adonijah provided themselves with chariots & horses with fifty men to run ahead (2 Sam. 15:1 & 1 Kings 1:5)

Both of these illegitimate kings, perhaps predictably, fulfilled the criteria of the supposition that will be wrought upon them because they asked to be ruled by kings (see 1 Sam. 8:11)

They were wicked rulers who desired power but did not intend to serve the people (see Jesus' explanation of the required difference between a pagan ruler & God's appointed ruler - Matt. 23:25-28).

Adonijah also realized that this desire was illegitimate - most probably because David had made clear his intention to have Solomon to succeed him publicly (1:13, 17).

Therefore Adonijah tried to usurp the throne by making a coalition with Joab the commander and Abiathar the priest (1:7) thereby having both military power and religious authority. But he did not invite along the other important men in the government (1:8). This further proved that Adonijah knew his illegitimacy.

Without the knowledge of David, Adonijah arranged for his coronation service (1:9) Perhaps Adonijah was counting on his father's indecisive & disciplinary attitude toward his children, as was apparent with Amnon, Absalom & himself (1:6). And indeed, his indecisive nature could be counted on. All seems well.

NATHAN'S CLEVER STRATEGY. Adonijah's actions & descriptions matched Absalom. They are of the same character. High possibility of success.

Adonijah was not the only person who understood David's weak character. Nathan who served as a faithful prophet under David's reign understood well his weakness in this regard. And he was quick to act. Upon knowing Adonijah's evil schemes, Nathan devised his own sincere but shrewd strategy - to ensure that God's intention is carried through. And it was something urgent - not only because Adonijah had already set himself up as king; but also because David was close to death, and there was a high probability that after he died, Adonijah would get rid of Solomon as a most possible competitor. And so Nathan worked with Bathsheba to ensure that David would make good his vow immediately.

And so David initiated Solomon as king with immediacy, and the coronation service was made to be so announcing, that "the ground shook with the sound" (1:40). Adonijah was so afraid, he "took hold of the horns at the altar" (1:50). Now this is not a solitary event where someone who is afraid for his life took hold of the horns at the altar. It shall happen again with Joab (2:28). And in Amos 3:14, God's judgment was explained thus "the horns of the altar shall be cut off & fall to the ground" (Amos 3:14)

The instruction for making the horns is found in (Ex. 27:2) and part of the ritual for the consecration of priests was to put the blood of the sacrifice at its horn (Ex 29:12) as a part of the sin offering (Ex. 29:14). This same ritual is commanded again in Lev. 4:18



again as a sin offering for the priest. The same ritual again as sin offering of the people (Lev. 4:30). ②

This, then, is often interpreted to mean that the person who takes hold of the horns at the altar was seeking refuge to the Lord by taking hold of the very symbol of the sacrifice for sin. But repentance is a requirement; as we shall see Solomon granting Adonijah Assylum provided he repents of his treason (1:50). > And later refused Joab of a similar request because of his unrepentant heart - but we shall discuss this later. Solomon was herein showing a proper respect to God's requirement for mercy, and showed himself even at such an early stage a worthiness for forgiving a brother who would most likely seek his death.

1 Kings 2. David's parting Advice.

David gave Solomon three dying instructions:

1. To be completely reliant on God.

David told Solomon that his reign on the throne was solely God's providence & gift for him. And that his reign will depend upon his faithfulness to God's covenant. (continued)

2. Executing mercy & justice.

David now ensures that the loyalty of his people would be rewarded; but also that disloyalty be punished. This did not mean that David kept a vengeful heart; but that he ensured the execution of mercy & justice at its rightful time. Those with disloyalty had at other times been contributive to David; and even if they had reigned under David with ulterior motives, nevertheless served him & deserved their wages.

3. Ensuring Solomon had faithful officials.

Joab was mighty (even David was powerless to subdue him 2Sam.3:39). Shimei kept a bitter heart against Judah (2Sam.16:7-8). These people would pose a subtle danger to Solomon because he hadn't experienced their treachery firsthand. And so David ensured that Solomon be aware of this danger. Solomon knew about Joab, but was asked to "not consider Shimei innocent" (1:9) - David had spared them but had kept a watchful eye on them and had seen them unrepentant.

And so David instructed that Solomon use his wisdom to find an opportune time to bring judgment upon them (1:6; 1:9) - to "use his wisdom."

But David also ensured that the sons of Barzillai be treated well, for Solomon owed them no direct debt, but was nevertheless dutiful to reward the extraordinary loyalty their fathers showed to David (2Sam.19).

And after that, David died. And we are told the summary, that "Solomon's rule was firmly established" (2:12).

ESTABLISHING SOLOMON'S THRONE (2:13-4:34)

2:12 gave us the executive summary - that Solomon's rule was firmly established. But it didn't just happen in a "happily-ever-after" fashion. Solomon had to earn his throne as he now serves as a newly-appointed king.

And as a first step. Solomon did all his father had commanded him to do:

1. He executed justice & mercy with firmness & gentleness.

- a. Against Adonijah. Solomon had given Adonijah assylum with the condition that he repents. But Adonijah was, in fact, unrepentant, and extremely sly.

The subtlety of his desire was evident in the very fact that Bathsheba did NOT grow suspicious of his request for Abishag. Bathsheba might have thought that Adonijah was madly in love with a very beautiful woman. And anyway, David had never actually slept with Abishag so there would be nothing morally wrong for Adonijah to marry her.



Solomon, though, saw through his trickery. After all, despite the fact that Abishag never slept with David, she did attend to him to make him warm. And to most unsuspecting public, she could be already seen as David's concubine. And in those days when taking a king's concubines was seen as a declaration of one's position on the throne, this was clearly Adonijah's careful plot for another try at the throne. Solomon's answer revealed what he knew of his brother's plot. "After all he is my older brother" (2:22) showed that Solomon suspected Adonijah would cook up yet another plausible story to convince the unsuspecting public of his legal right to the throne.

Solomon was quick to act; his firmness was unlike his father's. He saw the act as an attempt at treason - and therefore nullified his merciful treatment of Adonijah because he had proven himself unrepentant. Solomon gave an order to have Adonijah executed right away (2:25).

b. Against Abiathar the priest. As we have discussed before, Abiathar was not always disloyal to David. His story with David began even before David was king of Israel (1 Sam 22) - when Saul killed all the priests of Nob and he was its sole survivor. David took him in and promised him protection. He served David from then on, and showed loyalty in that he stuck with David even when Absalom successfully took the throne from David (2 Sam. 15). So despite Abiathar's clear act of treason (that deserved the death sentence as Solomon rightly said - 2:26), he merely stripped him of his priesthood and indirectly fulfilled God's punishment to the descendant of Eli (1 Sam. 2:30-33)

c. Against Joab. Joab had to be punished there and then. It was the opportune moment because he just clearly and openly attempted treason; and the public witnessed to it. If Solomon procrastinated, he would have lost this opportunity.

But Joab knew the formula. He went into the Tent of the Lord and took hold of the horns of the altar. But his attitude betrayed him, for Joab neither appealed to mercy, nor acknowledged Solomon's authority; which Adonijah did. And let us not forget that Joab was a repeat offender - one who was unrepentant of his sin; and so the mercy of God could not apply to him; and his mere symbolical act was to no avail.

Witnessing Joab's response to the threat of retribution only made Solomon's resolve stronger. His words described how Solomon knew the time of justice was at hand - and that the execution he was about to command was God's way of repaying the evil that Joab did in the times of his father David (2:31-33) And that by executing Joab, it will even further clear Solomon & his family of the guilt of innocent blood that although was not David's active fault but was nevertheless a wrong that transpired under his authority.

d. Against Shimei. Shimei got away scott free because David was initially wondering if he had been God's tool of judgment against his sin. Although Shimei did a horrible thing to David (2 Sam. 16:5-12) nevertheless he never caused David any actual harm. But David knew then that Shimei harbored bitterness against him and was therefore reasonably wary against him.

And so Solomon could not implicate Shimei legally, but nonetheless took caution against him and "not consider him innocent" as David had advised. He put Shimei under "house arrest" and prohibited him from leaving Jerusalem presumably to avoid any possible plot.

But after three years, Shimei broke the prohibition. And the way he did it probably revealed what a wicked man (or at least, wicked master) he was. His slave; probably due to mistreatment, ran away. Shimei went in search for the slave,



and was thereby guilty of breaking the rule Solomon had set. I think this was really the LORD delivering Shimei into Solomon's hand. And Solomon recognizing this really as the LORD repaying the wrongdoing Shimei had done to David (2:44). (4)

And when Solomon had done all of this, chapter two closes with the same conclusion with chapter one: "The kingdom was now established in Solomon's hand" (2:46).

Solomon - a good king (initially) 1 Kings 3-10.

1 Kings 1-10 tells us what a good king Solomon was - at least initially. But at its start we are told of Solomon taking the daughter of Pharaoh as his wife. The narrative did not seem to portray this negatively, which really is nothing new. We had previously discussed how David's multiplying wives was narrated in a similar way - in the midst of his great successes before the LORD (). Solomon had yet to multiply wives in chapter 3, but marrying an Egyptian wife can't be good given the warning not to intermarry (Deut. 7:3).

But v.3 gives an overall picture of a king who loved the LORD and who obeyed Him. And so God tested Solomon to reveal his innermost desire. God granted him one request he would absolutely fulfill. In short, Solomon could have had literally anything he most desired, - the very top of the list!

And so Solomon's request showed his innermost desire; and it was these:

2. Servanthood. The repeated terms "Your servant," "Your people," "this great people of Yours" showed that Solomon had a heart of stewardship; not tyranny. He acknowledged that the throne was really not due to his own merit.

1. Humility. Solomon, though already wise by any standard, did not feel adequacy but approached duty with fear and trembling. And it was a valid concern - Unlike his father David, Solomon lived in a time of peace & did not have the opportunity to experience the backstabbing, the intrigue, the horror that his father David experienced. But times of peace did not mean a cessation of evil - and Solomon knew what awaited him.

2. ...

And so Solomon asked for what he needed most - not so that he could enjoy his royalty, but so that he would be empowered to perform his task well by being able to administer God's justice.

And the example quoted next would prove the need for such wisdom. In his duty as king, Solomon would be confronted with the wickedness & deceitfulness of man - as is the case in this next example. The case proved to be a deadlock as there was no way to prove the baby's paternity as the women were prostitutes. They both claimed to be the mother. The only way was to know what was in their hearts, but this too was impossible to decipher.

And that is why Solomon's decision showed his great wisdom. By treating the baby as a property & giving his ruling, only the woman who had genuine care for the baby would respond with sacrificial love and not deceitful selfishness. This case study proved that Solomon had the wisdom he asked for: to discern between the good & the evil in a human heart.

God was so pleased with Solomon's request - that he sought the Kingdom of God & its righteousness as first and foremost - that He added the rest of the blessing unto Solomon (comp. Mat. 6:33) - riches and honor.

But this blessing that God gave to Solomon made me wonder. If God did promise Solomon riches, then was the gold and silver that Solomon were to accumulate part of God's blessing? If so, would it still be a violation to Deut 17:17 wherein he is forbidden to accumulate a great amount of silver and gold? The next section would answer this question; amongst many others.



THE ESCHATOLOGICAL VISION.

3:16 - 4:34 shows how Solomon's wisdom opened the door to great blessing.

The Reformation Study Bible explains it this way:

- 3:16-28 shows Solomon's Judicial Wisdom.
- 4:1-28 shows Solomon's Domestic Political Wisdom
- 4:29-34 shows Solomon's International Wisdom

The extent of the wisdom also bespoke of Solomon's honor; and the extent of God's blessing.

The judicial wisdom ensured success at administering justice; but also earned Solomon's respect & reputé.

The Domestic Political wisdom extends this not to individuals only but for the overall shalom of the nation. It is a justice that brought peace.

The International Wisdom extends this not only to one whole nation but also the whole world. It is a justice that brought glory.

And so Solomon's rule was the climatic fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham (at least its physical fulfilment).

- The people of Judah & Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore (4:20 - Gen 22:17)
- The breadth of the land now includes all of those promised to Abraham (4:24 - Gen. 15:18)
- Israel was now a great nation; blessed and also a blessing to the world (Gen. 12:2-3)

And the almost eschatological peace was granted — peace on all sides.

It is almost reflective of the vision of Rev. 21 - the establishment of Jerusalem where God rules & reigns over His people with His perfect shalom.

And where God's permanent dwelling will finally be with His people (Rev. 21:3)

It was therefore under this reflective fulfilment that the Temple of God would be built. God would move from the temporary tent to the permanent temple.

But even the apparent permanence of the temple was but reflective of the final eschatological vision: "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev. 21:22).

In a similar manner, this heavenly City is pictured as the place where the justice, shalom, and glory of God will be fully displayed. Its splendor far exceeds that of Solomon where the materials were of infinitely greater value than that which Solomon used (Rev. 21:18-21). The greatest splendor of Solomon was but a foretaste of the splendor of the New Jerusalem.

And finally, the blessing to the nations would be complete (Rev. 21:24-26) as nothing impure will ever enter again (Rev. 21:27).

TESTING OR TEMPTATION

But for now, impurity still lurks. And within the story of splendor was hid the deceitfulness of heart. And so what were only subtly hinted at earlier chapters — where Solomon's intermarrying foreigners for diplomatic benefits; where he provided stalls for chariots & horses (4:26) and where international trade would give way to the accumulation of gold — would be more openly discussed and exposed in 10:14 - 11:13.

Here, we will see the misuse of God's blessing to Solomon; that the very things that brought justice, shalom & glory to Israel also had side-benefits for Solomon that was never intended; showing indeed how sin is the misuse of; and the wrong enjoyment of that which God had provided.



Insert on the Judicial Wisdom, the Domestic Political Wisdom, & International Wisdom.

I have mentioned earlier that the example of Judicial wisdom that Solomon had was an extraordinary one. I think that particular example was chosen as representative of his future wisdom in ruling; because it showed the impossibility of verification. Yet Solomon was able to handle it so well.

The wisdom caused Solomon to be able to administer God's justice (3:29).

Domestic Political Wisdom.

4:1-19. David took a lifetime to recruit the officials who were loyal to him. The deceitfulness of heart meant that it was almost impossible to determine who were truly loyal.

But Solomon set up an enduring cabinet so early in his reign.

4:20-28. Solomon also managed to build an impressive economic system that were inclusive; productive & prosperous. The extremely numerous Israel were of enviable economic welfare (4:20) and safety (4:25). And the people still had enough excess to bring in as taxes (4:22-23; 27-28).

International Wisdom.

4:29-34. His wisdom gained him an international repute. He understood the philosophies enough to be able to write so many proverbs (some people can't write just one proverb for the whole of his lifetime); the arts enough to be able to express his wisdom aesthetically; and he understood science enough to be able to speak about it with great accuracy (4:32-33).

All nations came to Solomon to seek his wisdom (4:34) and Queen Sheba was but an example of such cases. (10:1-13).

The building of the Temple and the Palace came as a chiasmic climax sandwiched by Solomon's display of wisdom - especially with regards to his international wisdom. And so, it is vital to see why the wisdom he spoke to Queen Sheba was so important.

1. The Queen of sheba was important because it showed comparative wisdom. If the biblical scholars were correct, Sheba was either Ethiopia or Yemen and was a well-established city. Nevertheless, she must be extremely accomplished to be taken as the example of Solomon's sharing of his wisdom internationally. Sheba was evidently prosperous - looking at how much she brought with her (10:2) and how extravagant the description of her gifts were (10:10).

Jesus in the NT also mentioned of her, again witnessing to her significance. The NT description (Matt 12:42; Luk. 11:31) showed that she came from an extreme south from halfway down the world. This meant that Solomon's repute was no hearsay since she took a real effort to embark on a journey.

Being from a distant country also had one significance. It would probably have meant a vastly different culture and so Solomon's experiential wisdom might not be applicable in sheba. The Queen also pulled no punches - she gave Solomon with the intent to TEST and thereby coming with the most difficult questions from a civilization Solomon was not acquainted with (10:1).

And so the apparent ease with which Solomon answered her (10:3) was no ordinary feat. And Sheba saw that Solomon's answer wasn't one that came from an untested philosopher - a cognitive yet unapplied understanding at best. In 10:4 Queen Sheba was impressed also with Solomon's evident achievement in terms of his architecture, his economic prosperity, his parliament and finally his "religion." (10:4-5). She gave praises not only to Solomon - that he even exceeded the lofty expectation she had - but also attributed his success to the glory of Yahweh (10:9) - the personal covenant name of the God of Israel.

This was a God-glorifying achievement that brought God's glory "to the uttermost part of the earth."

Queen Sheba's gifts were legendary, as it would be referenced as God-honoring gifts brought from afar. Ps. 72, for example (which is a Psalm of Solomon) talks about the enduring reign of the King and the royal son by referring to gifts brought from distant shores - and Sheba was included.

- May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him.
- May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts.
- May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him." (Ps. 72:10-11).

And a prophecy about the returning glory of Zion includes this statement:

"Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb & swell with joy; the wealth of the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels from Midian & Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD." (Isa. 60:5-6).

But when its literal value is taken without true God-honoring sentiments, God will rebuke and say:

"What do I care about incense from Sheba, or sweet calamus from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please Me" (Jer. 6:20)

Even in the New Testament, Jesus Himself explained the coming of Queen Sheba as something that was most unlikely, unless she recognized the only possible option: that Solomon's wisdom was divinely granted. Jesus gave this judgment as part of the sign of Jonah - because the 2 groups of people acknowledged the signs from God but these people did not - Niniveh that repented without physical signs but by the Word of God; and Queen of Sheba that came from the ends of the earth to seek the divine wisdom evident in Solomon.

Her coming was no ordinary occurrence - it was an acknowledgment of the glory of God in Jerusalem.

(6)

And so the greatest blessing given to Israel also became a test to Solomon's faithfulness. INTERNATIONAL trades & treaties were God's channel to extend His blessings to the other nations. But it also brought in impurities into Israel. "The pattern of this world" (of Rom. 12:2) that seduces to conformity now comes into the untested Israel.

The successes of trade also did three things:

- It introduced to technologies → the chariots & horses that seduces kings to self-reliance & self-confidence. & therefore were not to be multiplied (Deut 17:16).

And Solomon accumulated chariots & horses (10:26) and was therefore tempted to self-confidence.

- It pressurized Solomon to be involved in the conduct of diplomatic marriages common in ANE cultures but clearly commanded against (11:1-2). And it turned Solomon's heart of faithful devotion (3:3) and he's now no longer fully devoted (11:4). And to be partially devoted is to be idolatrous.

Solomon multiplied wives, against the command of (Deut 17:17) and was tempted to idolatry.

- International trade brought an abundance of resources that Israel DID NOT previously have. It provided new skills advantageous to Solomon's projects. It brought in diversified materials that contributed to the grandeur of the palace & the Temple. It also opened the way to cultural development - of new inventions that was made possible by the new resources.

And those for the betterment of life.

But abundance can be the antithesis of reliance if we discard our "daily bread" mentality. And as resources get stored up as gold, which is of more permanency than the perishable resources, the need to rely on God's daily provision diminishes.

Solomon multiplied gold & silver against (Deut. 17:17) and was tempted to self-sufficiency.

I hope I have answered a question I raised. The blessing & abundance that God gave also served as a test of Solomon's faithfulness. The blessing itself was good & perfect gift (Jas. 1:17), but its misuse is sin.

It was intended to bring the blessing of justice, shalom & glory; but instead was misused to promote self-confidence, idolatry & rebellion.

And sin, once again, brought wrath. And the climax of the kingdom ended.

SOLOMON'S DOWNFALL.

Of all of Solomon's weakness, though, one was prominent and was a direct disobedience to God's command - that of multiplying wives & intermarrying with the pagans.

At this point many of us readers would scream, "how could he!" and so I need to cool down the temperature a little and show how we may be no better than Solomon.

See, what Solomon did was merely the norm. For kings to have many wives was nothing out of the ordinary; and diplomatic marriages was part of the means to keep peace between the countries. In fact, Solomon might have been deemed insulting to otherwise refuse.

And when we understand things this way, let us test how vulnerable we are to the mistake of Solomon: How many of us have never compromised by avoiding altogether deception when selling goods? How many of us have never been involved in a get-rich scheme that meant gaining money without being contributive to society? Never bribed an official for convenience? Never cheated on exams? Never dealt unscrupulously in transactions? Never been unfaithful in taxation?



7

Now you may protest to say that those are not the same thing: But they are! And it's called COMPROMISE plain & simple. Sure the actions are not the same but neither is the circumstance. If we are suddenly made the ruler of a superpower nation; what's to say that we wouldn't take extra benefit on the side for our own enjoyment? What we need to understand is not how better we are but how the very same sinful nature lurks at us.

Solomon did not get rid of his faith altogether. The narrator said that "his heart was not FULLY devoted to the LORD his God" (11:4). It wasn't total abandonment, but rather compromise. And the building of the high places could very well be diplomatic in nature.

Nevertheless, the damage is done. He undid what Saul did when he (inconsistently) rid Israel of idolatry; and what David did when he turned the heart of the nation to the LORD. He brought back:

- Ashtoreth of the Sidonians - which the Israelites served till the times of Joshua (Jud. 2:13; 10:6. 1 Sam. 7:3-4; 12:10).
- Molek of the Ammonites - the god identified with the abominable practices of extreme sexual perversion & child sacrifice (warned against extensively in Lev. 18 & 20) and that which caused the sin of the Ammonites to reach full measure.
- Chemosh of the Moabites - probably a Moabite version of Molek, portrayed differently; for the following reasons:
 - (1) Ammon & Moab are both descendants of Lot cursed because of sexual sin.
 - (2) Jdg 11:24 - Chemosh is also described as god of the Ammonites (not Moab).
 - (3) 1 Kings 11:7 - Solomon built high places for these at the same location & at the same time.

This mistake costed Israel everything! The time it took to reform the idolatrous practices of the people was reinstated by Solomon and would continue to haunt the kingdom right to its very destruction.

For man's sinful nature would pick up on Solomon's error. We see the problem will only be rectified during the reign of Josiah; and even then it was too late for despite Josiah's righteousness God remained angry at Israel. 2 Kings 23 would tell us this story - of how Josiah attempted to single-handedly undo the idolatrous actions of ALL of the kings of Judah had done over the period of 400 years.

The narrator mentioned that Solomon, Jeroboam, Ahab, Manasseh and the kings of Judah had built idolatrous altars. And so Solomon had started a trend that would be the doom of the nation - for God was still angry at Judah despite the very noble attempt of Josiah (See 2 Kings 23:25-26).

THE CURSE OF DISOBEDIENCE.

Because Solomon had broken the covenant, he incurred the curses that were to follow. The peace that was in Israel and extended outside of it was no more; and God allowed wars & civil wars to erupt - thus bringing an end to the climax.

Hadad the Edomite and Rezon son of Eliada were the descendants of David's conquered nemeses. These people must have thought that their rise to power was natural and their success, self-made. But the narrator disagreed. God was the first cause; using them to punish Israel's disobedience.

And God brought strife from within as he promised Jeroboam 10 of the 12 tribes. And suddenly, Solomon began to imitate Saul's jealous actions by attempting to kill Jeroboam (although it was a pity that Jeroboam wouldn't imitate David).

3x40. Solomon's death marked the end of an era. God had tested Israel through three x forty-year reigns of Saul-David-Solomon. And their failure led once again to a period of judgment.



An observation of Pattern.

It's always nice to discuss such understanding with another person. And the following expansion comes from a discussion I had with my wife on this.

There are some curious patterns which we can see in the life of Solomon:

1. He never INQUIRE OF THE LORD, unlike his father, David.

What we need to be aware of is that when God mentioned David as "a man after God's own heart" - it meant that David was made a rolemodel for the kings that would come after him.

(eg. 2 Kings 16:2; 2 Chr. 28:1) - Being unlike David = a bad king. A king who failed to do what was right in God's eyes. (also about Solomon himself - 1 Kings 14:3).

Of course we know this does not mean David was guiltless. But that he sought after what was right and was tender-hearted when rebuked of his sin.

But then comparing David's life to Solomon gave this stark contrast. Solomon never inquired of the LORD. Now this could come from 2 causes: ① That Solomon lived in a time of peace and David's inquiry had mostly come in times of war.

② That Solomon's God-given wisdom had meant that nothing was too hard on him - such that he never needed to inquire from the Urim or the Thummim.

Nevertheless - it's the same. Having a great theological knowledge should never mean that we cease to approach God in supplicative prayer. Not because prayer changes God - but because it changes us & keeps our heart in the right path. And because Saul didn't - although he didn't lose his wisdom, his heart did stray. He had forgotten to live Coram Deo.

2. Solomon's Wisdom.

Solomon's actions were so different from Joseph - who knew well to run from Potiphar's wife when tempted. And it was exactly because Joseph lived Coram Deo that he was able to resist the temptation.

But that made me wonder. If wisdom begins in the fear of the LORD (as apparently Solomon himself recognized in Prov. 1:7; Prov. 9:10 etc) did his wisdom then come from such source?

Well, I believe so. Solomon's request for wisdom did come out of his desire to serve God; and therefore should have come from the fear of the LORD. What I think is the lesson, rather, is that we should CONTINUALLY guard our hearts (again as Solomon knew in Prov. 4:23).

Wisdom begins with fear of the LORD; as it provides with the reason for knowledge; the WHY and not only the WHAT. But beginning in the Spirit and continuing in the flesh does not mean that one loses the knowledge & become stupid. It does; however, cause his subsequent actions to be met with VANITY.

3. Solomon's Salvation

And if Ecclesiastes was indeed written by Solomon (as I would argue to be the case); then what had happened to Solomon is strikingly similar to 1 Cor 3:10-15 - where the boulder survives (is saved) but only as one who had gone through fire.

In other words, Solomon was saved; but he would realize that ALL of his greatest achievement was actually for naught! He would have been saved as one going through fire. His work did not earn him any heavenly reward.

And a hint that Solomon was at the very least an elect is found in 2 Sam. 12:24-25. where the term the LORD "loved Solomon" was akin to Him loving Jacob (Rom. 9:13); which was a language of election.

But if so, then we should view Solomon NOT with envy but with pity. The greatest man in all of history might very well be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But even this interpretation is not something explicitly stated in the Bible, and is still ambiguous at best.

The lesson for all of us? "Work out your salvation with fear & trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

