

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings

Lesson 7: Solomon's Decline and Death -- 1 Kings 11:1-43

Imagine watching the most gifted man in the world slowly walk away from the God who gave him everything. That is what 1 Kings 11 forces us to witness. Solomon stood at the absolute summit of human wisdom, wealth, and honor. God had appeared to him twice. The temple he built was the most magnificent structure on earth. Other monarchs sent delegations just to sit in his presence for an hour. And yet, by the end of his life, incense was burning to Chemosh, the god of Moab, and to Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites, on a high place just outside Jerusalem. The wisest man who ever lived became a fool. How do you account for that?

The answer is heartbreaking in its ordinariness. He loved women who worshiped other gods. Seven hundred wives, three hundred concubines. The text does not traffic in sensationalism; it states the fact plainly and then delivers the verdict: 'his wives turned away his heart' (11:3). Not all at once. Not in a dramatic overnight collapse. Gradually, incrementally, one small compromise piling on top of another, his heart drifted from the Lord his God. By the time Solomon built those high places, he had long since stopped asking himself whether God approved. That question had quietly left the room.

The God who gave Solomon his wisdom is also the God who keeps His word about covenant faithfulness. When Solomon pursued other gods, God did not look the other way. He raised up adversaries. He announced the tearing of the kingdom. He held Solomon to the same standard He holds every person: you belong to Me, and your heart must remain undivided. There is no exemption for the famous, the talented, or the consecrated. If anything, greater privilege carries greater accountability.

This chapter is not meant to depress us. It is meant to alert us. The same gradual heart-drift that destroyed Solomon's legacy is available to every one of us. But the same God who held Solomon accountable also holds out grace to those who return. First Corinthians 10:12 was written for this moment: 'Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.' The warning is not pessimism. It is the loving honesty of a God who refuses to watch His people sleepwalk toward disaster.

Group Discussion: What do you think made Solomon vulnerable to this kind of gradual spiritual drift, and what does his example say to people who feel secure in their own faith?

Personal Reflection: Is there any area of your life right now where you are making small, repeated compromises that you would be uncomfortable naming before God? What would honest repentance look like in that area?

Read 1 Kings 11:1-43

Study Questions

1. Read 1 Kings 11:1–8. The text says Solomon ‘loved many foreign women’ and that ‘his wives turned away his heart.’ What does this passage reveal about the relationship between the people we love most and the direction of our spiritual lives?
2. Solomon’s drift did not happen overnight. Think about the most significant spiritual decline you have ever personally witnessed (in yourself or someone close to you). What were the early warning signs that, in hindsight, pointed toward a larger problem?
3. Read 1 Kings 11:9–10. God had appeared to Solomon twice and had explicitly commanded him not to follow other gods. Why does the narrator emphasize that background before describing God’s anger? What does it tell us about the nature of accountability before God?
4. In what specific ways do the relationships, entertainments, ambitions, or cultural pressures in your own daily life pull your heart in directions that compete with wholehearted devotion to God?
5. Read 1 Kings 11:11–13. God announces the division of the kingdom but preserves one tribe for David’s sake and for the sake of Jerusalem. What does this act of partial preservation tell us about the character of God, and how does it point forward to the promised Seed of David?

6. When you face consequences for past compromise or sin, how do you tend to respond: with renewed trust in God's character, with resentment, or with something else? What does a mature, godly response to discipline look like?
7. Read 1 Kings 11:14–40. God raises three adversaries against Solomon: Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam. What is the text saying about God's sovereignty in using political and military opposition as instruments of covenant consequence?
8. Is there any frustration, opposition, or difficulty in your life right now that you may have been viewing purely as bad luck or human hostility, but that might also be God's providential call to examine your heart? How would viewing it as a loving warning change your response?
9. Read Hebrews 3:12–14 alongside 1 Corinthians 10:12 and reflect on 1 Kings 11:1–13. Solomon was the wisest man on earth, chosen by God, builder of the temple, recipient of two direct divine appearances. His fall is documented in Scripture as a permanent warning. What does this teach us about the reality of apostasy, how it begins, and what the consistent witness of Scripture says about whether a genuine believer can fall away permanently? How does this passage directly address the claim that a saved person cannot lose their salvation?
10. Looking back over the entire narrative of 1 Kings 11, what is the single most important thing God is forming in you through this passage? Name one specific, concrete change He is calling you to make this week in the way you guard your heart.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Deuteronomy 17:14–20, where God warns the future king against multiplying wives and turning his heart away; Nehemiah 13:26, where Nehemiah uses Solomon’s failure as a direct warning; 1 Corinthians 10:1–12, where Paul draws lessons from OT history to warn Christians against presuming on grace; Hebrews 3:12–14, the urgent call to guard against an unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God; Matthew 1:6, where Solomon appears in the genealogy of Jesus, the greater Son of David who never wavered

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com