

# August 20, 2023

## Solomon's Apostasy

**Study Text:** Scriptures ST,CT

**Central Truth:** We must guard our hearts against evil and remain obedient to God.

### **Key Verse: 1 Kings 11:4**

It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father (KJV).

In Solomon's old age, they turned his heart to worship other gods instead of being completely faithful to the Lord his God, as his father, David, had been (NLT).

### **Learning Objectives**

- Students will explore the sad details of Solomon's later years, noting the sins into which he fell.
- Students will examine what it means to guard our hearts, both on a spiritual and a practical level.
- Students will commit to resisting, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the temptation to go our own way.

## **Introducing the Study**

**Say:** Throughout this unit, we've been reminded that serving God isn't about a wise action here and a good work there. The God-follower is one who perseveres in wisdom and obedience to the end.

### **Opening Activity—Turn from God?**

*Ask.* Have you ever heard a story about someone who made a huge sacrifice for the people he or she loved, whether it be a sacrifice of time or money, or even their life?

*Explain.* Through the years, there have been countless stories of people giving their lives for the sake of the people they love. Others put aside their own ambitions and desires to care for someone, whether a parent, a child, or another loved one. While we may never have to contemplate such a sacrifice, we would likely give up a great deal for those we care about.

**Say:** It's hard to imagine why or how someone might turn away from or betray those they love the most. Yet today's lesson explores just that, serving as a strong spiritual warning. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Except for David, Solomon was the greatest of all the kings of Israel. God blessed him with prosperity and success and gave him wisdom beyond what any other person has ever known. Yet later in life, Solomon turned away from that wisdom— leaving a life of obedience to follow the way of sin. This lesson explores Solomon's tragic later years

and serves as an admonition to us that we should stay fixed upon God. Solomon's story also reminds us sin can be subtle. We must be wary of any and every weakness within ourselves, depending on God to help us stay strong and follow Him faithfully.

## **Part 1—Solomon's Idolatrous Disobedience**

### **Solomon Turns from God**

#### Solomon Turns from God

**Say:** As we've already explored in this unit, God blessed Solomon with unparalleled wisdom and immeasurable wealth. Although Solomon faithfully served God early in his reign, he changed course dramatically later in his life. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

From their beginnings as a nation, God had commanded the Israelites not to intermarry with heathen nations because of the spiritual influence they would wield (see Exodus 34:11–16; Deuteronomy 7:1–6). Specifically, God was concerned that such relationships would lead the people to adopt idolatrous worship practices. Although Solomon knew what the Law commanded, he ignored the warnings and turning his affections toward foreign wives and their gods (1 Kings 11:1–3).

Solomon “had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines” (verse 3, NLT). A concubine in Bible times was a woman, often enslaved, who had greater rights than an ordinary servant but was of lower status than a wife. This status allowed a concubine to have legitimate sexual relations with her husband without marital benefits or even the basic rights of a person freed from slavery. Concubines were often secured for the pleasure of their (usually royal) husbands. On the other hand, many of Solomon's royal marriages likely served political purposes as he built alliances with the surrounding nations. These marriages enhanced his renown and power, but they came at a terrible price.

Tragically, Solomon accommodated his pagan wives by building places of worship for their gods (verses 4–8). Ashtoreth is a form of the name of the Canaanite goddess Astarte. This goddess was especially common in the region of Lebanon to the north (home of the Sidonians) and was often connected with Baal. Ashtoreth was a fertility goddess associated with sensuality and sexuality, which featured prominently in her temple rites. Milcom (KJV) or Molech (NLT) was the national god of the Ammonites to the east of the Jordan River. The abomination of child sacrifice was part of the worship of Molech (see 2 Kings 23:10), which even took place in Israel in later years, especially in the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5–6). Chemosh (1 Kings 11:7) was the god of Moab to the southeast, across the Dead Sea.

The true tragedy of this passage is found in verse 6 (NLT): “Solomon did what was evil in the Lord's sight; he refused to follow the Lord completely, as his father, David, had done.” Although we may have no intention of ever practicing idolatry, we can learn from the tragic—and subtle—compromise Solomon made because of unhealthy relationships. Building connections with unbelievers is a major component of evangelism (see 1 Corinthians 5:9–11), but we must be careful not to allow them to

influence our beliefs, attitudes, and actions. This is especially true as it relates to choosing a spouse. A Christian marriage provides us with a supporting partner to help us serve Christ, but an unbelieving spouse may try to discourage us from serving God.

### ***Discuss***

? Why should we be intentional when building relationships with unbelievers?

? Believers often have close relationships with unbelievers, whether family members or spouses. How can they maintain such relationships without compromising their faith? How can other Christians help them?

## **“The Lord Was Angry with Solomon”**

1 Kings 11:9–13

**Say:** Often we see two extremes in the world when it comes to understanding God. Some see Him only as a God who blesses and loves; others see Him only as a God who judges and punishes. Solomon’s life reminds us that God perfectly balances both love and judgment. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

What a profound shift takes place in 1 Kings 11:9, compared with our study of Solomon’s life to this point. God had once honored Solomon for choosing wisdom over pleasure and power. As a result, God’s hand of provision and blessing rested upon him. But now, as Scripture bluntly records, “The Lord was very angry with Solomon” (verse 9, NLT). The reason for God’s anger was shocking: Solomon had turned from the one true God to worship idols—the very opposite of wisdom.

God had spoken to Solomon about his sin (probably through a prophet), but Solomon did not listen to Him (verse 10). Clearly, the king’s heart had tragically become hardened against the God who had so blessed him.

Solomon would experience harsh consequences for his disobedience. The nation God had so wonderfully blessed would be torn away from the king and given to a servant (verse 11; certainly a reference to Jeroboam, see verses 26–40). Mercifully, for the sake of David’s legacy, this would not happen until the reign of Solomon’s son Rehoboam. For David’s sake, one tribe—Judah—and the chosen city of Jerusalem would be retained by his family. The references to David in verses 12–13 are important reminders that his lineage (never called the lineage of Solomon) would endure forever as God had promised. King Solomon had been blessed richly by God and granted extraordinary wisdom—the very thing that ought to protect one from sin—but he finished his reign as a rebellious son fit for judgment.

### **Resource Packet Item 1: Money, Purity, and Power**

Distribute the worksheet. Divide the class into groups and assign each group one section. Then discuss their answers in class.

### ***Discuss***

? What are some reasons a strong believer might turn from God?

? How would you respond if you saw a friend or loved one turning from God toward a life of sin?

## **Part 2—God Brings Adversity**

### **An Enemy from Egypt**

1 Kings 11:14–22

**Say:** What is the most difficult time of adversity you’ve ever faced? For most of us, adversity is simply a part of life. Thankfully, as believers we trust God to bring us through. But in Solomon’s case, adversity came from God himself as a result of Solomon’s rebellion and sin. We can only imagine Solomon’s thoughts as we move through the remainder of this chapter. His dilemma is a reminder and warning to us that it is imperative we stay faithful in following the Lord. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

#### **Resource Packet Item 2: Regrets**

Complete the worksheet as a class, then discuss the results together. Emphasize that we all have regrets, but God redeems our mistakes and leads us into the future. Solomon continued to suffer because of the persistent hardness of his heart.

Because of Solomon’s apostasy, God brought twofold adversity to this fallen king in 1 Kings 11:14–22. The first adversary was aptly named Hadad, which means “the thunderer.” This was a common royal name among the Edomites and, more significantly, a common adjective describing divinity. The message was clear: “The thunderer” may have come from Edom, but “the Lord raised [him] up” (verse 14, NLT).

The event described in verses 15–25 may well refer to the account in 2 Samuel 8:13–14 (NLT; see also 1 Chronicles 18:11–13). In 2 Samuel 8, David won a tremendous victory against Edom among other nations. Verse 14 is especially significant: “The Lord made David victorious wherever he went” (NLT).

Moving forward to Solomon’s time, a ruler from this defeated royal line of Edom arose as an adversary against Solomon. It is interesting that Hadad had found refuge in Egypt after his father’s defeat by David (1 Kings 11:17–20). Egypt was a common destination for refugees from the north and east (see Joseph’s story in Genesis 37–50), and Egypt had been a key ally for Solomon, who formed an alliance with Pharaoh and married Pharaoh’s daughter (see 1 Kings 3:1). But because of Solomon’s sins, from Egypt would come an adversary sent by God.

Verses 21–22 describe Hadad’s return. Once he learned that both men who had defeated his father—David and Joab—were dead, he chose to leave his life of luxury in Egypt to return to the north. He proceeded to cause great trouble for Solomon as a guerrilla fighter (rather than a king) perhaps for years to come—just as God had said.

### ***Discuss***

? How was Solomon's adversity different from the adversity God's faithful servants encounter today?

? What should faithful Christians learn from adversity?

## **A Bitter Adversary**

1 Kings 11:23–25

**Say:** Solomon's troubles did not end with Hadad. In 1 Kings 11:23–25 we find yet another persistent adversary who would plague Solomon for a long time. He had also experienced defeat at the hands of David—another reminder that the victory God's people experienced over their enemies was a result of God's gracious hand. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

First Kings 11:23–25 includes the Old Testament's only mention of the name Rezon. Yet many scholars see this as a reference to 2 Samuel 10:1–17. It is believed that Rezon refused to submit to Hadadezer and, later, King David. As a result, he established the kingdom of Aram-Damascus (sometimes translated Syria), a kingdom that became a severe thorn in the flesh of God's people (see 1 Kings 20). Through the testimony of 1 Kings 11, we find that this persistent source of trouble originated with Solomon's disobedience.

We also see, once again, that these sources of adversity arose from David's victories. In 2 Samuel 10:19, the kings allied with Hadadezer surrendered and subjected themselves to Israel as a result of David's overwhelming military victories due to God's intervention. From those same sources—previously defeated foes—Solomon would experience adversity because of his stubborn rebellion against God.

We can learn from Solomon's rebellion that we must not take God's blessings— or indeed, His presence—for granted. He calls us to more than mere religious practices, as good as they might be. This can be a source of temptation for us, to conclude that God will continue to bless us if we go to church, give to ministry and missions, participate in worship services, and invite our neighbors to church. At its foundation, our walk with God is based on commitment to Him and obedience to His righteous commands. Any sacrifice we choose to make is secondary to living as His child and accepting Him as Lord (see also 1 Samuel 15:22).

### ***Discuss***

? What are some ways other people might be hurt by our sins?

? How can we avoid the trap of taking God for granted and assuming He is pleased with us because of the religious things we do?

## Part 3—Consequences of Disobedience

### The Kingdom Will Be Torn

1 Kings 11:26–39

**Say:** Can you think of an example where one person’s mistake, miscalculation, or sin caused disaster for countless other people? This was certainly the case for Israel, since Solomon’s rebellion led to catastrophe for the kingdom. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In 1 Kings 11:26–28, we meet Jeroboam, a capable and ambitious official of Solomon’s court. Since he was from the tribe of Ephraim, he could appropriately serve as the overseer of a group from the descendants of Joseph as they made repairs (Joseph’s descendants included the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh).

Verses 29–30 reminds us that what seems like an ordinary day can have profound significance within the plans of God. As Jeroboam left Jerusalem, he was met by a prophet named Ahijah. The prophet wore a new cloak, which he proceeded to tear into twelve pieces, handing ten of the pieces to Jeroboam. He explained it was the will of the Lord that the nation be divided (verse 31; see also 2 Chronicles 10:15).

Let’s look closely at 1 Kings 11:32, which states that one tribe—Judah—would be preserved for David’s lineage while ten would break away. Of course,  $1+10=11$ , not 12, which is the number of the tribes of Israel. However, this prophecy encompasses both historic and contemporary realities. Historically, there were twelve tribes. But over time, Benjamin became absorbed by Judah, a reality made clear in 1 Kings 12:21–23. (Scholars surmise Simeon was absorbed into Judah as well.) What we see within the prophecy of Ahijah in 11:29–39 is a splitting of the northern tribes away from Judah, leaving Judah to exist alone (and often with animosity against the Northern Kingdom).

The Lord decreed that the Southern Kingdom would have only one tribe, ruled first by Solomon’s son Rehoboam, in order that it would shine “like a lamp in Jerusalem, the city I have chosen to be the place for my name” (verse 36, NLT). God’s plan would not be derailed by one rebellious king. The prophet also stated the Lord would bless the Northern Kingdom only if Jeroboam and the people followed His ways and obeyed His commands (verses 37–38). The Northern Kingdom did no such thing and was hurtling toward blatant rebellion (see 1 Kings 12:25–33). Yet the gleaming promise of hope for God’s people remained, and the Lord declared through the prophet in 11:39: “Because of Solomon’s sin I will punish the descendants of David—though not forever” (NLT).

#### **Discuss**

? How do God’s promises shine like a lamp in a sin-darkened world today?

? What are some ways we can keep God’s promises in view even during challenging times?



## A Tragic Road Begins with Rebellion

1 Kings 11:40–43

**Say:** Bad choices inevitably lead to bad consequences. In the case of Solomon, years of rebellion against God created problems that endured long after his death. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

First Kings 11:40–43 provide sad foreshadowing of what was to come. Clearly, Solomon learned of Ahijah's prophecy and sought to kill Jeroboam. This drove Jeroboam to flee to Egypt, where he found refuge with King Shishak. This relationship itself brought trouble for God's people, and Shishak became Jeroboam's ally and later attacked Jerusalem (see 14:25; note that this invasion was a result of God's judgment, as seen in 2 Chronicles 12:2).

After a forty-year reign that began with immeasurable promise but ended tragically, Solomon died and was buried in Jerusalem. Conditions did not improve when his son Rehoboam ascended to the throne. The new king followed bad advice (see 1 Kings 12:1–20), worsening the animosity between the northern and southern tribes and leading to the rebellion that divided the kingdom. Furthermore, 14:21–24 details the idolatry and pagan practices that went on during his reign, summarizing that "it was even worse than [the sin] of their ancestors" (verse 22, NLT).

### Resource Packet Item 3: Wise Choices

Distribute the worksheet and encourage students to take it home in order to complete it individually during the week.

#### *Discuss*

- ? What were some of the most significant consequences of Solomon's rebellion?
- ? Why might people fail to consider consequences when making sinful decisions?

## What Is God Saying to Us?

**Say:** The sad story of 1 Kings 11 includes at least four instances where God said He withheld specific punishments for the sake of "His servant David." What a marvelous reminder that even when sin seems to pervade the world all around us, God's promises of restoration and a glorious future remain true for all those who seek Him.

## Living It Out

### Ministry in Action

- If you know someone who struggles with regret over past sins, encourage and pray with them, reminding them that God restores and that you see their value in His eyes.
- Take time for personal examination and reflection, asking God to reveal any areas of your life where you need to repent and change direction.

- Spend time in prayer and praise with the class, thanking the Lord for His incredible faithfulness and enduring promises.

## **Daily Bible Readings**

Monday:

Consequences for Adam and Eve.  
Genesis 3:14–19

Tuesday:

Consequences for Saul.  
1 Samuel 13:11–14

Wednesday:

Consequences for God's People.  
Isaiah 3:1–12

Thursday:

Consequences for Judas.  
Matthew 27:1–10

Friday:

Consequences for Ananias and Sapphira.  
Acts 5:1–10

Saturday:

Consequences for the Evil One.  
Revelation 20:1–3