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A Tragic Conclusion

I Kings 11:1-43

Intro: So far, in our study of I Kings, everything has been coming up roses and clover. Yahweh has spoken and Solomon has obeyed. God has promised and God has delivered...in wonderful ways! We've been surprised by the detail and determination of Solomon's building efforts. We've been amazed at the extravagant grandeur and majestic beauty of his royal style. We've even been impressed by his wisdom and knowledge in all areas of life. And, if you're anything like me, you've also been waiting for the other shoe to fall! Nothing that fabulous could last forever, right? Well, yes it could, if all the parties involved would remain faithful to God's Word. But, of course, we're talking about human beings here, regular folk just like you and I. And so, someone's going to do something to muddy the water. We know this to be the case as indicated by the very first word in **ch11**, "But..."

1-8 – Before we launch into the mess of Solomon's fall, let's be honest about the character of his sin. **V1** describes his initial failure. In fact, there are 2 great stumbling blocks revealed here. 1st) He loved foreign women. The problem with foreign women is that they worshipped other gods, false gods, and brought in and promoted pagan influences within Israel. 2nd) He loved many women. This was a direct rejection of God's plan from the very beginning for one man and one woman to become one flesh in marriage.

In our modern, post-Christian culture, neither of these things is considered wrong and plenty of people would be shocked and offended at the mere suggestion of any impropriety with these things. But God Himself gives the rationale for the prohibition on marrying foreign women right there in **v2**. This divine directive is taken from **Ex 34:11-16** and **Deut 7:1-4** and was a general warning to all Israel not to intermarry with any of these nations. What is astounding is that, for all of Solomon's great wisdom, he failed to see the benefit of applying this divine directive to his own life.

Of course, if that is the case, Solomon only did what many of us do today. Solomon somehow thought that he would be the exception to the rule. He may have believed that since he had been chosen by God and endowed with a heaping helping of divine wisdom, he could somehow escape the

consequences of this sin, despite seeing how it affected others throughout Israel's history. Apparently, Solomon believed he was special and that what God had warned Israel against didn't really apply to him because he was wise, he was wealthy and he was king! Solomon would soon learn that he was not the exception to the rule.

Saying that Solomon loved many women was an understatement – there were 700 princesses that demanded attention, not to mention the 300 concubines. Concubines were legal partners without the same standing as wives, like a legal mistress. There were many prominent men in the OT who had concubines: Abraham, Jacob, Caleb, Saul and David, but what is significant about each of these is that we never see this kind of family blessed by God. All you need to do is look at the example of Jacob's home life to see and understand that there is no peace in a home like that. It is a constant running battle between rivals and the entire family stays in a state of uproar all the time. This isn't God's desire for the home. His will is for the home life of a believing family to reflect the peace that exists in the God-head.

Now, as bad as these things were, they weren't the reason Solomon was about to be confronted by God. Solomon's real sin was the inevitable result of these two compromises on his part. His sin was that he allowed his heart to be turned after other gods. It wasn't Solomon's affluence, indulgence, excess, extravagance or oppression that are the principle problem here. The first 10 chapters are completely positive towards Solomon and all he achieved. Our text clearly reveals that old king Sol's problem wasn't his wealth, luxury, high-handedness, wisdom, popularity, or renown – it was other gods! It was a clear and deliberate violation of the very first commandment!

Notice the subtlety of Solomon's sin. It was subtle because it was internal. The heart of the problem is a problem of the heart. The word heart appears 5 times in [v2-4](#). But the Bible doesn't use heart to just refer to our emotions or feelings, like is common in modern western culture. That's part of it, but the Bible has a bigger concept of heart which includes the willing, loving, thinking center of a person. The Bible doesn't separate the head and heart, rather the head is in the heart. So, this use of heart in the text tells us we're dealing with internal, invisible things. Clearly, the most important aspects of OT faith were internal. That's what makes unfaithfulness so subtle; it starts

in the hidden depths of heart. Long before the Chemosh chapel was built in Jerusalem, a royal heart had taken an evil turn.

This unfaithfulness was also subtle because it was gradual. V4 is frightening in it's revelation that all of this took place when Solomon was old. It wasn't some sudden attack or irresistible coercion that forced Solomon to take this plunge into pagan idolatry. At the beginning of his reign, it would have been useless to argue the claims of idolatry with Solomon. With his God-given wisdom, he could've immediately defeated all claims of idolatry and established both the existence and unity of God beyond dispute. And yet, years later, his heart has turned away from the one true God. This was the sad but inevitable result of the creeping pace of accumulated compromises, the poisonous fruit of a conscience that had been completely desensitized by repeated permissiveness. It happened, gradually, slowly, almost imperceptibly. Step by step, he was led as a captive, by silken cords, to the worship of other gods.

What's most frightening about this is if it could happen to Solomon, it could happen to anyone. Apparently, age didn't make Solomon wiser. He seemed to be wiser in his youth but old age only hardened the sinful tendencies that were present in his youth. Age and experience should make us more godly and wise but it's not automatic. Is there not a warning here for the church? Yes, concern for the spiritual welfare of our children and youth is important but should we not also exercise more vigilance over our more senior members, many of whom will face the greatest troubles of their lives in their final years.

Finally, let's notice the tragedy of Solomon's sin. To see this, we must look at ch11 in light of the whole Solomon story. V1-2 tell us that Solomon loved many foreign women and that he clung to these in love. Compare this with the writer's assessment from the beginning of Solomon's reign in 3:3. Some may try to qualify this "love" by pointing out that huge harems were common in those days and it didn't mean Solomon was constantly hovering around burning with desire. Many of these marriages were political in nature, meant to secure alliances with other nations. This may be true, but the text isn't interested in Solomon's politics, just his affections. He clung to these women. At this point in his life, he wanted romance and sensual fulfillment more than he wanted a good relationship with the Lord.

That's the tragedy here; the story begins with Solomon loved the Lord and ends with Solomon loved many foreign women. These book ends should grab hold of our hearts and sober us up. Where are my affections? We live in a culture that is constantly vying for our affections. It screams all kinds of options and opportunities to draw away our attention and the focus of our lives. If we're not careful, if we're not deliberately maintaining our relationship with Jesus Christ, then an imperceptible drift will begin to take place and it will happen over many years.

Maybe it's already started in your life. Are you headed for tragedy because you have left your first love? Maybe you've noticed the drifting and are now scrambling with what to do about it. It's a terrifying realization when you just see how far you've drifted from the place of peace and blessing. It's terrifying because the consequences of life long compromise doesn't just affect you – it will affect everyone you are responsible for, just as it did Solomon. What can you do? Only what Jesus instructed the church at Ephesus to when they had left their first love (Him); “remember... from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works.” Think of the glory of your initial walk with the Lord, after you were first saved, and compare that with your life today. Is it better or worse? Are you walking closer with the Lord or farther from Him? If it's not as good or better, there's a problem! Repent and go back to living for the Lord again.

9-13 – what happens when one make compromises with the 1st commandment? One meets the anger of the Lord! As students of the Bible, we're not surprised to hear that the Lord was angry with Solomon. We understand that God is simply following His previously declared policy towards those who were party to the covenant (**Deut 6:14-15**). His anger flows out of His jealousy for the supreme place in His people's worship and affection. Disturbing as this may sound; this jealousy is simply the character of any love that is worth its salt when that love has an exclusive claim. If your spouse is unfaithful, you're supposed to be angry about it. That doesn't mean you can run 'em over with an SUV (unless you live in Texas). Some may say, “We have an open relationship.” Hogwash! You either have an exclusive relationship or you're just kidding yourselves and asking for lots of trouble later on.

Many in our culture are shocked by the Lord's anger because He refuses to conform to human expectations. Nope, Yahweh is unique. None of the

pagan deities of the ancient Near East demanded exclusive devotion from their worshippers. Yahweh's anger also bothers modern man because it proves that the God of the Bible isn't a pluralist. He doesn't fit with our cultural norms or free living mentality. Why should God be so upset just because Solomon wants to spread his religious devotion around? People today want nothing to do with a God Who will stake an exclusive claim over their affections. Nor do they care to face the God-in-the-flesh who sits on the shore of Galilee, peers across the fire, and assumes He has the right to keep asking us about our love for Him (Jn 21:15-17).

14-25 – The rest of **ch11** tells us what God was doing in the historical scene during this time. We see two rivals who appear to cause trouble for Solomon from outside his kingdom and a third who causes him trouble from the inside. What we have in this section is the intersection of history and sovereignty. Twice, the author indicates that God raised up an adversary (**14, 23**). In the next section we'll see it a 3rd time (**26**). This is completely different from the reporting we are used to seeing. Neither print nor broadcast news report events that way – explaining God's role in them. History books never include any background, spiritual information. They focus on cause-and-effect relationships, for various factors, for explanations and motives. This isn't just because reporters and historians are secularist. Most are but even Christians find it difficult to accurately pinpoint what God is doing at any given time.

That's why the Bible's so different. The biblical writers are given history from the divine perspective. Without blushing or batting an eye they'll tell us that God did this or God did that. We may be so used to reading this stuff in Scripture that it no longer surprises us but we'll never read anything like this from any other source. Our text clearly states that both Hadad and Rezon (and Jeroboam) were raised up by God for the express purpose of opposing Solomon. They are not accidental blobs that just happened to randomly pop up in this historical diorama. No, their positions, their actions, their impact occur at the direction of God's sovereign finger. We can assume the same for all other petty world leaders throughout history and in the news today. Reporters won't admit to it but we know it to be the truth.

Of course, there's much to be discussed here but one truth commands our attention: when God acts sovereignly in history, it's always by the means of a faithful sovereignty. Meaning, God's work in history is always in line with

His previously stated principles, His covenant policy. In Solomon's case, it's the Davidic covenant (**II Sam 7:14**). God is simply carrying out His previously announced response in the event the Davidic royalty proved to be unfaithful. He had even graciously reiterated stipulations to Solomon – on 2 separate occasions! For Solomon, the rod of Yahweh's punishment comes in the persons of Hadad, Rezon and Jeroboam. Our text simply records God's faithful application of Davidic covenant principles to a particular historical situation.

If nothing else, God is consistent. What we usually say is that God is faithful. They mean the same thing. Of course, we love the fact that God is faithful in His love for us, His salvation, His protection, presence and provision. What we often fail to consider is that God is also faithful to His Word and to His Holiness. This means He will be faithful in His judgment, in His chastisement, in His wrath, in His jealousy, in His severity. And yet, is He not as deserving of our praise for His faithfulness in things we dread as He is for His faithfulness in things we desire and even pray for? What's the use of having a distinct policy if it is not applied consistently? Our God never fluctuates. He is a true God!

26-43 – Here we see the intersection of history and prophecy. Jeroboam seemed to be the kind of man that exudes success. He seemed to be an energetic worker and a natural leader and he caught the eye of Solomon early on. He made him project manager over the conscripted labor from the northern tribes. This may have been where his heart began to turn away from Solomon (**27b**). Regardless, he's heading out of town one day when he was jumped by a prophet. This prophet wasn't trying to take his wallet but he was about to rock old Jerry's world. Ahijah pulls off his own brand new outer garment and starts tearing it into 12 pieces. He then tells Jeroboam to take 10 pieces for himself. After counting them off, he then explains to Jeroboam what God is about to do through him (**31**).

What Ahijah is doing is simply announcing beforehand what direction history will take under God's control. Of course, prophecy always functions within the parameters of God's sovereignty. Through prophecy, God simply indicates the path His sovereignty will take in any segment of history. Now, God is going to tear the kingdom apart; He announces it through His word and we will watch His word bring that history to pass. Some may be bothered by the fact that this prophecy seemed to be the catalyst for Jerry's

rebellion. Why else would Solomon seek to kill him? If this is true, it wouldn't be the first time God has used human selfishness and greed to fulfill His Word.

What is the lesson for the church in all this? It's that history is solidly and undeniably under God's control. God knew of Solomon's infidelity before Solomon was born. He wasn't shocked by it or surprised. God knew the evil that was present in the hearts of Hadad and Rezon. He knew the rebellious plan Jeroboam was hatching even as he walked away from Ahijah. None of this would be a surprise to God. So we, as God's people, can find our rest in Him even when it looks like He's tearing our own country apart or our lives. God's always in control. We can rest in that truth.

With all this ripping and tearing about to happen, it's only logical to wonder if God is able to preserve that which He is about to destroy. Does God's judgment on Solomon cancel out His sure promise to David ([II Sam 7:12-16](#))? Not at all! There were some clear qualifiers included in God's words to Solomon and to Jeroboam. The clear principle here is: god's judgment doesn't cancel out God's promises. When God announced His judgment to Solomon, He placed 2 restrictions on it: not now ([12](#)) and not all ([13](#)). Ahijah repeated the same qualifications to Jeroboam. The judgment will be delayed in time (after Solomon) and limited in extent (Solomon's son gets a tribe).

Why these restrictions? God has made previous commitments, previous choices. God has an elect person (Davidic dynasty) and an elect place (Jerusalem); covenant king and covenant worship are nonnegotiable. They cannot be completely removed and Jeroboam rule will be limited by these divine parameters. In fact, [v39](#) implies the Davidic line will be restored to full strength in the future (not forever). So, God's promise may be eclipsed but not eliminated. There will be affliction but not abandonment. The rays of hope flicker behind the clouds of God's judgment. It had to have been such a culture shock for Israel to go from living high on the hog in the Golden Age to merely surviving in the torn kingdom but it was possible for the faithful to endure because they had God's quiet promise...not forever!

Even after going through this entire chapter, it still throws me how Solomon could sink to such a low spiritual level. All I can figure is that he lost sight of the holiness of God, the exclusiveness of God. We walk in constant danger of the same sad pitfall. We love to praise God for His love, grace and mercy

but are quick to forget about His holiness. But it's as much a part of His character as the others. When we forget or ignore God's holiness, we invite disaster into our lives. Biblical prohibitions against sin aren't there to spoil our fun but to shield us from pain and destruction. 😊