

## Review of Solomon's Rise and Decline

### Commentary for August 1, 2016 — Human Perspective and God's Perspective

This month's article, "Israel and Judah: 19. Solomon's Glory and Death," presents the biblical narratives surveying the glory of Solomon's kingdom, his sins and his death. The "[August 1, 2016 Newsletter](#)" should be read first.

According to human understanding, Solomon's reign was glorious. Oh, perhaps he got a bit odd and sinful at the end of his life and reign (1 Kings 11:4), he made enemies, imposed oppressive taxes, but this was no different from most kings. This would have been the judgment of most people in Solomon's time regarding his reign. Great glory was his, glory given by YHWH Himself:

**"And YHWH magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel."**

• *1 Chronicles 29:25, KJV*

**"And Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and YHWH his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly."**

• *2 Chronicles 1:1, KJV*

Solomon grew up as a royal prince of King David. He was not destined for the throne according to the normal system of primogeniture as practiced in ancient Israel. However, he was destined to rule because God chose him to follow David as King. Solomon received advice from David on how he should act as king. YHWH spoke directly to Solomon two times, telling him how he should act toward YHWH His God. He gave Solomon a special dispensation (an extra dose) of common sense called "wisdom." One would expect the advice and warning of his father, David, and his God, YHWH, would have been heeded. They were not.

Solomon's knowledge, understanding, and wisdom extended to everything he was interested in. He knew intricate details about many things. Solomon knew about human love between a man and a woman as expressed in his Song of Songs.<sup>1</sup> He wrote and gathered proverbs to impart some of his collected wisdom to future generations.<sup>2</sup>

God told him specifically how to remain faithful in his relationship to Him, and how to worship, all after He gave Solomon the wisdom to do so. Solomon began his reign well, but in his old age (1 Kings 11:4–6) the text indicates "slowly he turned, step by step, inch by inch"<sup>3</sup> — first by acknowledging other gods, then building high places of worship for his wives, and finally participating in worship of those gods with his wives.

In God's view Solomon disobeyed a clear and direct command that he fully understood.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ernest L. Martin, "[The Significance of the Song of Solomon.](#)"

<sup>2</sup> "[The Book of Proverbs: Its Structure, Design and Teaching](#)" and "[The Book of Ecclesiastes.](#)"

<sup>3</sup> To paraphrase an old vaudeville comedy routine ...

Solomon did so knowingly with all his wisdom (Romans 1: 18–25). God took a dim view of such behavior in light of His warning in Exodus 20: 3–5, which Solomon knew by heart, and because YHWH reiterated the covenant prohibition to the young king — personally:

**“But if you shall AT ALL turn from following me, you or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, ... will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people:**

**And at this house, which is high, every one that passes by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, ‘Why has YHWH done thus unto this land, and to this house?’ And they shall answer, ‘Because they forsook YHWH their God, ... and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore has YHWH brought upon them all this evil.’”**

• *1 Kings 9:6–9, KJV*

Solomon had no excuse. Yet Solomon’s wisdom to rule His people continued to the end of his days (read the short book of Ecclesiastes). Solomon ruled by God’s grace and permission day by day, moment by moment. Yet the wisest man was stupid (1 Corinthians 1:20–21, 3:19; 2 Corinthians 2:6–7). He lacked God’s Holy Spirit. Solomon concludes Ecclesiastes, knowing he failed God and Israel with his idolatry, although he still retained his earthly wisdom.

**“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”**

• *Ecclesiastes 12:13–14, KJV*

Solomon was faithfully obedient to his father’s and God’s commands regarding construction of the Temple in the beginning of his reign. He properly organized the running of the Temple according to God’s direction in the operation of the Tabernacle, and David’s instructions for the Temple. Solomon acted with strong faith in his excellent prayer to YHWH at the dedication of the Temple. God responded to Solomon with a gift of wisdom. In spite of all this, at the end of his life he did not follow these last words in Ecclesiastes. Solomon did not fear God enough for him keep the clearest of God’s commandments.

There is no evidence in the narratives of Kings or Chronicles, in Proverbs, or Ecclesiastes that Solomon repented of his actions before his death. Nor is his repentance hinted at in the New Testament. He was not listed among heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter 11. His son Rehoboam followed Solomon’s evil ways, ignoring his father’s counsel of Ecclesiastes, and ruled with much less wisdom.

David ruled a united Israel for 33 years (1 Kings 2:11). Solomon inherited that united kingdom and he ruled for 40 years (1 Kings 11:42). After Solomon’s death, YHWH divided the 73 year united kingdom of Israel into two parts, a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. They were not to be unified again. Each kingdom was destroyed and the people exiled, wiped from history except in the history of Scripture.

David Sielaff  
[david@askelm.com](mailto:david@askelm.com)