

Review: 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), and he made enemies, imposed oppressive taxes, but this was no different than 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 knew many things. He knew about human love between a man and a woman are expressed in the Song of Songs, written by Solomon.¹ He wrote and gathered proverbs God specifically told him how to remain faithful, gave Solomon the wisdom to do so. Solomon began his reign well, but "slowly he turned, step by step, inch by inch"² — first by acknowledging other gods, then building temples for his wives, and finally participating in their worship of those gods.

In God's view Solomon disobeyed a direct command from God, and Solomon did so knowingly with all his full wisdom. God took a dim view of such behavior in light of His warning of Exodus 20:3–5 which Solomon knew by heart, and because YHWH reiterated it 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 Dr. Ernest L. Martin, "[The Significance of the Song of Solomon](#)."

² To paraphrase an old vaudeville comedy routine ...

• *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. He lacked God's Holy Spirit. Solomon concludes Ecclesiastes, knowing he failed God and Israel with his idolatry, yet still regaining his 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*

After Solomon death comes the division of David and Solomon's united kingdom of 73 years into two parts, north and south. They will not be unified again. Each kingdom will be wiped off the map. Will such a unified kingdom occur again before Christ returns? There are prophecies that seem to indicate that will happen. (This is what is called "a tease.")

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