

## 1st Kings Chapter 11 – John Karmelich

1. In this chapter we're going to read of the decline and death of Solomon as the king. No he doesn't lose all of his power or all of his wealth and fame. However he does turn from worshipping God. In effect God says to Solomon, "OK, enough is enough. I've warned not to turn from Me and now Solomon, you must now pay the consequences for your sins."
  - a) That leads to my lesson title, "The price of disobedience". My point here is that God does desire a relationship with all of us. When we turn from worshipping Him, God does what He can to draw us back to Him. That includes forms of suffering and raising up problems in our lives so our focus is back on Him. If that doesn't scare you away from reading this lesson, nothing will. The point is to learn the cost of turning from God in our relationship with Him. The issue is not about losing one's salvation, but about the danger of failing to be a witness for God. In short, there is a price to be paid when we turn from God.
2. To explain this better, let me go summarize the key facts of this chapter:
  - a) The first is about how Solomon built up a large harem. He married 700 women and also had another 300 concubines. Yes I could make a thousand jokes about that situation, but the key point is they turned Solomon against God. The most important thing I can teach on this subject here is no matter how devoted we are as Christians, our sin nature can get any of us to turn from God like Solomon does here. One of the most common arguments people will make when they flirt with skirting one of God's commandments is in effect, "I am different, I can handle this situation". The answer of course is no we can't. If we could ask Solomon if he would turn to God to worship a pagan god, I'm sure he would laugh at that thought. Yet, by going after other women, they turned his hearts to foreign gods. The point for us is that demons are well aware of our weaknesses and will use our weaknesses to make us ineffective witnesses for God.
    - i) I'm convinced Satan can't take away our salvation, but he does work to make us ineffective witnesses for God and that is why demons pick on our weaknesses. If we are a bad witness for God, it won't draw others to Him. So, is Solomon in hell or in heaven? I don't know and since heaven is God's domain, it is His business to judge him. God calls on us to judge behavior and learn from it.
  - b) OK I got on a roll here, and forgot to summarize the rest of the chapter: The short version is that the rest of the chapter focuses on the consequences Solomon faced for his troubles.
    - i) The first is the chapter lists two non-Jewish people who became adversaries for the nation of Israel. What's interesting is the text doesn't say how these two foreigners did harm to the nation of Israel. It just implies they did. A point to consider is the sins we commit, we think won't harm others. The whole nation of Israel suffered by what Solomon did as the king. A common lie told in our society today is that no one gets hurt when we choose to do some sort of harm to our own lives. The truth is our actions affect those around us. The point is all of Israel had to pay the price for Solomon's sins and those around us have to suffer when we choose to be disobedient to God's will for our lives.
    - ii) On that happy note, there is more to this chapter. We get introduced to a prophet of God who then tells another Israelite that he'll soon be the leader over ten of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is the point in history where Israel will split into two separate nations. We'll cover that in more detail in the next lesson. The point here is that God announces now how this will happen due to Solomon's sins.
3. Well John, congratulations, you managed to depress us and we're only on the first page. I want you to read this chapter not to learn about the tragedy of a king that lived about 3,000 years ago. I want all of us to understand there are consequences from turning from God and other people will suffer the consequences just as we will. There is no getting around those consequences.

4. On that happy note, Chapter 11, Verse 1: King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter--Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. <sup>2</sup> They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.
  - a) Like I said in the introduction, the temptation to resist for me is to tell a thousand jokes of about having to live with a thousand women. At the least, it brings up lots of questions: For example, did Solomon have separate residences for each wife? How did he go from wife #238 to #693? Did wife #535 say to wife #536, you're not nearly as beautiful as I am and soon you'll be cast aside for wife #537 before the end of the week? I'm sorry, it's hard to deal with my weakness to question how all of this worked practically.
  - b) The truth is Solomon lived to excess. Let's face it, Solomon had all the wealth, power and fame any man could ever want, so why not have a harem larger than any king in recorded history? In other words, if Solomon could afford this, why complain about it? My answer is Verse 2. In fact that verse quotes Deuteronomy Chapter 6, which essentially teaches the Israelites are to marry Israelites and not marry with these specific groups of people.
    - i) OK John so the Israelites were not allowed to marry within these ancient groups of people that no longer exist today. Why should we care? Remember that the New Testament teaches that Christians should not marry or have business partnerships with nonbelievers. (See 2nd Corinthians 6:14-15). Without getting into the details on that principal, the idea is about keeping our focus and our loyalty upon God. If we get connected with nonbelievers, that will divide our interests between serving God and serving the interests of those nonbelievers. That mistake caused the fall of Solomon and it cost him his witness to God let alone his power and fortune.
    - ii) Consider Solomon's turning from God this way: If you were to question Solomon and ask him, "Do you believe in God and God only?" Of course he would say yes. My point is Satan and his demons are well aware of each of our weaknesses. That is why he uses those weaknesses to make us ineffective witnesses for God. Satan was also aware that Solomon was part of the lineage of people that would bring the Messiah into the world, so Satan focused his efforts on Solomon for that reason.
    - iii) My point is simply that just as Solomon feel victim to his own weakness for going after foreign women, so demonic forces attack our weaknesses for the purpose of making us ineffective witnesses for God. I'm convinced they can't take away our salvation, but their goal is to make us ineffective witnesses by going after aspects of our lives where they know we are weak. That is why God calls on us to depend upon Him for the strength to fight such weaknesses and not our own willpower.
  - c) Meanwhile, Solomon is in big trouble here, as we'll read further in the next few verses.
5. Verse 3: He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. <sup>4</sup> As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. <sup>5</sup> He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. <sup>6</sup> So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.
  - a) If I had to say what is the most common mistake most Christians make, it is the belief that somehow they are the exception to the rule. We wrongly think, "That specific set of rules in the bible, are necessary for others, but I can skirt that rule as I have the strength to resist that temptation".
  - b) I can't see Solomon saying he was going to worship other gods. However, he figured that if he could have anything he wanted, he wanted an excess of women as he figured he was a king and having all of those women as essentially servants would make him happy. It may help to remember his father David also had a lot of wives and "like father, like son".

- c) The key difference between David and Solomon is that when David had his moments of weakness like his affair with Bathsheba, David realized his mistake, confesses it as sin and turned back to God. You never read of David doing that twice. Yet here in these verses we read of Solomon worshipping all sorts of foreign gods that his wives worshipped. The question is why would Solomon do such a thing? The answer was back to Verse 1. It said that Solomon loved these foreign women. If he cared about them, then he wanted to learn in effect what make them tick. So he did what they wanted and worshiped foreign gods.
  - i) To understand this better, one has to understand just how detestable this was. To worship these gods of the underworld, sacrifices of living animals were made and in some cases live children to show one's devotion to those gods. If we read about cults and bizarre rituals, we would get a feel for what this was like back then.
  - ii) Most of the commentators I read speculate that Solomon was in his 50's when all of this happened. My point is wisdom does not naturally come with age. One has to stick close to God all of one's life as one can be easily tempted when one is older just as much as when one is younger. The way to resist temptation is not by trying harder, but by regularly praying and if one is struggling, have others pray for you and even be accountable to others. Temptation is easier to resist if we know that we have to be accountable to others for our behavior. The problem with Solomon is that he was king and he did not feel he had to be accountable to anyone. That is why he thought he could get away with this. To state the obvious there are always consequences for our actions, and we'll read how Solomon suffered for his actions.
- 6. Verse 7: On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. <sup>8</sup> He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.
  - a) If there is one thing one learns from reading their bible on a regular basis, is "no one gets away with anything". That is as true for our lives as it is for all the biblical characters. In these verses, we read of Solomon taking the next step downhill by him building the places where these foreign gods were worshipped.
  - b) Let us consider Solomon's downhill slide the way we might approach sin:
    - i) Did Solomon realize that God didn't want worship of other gods? Of course.
    - ii) Did Solomon in his gift of wisdom, realize that all of this was wrong? Of course.
    - iii) The mistake was Solomon did think, "What's the harm in having other women be a part of my harem? After all, my father had multiple wives and after all I am the richest man alive now. I have all this money, so why can't I have lots of beautiful women to enjoy it with? What's the harm? That's the issue for you and me. When we start to think, what is the harm of doing something that may or may not be a violation of God's laws? The way most Christians become ineffective witnesses for God is not by committing some great sin to start off, but only by thinking what is the harm to do this or that? That harm is what lead Solomon down a steep slope and ended him up here actually worshipping demonic deities.
  - c) I could spend some time explaining what these demonic false gods where, but lets just say it is pretty disgusting stuff. Again, it's a little like the things one reads of people offering animal sacrifices and even children in order to prove their trust in these gods.
  - d) Even if we say I would never do something that bad, that isn't the issue for you and me. The danger is when we flirt with something that isn't right. It always leads to something worse and that is the lesson we need to learn from Solomon: That we as people today are not stronger mentally or physically than the wisest man who ever lived. My point is if Solomon can fall into this trap, so can any of us. That is a reason why I emphasize that we have to depend upon His power in order to overcome temptation and not our willpower.
  - e) OK, enough of making us all feel guilty. We are going to spend the rest of the chapter to read of the consequences that Solomon himself had for his own downfall.

7. Verse 9: The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.<sup>10</sup> Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command.
- a) Let me start with the concept of God becoming angry. I believe in a God that is perfect by definition. If He is perfect, He can't learn. If He can't learn, then He must be aware of all things. Given all of that, how can the text here imply that God became angry? Does God have emotions that react to our lives? The way that I view this is I see it from Solomon's perspective. From his point of view, he will see his life go downhill at this point because he had violated God's rules for his life. Therefore, when the text says, God is angry, don't read it as a mood change of God. Read it as Solomon is now seeing the consequences of how he is living his life.
  - b) Suppose one is thinking, "I know people who get away with stuff. I know of people who are living 'high off the hog' and have gotten away with all sorts of things." As I state on a fairly regular basis, if this life is all that there is, it is a very unfair and cruel place to live. However, if there is a God who judges all people fairly, remember that eternity is far longer than any time span where one gets to enjoy those blessings.
    - i) One thing that one discovers as a Christian is as I put it, "We can't get away with anything". One discovers pretty quickly that either due to circumstances that one gets in or one's guilt, to trust in God means one can't get away with stuff far more than one who doesn't trust in God for their lives in the first place. The idea is that since God is preparing us for eternity in this lifetime, He is constantly working on our lives so that we trust Him in every aspect of our lives. That includes the idea that we as believers can't get away with anything.
  - c) Therefore, while God is about to lecture Solomon directly for the sins he committed, God also is lecturing us through these warnings He is actually giving to Solomon at this point.
    - i) That means when we read of God getting angry at a believer, we need to take that as a personal warning for you and me to not fall down the same trap: To think we can get away with "this little sin" and it won't grow into something worse. Again the secret to combat such issues is not to try to do it based on willpower, but only upon our dependence upon Him and His power. Seek out other believers who are usually more than willing to pray for us and with us, because they know their own weaknesses and know that if we fall today, it could be them tomorrow.
8. Verse 11: So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates."<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son.<sup>13</sup> Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."
- a) Here we read of the third time that God spoke directly to Solomon. The first time was in Chapter 3 when God first gave Solomon the gift of wisdom. The second time was back in Chapter 9 when God warned Solomon about the danger of turning from Him. Now we get the "it's too late" lecture here in Chapter 11. Before I get into the specifics of what God is telling Solomon about his punishment, let me discuss the "it's too late" issue:
    - i) Does this mean there is a point where God won't forgive us of our sins? No, that's not the issue here. The issue is about our being a public witness for Him. God can and does take away our witness for Him. Sometimes it is by death and other times it is just by taking away our effectiveness or the ministry opportunities he gives us. Think of the famous ministers who have fallen from power when they gave way to their sinful desires. I know of a once very prominent American minister who now works in a homeless soup kitchen in Los Angeles after he was caught in a sexual scandal. The point is God can take away our blessings if we turn from Him.

- b) That leads me back to Solomon. Remember that he was the king of Israel. He was also the richest, most famous and most powerful man of that time. God raised him up so that he was well known. If God raises one up that way, then he needs to be a witness for Him. Since he is now publicly worshipping other gods, he is no longer a witness for God and it was necessary for God at this point to step in and do something about it. That leads us to the announcement of God's punishment in these verses.
- c) The first thing God says is that He will take away the kingdom of Israel from Solomon and give it to a person who works for him. Since he is a king, he has lots of servants and I'm sure he was wondering here, which of his thousands of servants was God referring to.
- d) That leads us to Verse 12. This verse says that God won't do this thing now, but will do it during the lifetime of Solomon's son who is to be the next king. So if what Solomon did is so bad, why wait until later to administer this punishment? First of all, we will read that Solomon is going to suffer as a king during the remaining days of his kingship. The point is Solomon will not lose part of his territory as a king until the reign of his son.
- e) Then we get this strange comment that God won't do this "now" for the sake of Solomon's father David. Remember that David died a long time before this date, so why does God say that for the sake of David, he won't do this now?
  - i) The issue is that God made an unconditional promise to David that a son of his would rule forever. That leads to Jesus who rules today over multitudes that do and have called Him the Lord of their and our lives. Therefore, God is saying to Solomon, I'm going to keep my promise to David and the dynasty of your family will continue for David's sake and not for your sake. However, I (God) will make your dynasty weaker because you have made a public witness for Me weaker by your actions with these other women.
  - ii) To say this another way, "Hey Solomon, I will punish you now for the sins that you have committed, but the damage to the nation of Israel will come later just as the sins we commit now have affects upon other people around us." That is why in Exodus 20 (the 10 Commandment passage) there is a reference to a punishment to the 3rd and 4th generation (Exodus 20:5). The idea is what we do will affect the future generations whether we realize it or not. There is no "this sin only hurts me and doesn't affect others". That is why the future generation will suffer due to the sins that Solomon committed here in this chapter.
- f) That leads us to Verse 13. It says that one tribe of the 12 tribes of Israel will still be under the control of Solomon's son when he begins to rule. The point is that in order for God to keep his promise to David that a son of his would rule forever, there still needed to be a succession of kings as to show that Jesus came from a long line of kings. That's why the punishment to Solomon was not the end of a family dynasty, so that one tribe of Israel will still be under the kingship of the descendants of his.
  - i) At this point, it's time for a quick lecture on the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel. From the time of Solomon's son, Israel split into two kingdoms. Each of them will last for centuries, with the southern kingdom lasting a little longer. It is that Southern kingdom where the descendants of David will reign until the time of the Babylonian Captivity roughly 400 years later.
  - ii) It is also necessary to understand a little about the so-called "lost tribes of Israel". First of all, one of the tribes by the time of Solomon was so small in effect it was folded into the much larger tribe of Judah that David and Solomon were a part of.
    - a) Next understand that when the northern kingdom split off (I cover this in the next chapter and the next lecture in this series), they turned from God and therefore, the priests loyal to God migrated to the Southern Kingdom of Israel. My point is just to understand by the time both kingdoms were destroyed, the tribes intermixed and there are no lost tribes of Israel.

- iii) However, I'm jumping way ahead of the story. I'm giving all of this background now, as to understand Verse 13 when it says "I will give one tribe to your son, it was actually more than one tribe in terms of people, but only one tribe in terms of the territory that is controlled. The point is the descendants of Solomon will lose most of the territory controlled by Solomon at the peak of his power.
  - g) OK John, remind me again why I should care about all of this ancient history? The point is if we turn from God with our lives we too can feel the consequences as well as others in our family and even those we influence will also suffer the consequences. A reason that God punished Solomon's descendants as well as Solomon himself is to show us that there are long-term consequences to others for the sins we commit.
  - h) As to Solomon himself, we don't get any clues whether or not he repented from what he was practicing here. He wanted to be like other kings around him and we don't get any clues in the text that he stopped this practice based on this warning. I wonder if he just thought, "Well, if it affects my descendants, why should I care?" That of course is the type of danger all of us face when we think no one gets hurt by what we are doing.
  - i) Meanwhile we are going to read of some of the consequences that Solomon is going to suffer during the remainder of his lifetime in the rest of this chapter.
9. Verse 14: Then the LORD raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom. <sup>15</sup>Earlier when David was fighting with Edom, Joab the commander of the army, who had gone up to bury the dead, had struck down all the men in Edom. <sup>16</sup>Joab and all the Israelites stayed there for six months, until they had destroyed all the men in Edom. <sup>17</sup>But Hadad, still only a boy, fled to Egypt with some Edomite officials who had served his father. <sup>18</sup>They set out from Midian and went to Paran. Then taking men from Paran with them, they went to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house and land and provided him with food.
- a) In these verses, we are going to read of the first of three adversaries that God raised up to oppose Solomon. What is interesting to consider about the first two adversaries, is there is nothing in the text that suggests how this guy Hadad or the next guy coming up caused Solomon problems. It just states that both of these men were problems for Solomon.
  - b) If the bible doesn't say what this Hadad character did to Solomon, why should I care what he did? The issue to learn here is not what he did, but how God raised this guy up:
    - i) The text tells a story about how King David and his general Joab had a complete victory over an enemy of theirs called the Edomites. They lived east of Israel and had been a traditional enemy of the Israelites for a long time. We learn that when David lead the Israelites to fight there. He defeated them so completely that every male Edomite was killed. David probably thought he would never have to worry about this group ever again as all of them were killed. As to whether or not David should have killed everyone like that, one has to remember that this was a kill or be killed society. For the Israelites to live in peace at that time, such actions were necessary as cruel as they were.
    - ii) The point to learn is we may think an enemy is completely dead or a problem we once had is long gone, but when we turn from God, that same problem can now reappear. Here was an Edomite survivor who fled to Egypt along with some of the other Edomites. This group was taken care of, so that they grew strong and prospered. It shows how God can raise up for us a problem we consider "dead" when we turn from His will for our lives.
    - iii) I thought about this problem another way too. Why would the king of Egypt want to help out this fugitive? Verse 18 says the Pharaoh himself provided them with a place to live, provisions and food. Consider this possibility: Maybe the Pharaoh was angry at Solomon for cheating on his daughter with all of these women. Now by helping out a known enemy of the Israelites, Pharaoh was plotting revenge.

- iv) Even if I'm totally wrong on that issue, the point is God is raising up a "formerly dead problem" to show us the danger of turning from His will for our lives.
  - v) With that said, it's time to get back to this future enemy of Solomon being raised up by Pharaoh in Egypt.
10. Verse 19: Pharaoh was so pleased with Hadad that he gave him a sister of his own wife, Queen Tahpenes, in marriage. <sup>20</sup> The sister of Tahpenes bore him a son named Genubath, whom Tahpenes brought up in the royal palace. There Genubath lived with Pharaoh's own children.
- a) The story here is Hadad the Edomite now became part of the royal family in Egypt. This man Hadad went from being a runaway in Edom to part of the ruling family in Egypt.
  - b) One has to admit, this story reminds us a little of the story of Joseph in Genesis where he went from being sold as a slave to the number two man in Egypt. This story does not say anything good or bad about the character of Hadad. God was just working behind the scenes to raise up an enemy of King Solomon and used the Pharaoh to do all of this. With that said, we finish that story of Hadad in the next two verses.
11. Verse 21: While he was in Egypt, Hadad heard that David rested with his fathers and that Joab the commander of the army was also dead. Then Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me go, that I may return to my own country." <sup>22</sup> "What have you lacked here that you want to go back to your own country?" Pharaoh asked. "Nothing," Hadad replied, "but do let me go!"
- a) The key point here is that Hadad wanted to go back to the land of Edom and settle there. That is the end of the story. There is no dialogue about how he became a problem for the Israelites. The big picture idea is that a traditional enemy group of the Israelites who I'm sure King David thought, "I'm going to wipe this group out once and for all", was able to rebuild itself. God allowed this enemy to come back due to the disobedience of Solomon and the consequences now play out in these verses.
  - b) To state the obvious, I doubt either Hadad or the Egyptian Pharaoh knew any of this. I'm guessing that when the Pharaoh first saw this man, he was impressed by his ability to be a hard worker and eventually Hadad became part of the Egyptian royal family. Once he got stronger and more powerful, Hadad took his new family back to Edom. The text implies that the Edomites are back in the territory east of Israel but they are ruled at this time by the Israelites again. However, they are going to be a problem for the Israelites. How they become a problem isn't discussed until later in their history.
  - c) The text says records the fact in Verse 22 that the Pharaoh wanted him to stay. I believe that simply means the Pharaoh saw him as family and an impressive man. But I thought you said a possible reason he helped Hadad was because Solomon was cheating upon the Pharaoh's daughter. Besides the fact that Pharaoh didn't know God was manipulating all of this so that Hadad would be a problem for Solomon, we also don't know the sincerity of whether not Pharaoh really wanted him to go.
  - d) I have to admit, I am fascinated by the question of how did whoever wrote Kings, find out all of this background on Hadad. What I suspect is the researcher got a hold of the official records of the Egyptian Pharaoh's. The truth is, we don't know.
  - e) The lesson for you and me about this character is simply that a problem for our lives that we think can be dead can be resurrected by God in effect to get our attention and get our focus back upon Him, to protect us against whatever is out there to harm us.
  - f) In the meantime, it is time to discuss another enemy of Israel at that time.
12. Verse 23: And God raised up against Solomon another adversary, Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah. <sup>24</sup> He gathered men around him and became the leader of a band of rebels when David destroyed the forces of Zobah; the rebels went to Damascus, where they settled and took control. <sup>25</sup> Rezon was Israel's adversary as long as Solomon lived, adding to the trouble caused by Hadad. So Rezon ruled in Aram and was hostile toward Israel.
- a) Notice that this new rebel Rezon was part of a group of rebels that David had destroyed.

- b) Lets be honest, unless you have a photograph memory, in a short time, you will forget the name Rezon. Like the first enemy raised up against Solomon, this Rezon was a survivor of a group that King David had wiped out. It makes me consider if King David was able to watch all of this from heaven and yell out at Solomon, "Son, I wiped all of these guys out so you wouldn't have to deal with them. Now you are turning your back on God, and He is allowing these troublemakers back into the life of the Israelites! Turn away from the foreign women back to God before the damage gets even worse."
  - c) I suppose the key question for us is "Our troubles God ordained or God allowed?" Since He won't tell us that answer we don't know. All we know is we have to deal with our own issues let alone worry about these two ancient people. Most of us know that our troubles don't magically go away if we pray once. What I have learned is the best prayer in such situations is, "Dear God, help me to learn what you want to learn from this situation as to help me deal with it". Praying for God to be in charge of that aspect of our lives is always a good thing and I find that He usually guides us at that point to help us to deal with that problem simply because we acknowledge He's in charge of it.
  - d) Meanwhile, Solomon is still in trouble from "Problem #2". More on this Rezon character:
    - i) Like Hadad, this was a non-Israelite living in just outside of Israel, but in territory that was controlled by Israel. The text says he was the leader of a band of raiders. What is fascinating to me is when this guy settles in the city of Damascus, which isn't that far from Israel. The locals make him the leader of that city. That tells us what the non-Israelites thought of being under the domain of the Israelites.
    - ii) The text is not specific as to how this Rezon person caused trouble. The text said he lead of ban of raiders. Think of it as a group of "cut throats" on the loose in our area. We would need police action just to sleep peacefully at night. Since this is a part of the territory controlled by Solomon, it was a problem that he had to deal with it himself or through his staff.
    - iii) Consider the irony that Solomon was marrying foreign gods and worshipping the deities associated with those gods. Now here are these foreign rebels living in the area controlled by Israel causing trouble. It's as if God is saying to Solomon, "You want to see the influence of foreigners in your life, great, now you've got it."
  - e) Stop and consider that Solomon had everything he could ever want. He was rich beyond any measure one can imagine. He was probably the most famous person at that time and he was a powerful king. All God demands of us is that we honor Him as being in charge of our lives and He can guide us through the best and worst of anything. It is when we choose to abandon that relationship that God does what He can to get our attention. That is what we are reading about here with Solomon and these problems.
13. Verse 26: Also, Jeroboam son of Nebat rebelled against the king. He was one of Solomon's officials, an Ephraimite from Zeredah, and his mother was a widow named Zeruah.
- a) Here we get the start of the third rebel against Solomon, a Jewish man named Jeroboam.
  - b) You may recall from earlier in the lesson that God told Solomon that one of his servants would rebel against him. This Jeroboam is that servant. In fact, Jeroboam would go on to be the first king of the Northern Kingdom. We'll get to that in the next lesson. All we get in this verse is Jeroboam's family background. He was from the tribe of Ephraim and we have his mother's name. I would argue that whoever organized "Kings" had access to the records of the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and that is how he got some of this background information.
  - c) With that said, the rest of the chapter is going to focus on the rise of Jeroboam to power. The last few verses will talk about the death of Solomon. The tragedy of the chapter is we don't read of Solomon repenting, just the fact that he had to fight against Jeroboam so that he can retain what power he has. That is usually how we fall: trying to save what we've got as opposed to turning to God to help us through whatever situation we have to face.



14. Verse 27: Here is the account of how he rebelled against the king: Solomon had built the supporting terraces and had filled in the gap in the wall of the city of David his father.<sup>28</sup> Now Jeroboam was a man of standing, and when Solomon saw how well the young man did his work, he put him in charge of the whole labor force of the house of Joseph.
- a) These two verses tell the story of Jeroboam's rise to power. The short version is that this man was a good worker and he caught Solomon's eye for his ability to do his job well. So Jeroboam was put in charge of the labor force on this project.
  - b) I'm sure most of us who work have times when we feel that no one is watching us at our jobs or no one cares how well we are doing. I remember being taught of the importance of complimenting others on their work. Often compliments means more to people than just getting paid for their job. Everyone wants to feel appreciated. My point is it is a good witness for Jesus sometimes to simply compliment someone who is doing a good job. To make others feel good about their lives makes them want to be around us more, so they can hear what else we may want to say about them or to them.
  - c) With that said, I'm deviating away from the story. The point here is simply that Solomon saw this hard working young man, and Solomon promoted him. Little did he realize he was raising up the specific servant that God said would rebel against him.
  - d) We now come to a key moment when we find out Jeroboam will be a future king:
15. Verse 29: About that time Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem, and Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him on the way, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone out in the country,<sup>30</sup> and Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces.<sup>31</sup> Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes.'<sup>32</sup> But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe.
- a) At this point we get introduced to a new character in the story named Ahijah. We don't know anything about his background, except that he was known locally as a prophet of God. Because he had that reputation, Jeroboam was willing to listen to what he had to say. At that point in the story, Ahijah was somehow alone with Jeroboam. I suspect that Ahijah said to Jeroboam, "I have something to say to you in private. After work, come for a walk with me and I'll tell you a message God gave me to tell you." I'm sure that had to make Jeroboam curious, so he left with him.
  - b) Notice Ahijah gives Jeroboam a message from God in a dramatic fashion. Ahijah took off a cloak he was wearing, and tore it in 12 pieces. He then gave 10 of those 12 cloak pieces to Jeroboam and said in effect, "You Jeroboam will be the king over 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel". I'd bet Jeroboam was thinking at that point, "This man is crazy. I'm no king. I'm just a worker here in the city for Solomon. How will this event happen?" That is why he didn't become king immediately. I'm speculating Jeroboam took in all of this information and said in effect, "If you say so, now if you excuse me, I have to go now." The why God answered that question, coming up in the next verse.
  - c) Before I get to the next verse, let me talk a little more about why 10 of the 12 tribes. After all, if Solomon was getting that bad, why didn't God just make Jeroboam the next king of all of Israel? Why split up the country? Part of the answer is that God promised David that a descendant of his would rule forever from Jerusalem. Therefore, a line of kings had to be descendants of David if for no other reason, that the Israelites would keep an eye on that lineage just to watch out for the Messiah to come one day. Also know that one of the twelve tribes was so small at this point (Benjamin) that it was now essentially part of the tribe of Judah, which was David's and Solomon's tribe. My point here is simply that to give Jeroboam the territory of 10 of the 12 tribes is the most that could be done practically without having to end the prophecy given to David. How that will actually play out will occur over the rest of this chapter and into the next chapter of this story.

16. Verse 33: I will do this because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molech the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in my ways, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my statutes and laws as David, Solomon's father, did.
- a) I'm sure that Jeroboam was wondering at this point, "Why do this to Solomon? What did he do to deserve this?" God gives Jeroboam that answer through this prophet. Jeroboam gets informed that Solomon and other Israelites (notice the "they" in Verse 33) are now worshipping foreign gods that of course, the Israelites were forbidden to worship.
  - b) One of the great questions that has always puzzled me about the book of Kings, is why did God pick this guy to be the first king of the Northern Kingdom (where Jeroboam was from by the way)? As we work our way through 1st and 2nd Kings, we will discover that there was not one king of the northern kingdom who was loyal to God during their reigns as kings. My question is why did God pick Jeroboam if He knew this guy would turn out to be a "bad egg"? Don't know, which is why I think about these things. I suspect it is to show us that once we get away physically and mentally from where God wants us to be, (that is close to Him), it doesn't matter how good of a person one is. They will eventually turn from Him when they don't desire to be near Him with their lives. That is the tragedy of not only Jeroboam but also for all the 20 kings who rule over that "Northern Kingdom" that will be called "Israel". However, I'm now jumping way ahead of the story. The point here is simply that God is picking Jeroboam because Solomon did choose to rebel against God and this man will be the next king.
  - c) Before I move on let me share a simple secret to keep one's names straight. A good idea to remember here is that everything is backwards from what God desired of the Israelites at this point in history. I say that because "Jeroboam" sounds like Jerusalem. However, this man Jeroboam will not rule from Jerusalem, but from the northern Kingdom that is to the north of Jerusalem and not part of the territory controlled by David's descendants. All I'm asking is when one thinks of Jeroboam, think of rebellion and therefore, he never did rule in Jerusalem, even though his name is similar to the name of that city.
  - d) With that bit of trivia out of my system, time to get back to the story.
17. Verse 34: "But I will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand; I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David my servant, whom I chose and who observed my commands and statutes."<sup>35</sup> I will take the kingdom from his son's hands and give you ten tribes.<sup>36</sup> I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my Name.
- a) While I was explaining the "future history of Israel" at this point to you, God is essentially saying the same thing to Jeroboam. God is telling him that he will never be king over the tribe of Judah that includes the capital, Jerusalem. However, Jeroboam will be king over the rest of Israel.
  - b) Another important point here is that God is explaining to Jeroboam the "when". God is telling him this won't happen now or say, next week. It will only happen after Solomon is dead. Therefore, Jeroboam knew that he would live long enough to see Solomon die and God will control the events of the future so that you will be the king over most of Israel.
  - c) Let me pause for a moment to discuss the topic of prophets in the bible. The way one is established as a prophet is that one has to be 100% accurate in their predictions. The way we know someone is a prophet is if we can verify that their predictions have come true. The way Jeroboam knew that this prediction would come true is only if these events that had to seem improbable at this point in history would happen exactly as God said they would happen. I'm guessing that Jeroboam didn't go back to work, but shared what this prophet of God said to him. Therefore, others kept their eye on Jeroboam to see if things would happen as this prophet said they would. In the meantime, Solomon got wind of what this prophet had predicted and we'll read that Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam:

18. Verse 37: However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. <sup>38</sup> If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you. <sup>39</sup> I will humble David's descendants because of this, but not forever.' "
- a) Before we get to Solomon's reaction to this, God is not through speaking to Jeroboam of what He expects Jeroboam to do as the king: Essentially Jeroboam is being told that if he obeys the commandments that God has laid out for the Israelites, which was essentially the first five books of what we call the bible, he and his descendants would have their own dynasty like David's.
  - b) The key word here is "if". It's almost as if God saw the flaw in Jeroboam's personality and is warning him the same way he warned Solomon in the last chapter. Again I am puzzled why God picked this guy when he did turn from God as did all the kings of the Northern kingdom of Israel. I suspect it is to show us the danger of not being "near" God, which is what all these kings did when they forbid Israelites to travel to Jerusalem for holidays.
  - c) The fascinating verse for me is Verse 39. It says God will humble David's descendants for this, but not forever. That is a clue that the Southern Kingdom will not last forever. In its own way, it's predicting the fall of Jerusalem that won't happen for about 400 more years. It also shows that a continual lineage from David will not continue forever. So what does forever mean? It means a day comes when we will no longer look for another descendant of David to be a king, because one of his descendants will be the king forever.
  - d) If you don't know, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD, they destroyed the temple that stood at that time. The temple had the only copy of all of the Israelite family records. It was the only way one could prove if one was a direct descendant of David. That is how both Joseph and Mary could prove their lineage tied to King David. So how do religious Jewish people say they will recognize "The Son of David" (i.e., the Messiah) without those family records? They argue they will know the Messiah will come because he will lead them to rebuild the temple. To state an old joke, when the Messiah comes, the Jewish leaders will ask, "So, is this your first or second visit here?"
  - e) Meanwhile, while Jeroboam is probably freaking out trying to absorb all this information about his future, we read that Solomon isn't too pleased about what God told Jeroboam.
19. Verse 40: Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt, to Shishak the king, and stayed there until Solomon's death.
- a) The bottom line here is that Jeroboam didn't keep all of this prophecy to himself. Most likely he shared this with someone else, and word eventually got back to Solomon. This reminds me of the definition of a secret, "A message spread one person at a time".
  - b) Notice Solomon didn't say, "Is that what God told you? Great. It's my own fault because I turned away from Him. Let me accept the inevitable and pass on some of my wisdom on how to be a good king." Instead we read of Solomon seeing Jeroboam as a threat and with the help of Solomon's army, he tried to have Jeroboam killed.
  - c) For those of you who like repetition in bible patterns, this reminds me of what happened at the end of King Saul's life from the book of 1st Samuel. When Saul was told he would lose his kingship, he tore part of the prophet's robe. Samuel said that just as the robe tore, so will Saul's kingdom be torn away from him. (Reference: 1st Samuel 15:28). My point is once we turn from God, we have the choice of either repenting and accepting the consequences for our actions, or else do what we can to keep what we have. That was the tragic end of Saul's life and that pattern repeats itself here with Solomon. His life is an example of us of both the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. Yes none of us will get the "extremes" of Solomon both in terms of the greatness of his power, or in terms of losing what he had due to disobedience. However, we like Solomon can lose our witness for God by our disobedience and that is the tragedy of this bible lesson.

- d) Meanwhile Jeroboam who now was in literally fear of his life went to go hide in Egypt. Notice Jeroboam didn't say, "God said I will be king. So leave me alone Solomon and let me get ready". Jeroboam literally feared for his life and ran away. I'm sure he did trust in God's promises at this point. He also realized practically for his own safety, he needed to live away from his Israel until Solomon had died. If Jeroboam believed God's prediction about him, Solomon may not be able to kill him, but Solomon could still make Jeroboam's life miserable, so he ran to Egypt for safety.
  - i) My point is if we believe we are destined for something significant or if we believe God is guiding us in a certain direction, never hesitate to do what is practical until we get to the point where God wants us to be. In other words, do the footwork to go to where we believe God wants us to go in life.
  - ii) Meanwhile, it's time to read of the tragic end to Solomon's life.
- 20. Verse 41: As for the other events of Solomon's reign--all he did and the wisdom he displayed--are they not written in the book of the annals of Solomon? <sup>42</sup> Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. <sup>43</sup> Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king.
  - a) Here we read of the death of Solomon. Don't make too big a deal about the "rested with his fathers" reference in Verse 43. It is just a colorful way of saying he died.
  - b) As to whether or not Solomon is in heaven, we'll just have to find out ourselves one day. It is God's job alone to decide who will be with Him forever. What God calls on us to do is to judge our own behavior and be a good witness for Him. Here, God wants us to learn from Solomon's mistakes so that we don't make the same one's with our lives.
  - c) Before I wrap up, let me comment on the book the "annals of Solomon". It is possible that it refers to the book of Chronicles, or another book Solomon wrote, such as Ecclesiastes. If it is the book of Chronicles, it means aspects of both books existed around the same time. Jewish tradition is that Ezra organized Chronicles which like "Kings" was originally one book. As I stated back in the first lesson, Jeremiah was the one who organized Kings, as stated in Jewish tradition. I suspect parts of these books were around for centuries before they were formally organized as bible books many centuries later in history.
  - d) Another question that fascinated me is why is there only one son recorded by Solomon? After all this is a man who had 1,000 women in his life. It's possible he had more children, but they were not recorded, as they didn't become king. The other possibility is that God made Solomon infertile as a punishment for all of those wives. I don't know. It's just one of those things I like to ponder as I study my bible.
- 21. The main thing to get out of this lesson is that there is a price to be paid for disobedience to God. Yes, that applies to Christians as well as the Jewish people living back then. This is not about our salvation, but our witness to God. The price one pays to be a Christian is that God calls on us to be a witness for Him to the world around us. Failure to obey in that way can cost us our lives or more likely God can take away what we have to draw our attention and our focus back on Him.
  - a) What God calls us to do varies with each person. God may call on you to be a witness for Him to one specific person or a small group. He may call others to large ministries. It is not the size of the ministry that matters, but the loyalty to what God calls us to do. If you don't know what it is that God called you to do, ask Him. Which would be a good lead in to my closing prayer. Speaking of which.
- 22. Father, help each of us to be a good witness for You. Help us to stick close to You and draw upon Your power not only to resist temptation but for guidance in how You want us to live and make a difference for You in this world. Help us to seek out other Christians who we can minister to and they can minister to us, so that together we can make a difference for You in this world. May we be a good witness for You and be obedient to You, not to earn our salvation, but out of gratitude for what You have already done for us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.