

Introduction

1. In 1st Samuel 8 as Samuel was getting old, Israel demanded he appoint a king over them because they wanted to be governed (“**judged**”) like every other nation, and believed they would be better protected from their enemies with a human king
2. This was a rejection of God and as a result He told Samuel to warn Israel of the consequences of having a king rule over them (1 Samuel 8:10-18; READ inline below):
 - a. He would draft their sons to serve in his military (10-12)
 - b. He would recruit their daughters to serve in his palace (13)
 - c. He would confiscate the best of their land to be farmed by his own servants (14)
 - d. He would tax their produce by taking 10% of their grain and vineyards (15)
 - e. He would take their servants and service animals for his own work (16)
 - f. He would tax their flocks by taking another 10% (17a)
 - g. Ultimately, they would become his servants and cry out to the LORD because of it (17b-18)
 - h. In spite of this warning, Israel continued to demand a king and the LORD relented (19-22)
3. This was no shock to the LORD; He anticipated it and had already put into the Law rules to govern the king’s behavior (Deuteronomy 17:14-20; READ inline):
 - a. The first rule, was that the king must be an Israelite, and not a foreigner (14-15)
 - b. The second rule was that he must not multiply horses for himself, or acquire them from Egypt (16)
 - c. The third rule was that he must not multiple wives for himself (build a harem; 17a)
 - d. The fourth rule was that he must not multiply gold or silver for himself (17b)
 - e. The fifth and final rule was that he was to write for himself a copy of these four rules, in the presence of the priests, and read it all the days of his life (18-20)
4. The reason I began with this is because it’s crucial to understanding our passage today:
 - a. When we were introduced to Solomon, he was described as someone who “**loved the LORD, walking in the statues of his father David**” (1 Kings 3:3)
 - b. When the LORD offered to grant Solomon whatever he wished for, He was pleased because he didn’t ask for long life, riches for himself, or even the life of his enemies; instead, he asked for heart that would be inclined toward obedience
 - c. So, the LORD granted him not only wisdom and a listening heart, but riches and honor so that there would be no one like him among all the kinds of earth for as long as he lived
 - d. There was only one caveat: he must continue to walk in the ways of the LORD by obeying his commands and statues (1 Kings 3:10-15)
 - e. Everything we’ve seen from Solomon’s inauguration as king in chapter 3 to the visit from the queen of Sheba in chapter 10 suggests that Solomon did just that and the LORD blessed him tremendously for it:
 - 1) He was the most powerful king in the ANE
 - 2) Word of his wisdom, intelligence, and wealth spread throughout the world
 - 3) Men, kings, and apparently queens, from all over sought him out
 - 4) They brought him multiplied tons of gold and silver, precious stones, spices, horses, weapons, garments, and other expensive goods year over year

- f. But then a tragic thing happened, and it seems to come out of nowhere and blindsides us: chapter 11 tells us that Solomon forsook the LORD
5. So, the question is, how did Solomon go from the god-fearing, humble, obedient servant of chapters 1-9 to forsaking the LORD in chapter 11?
- a. Chapter 10 provides us with some clues and serves as a transition between the two Solomons (if you will)
 - b. At first, 10:14-29 appear to be just another description of Solomon's wealth, wisdom and fame:
 - 1) It describes his massive gold reserves, impressive throne room, military might, and business dealings
 - 2) The author even stresses that Solomon became greater than all the other kings of the earth
 - c. However, when we view these verses in light of the Law the LORD provided for kings, we see the beginnings of Solomon's downfall

A. Solomon multiplied gold and silver for himself (READ 10:14-22)

1. One of the things the LORD promised Solomon was riches, so we certainly have to attribute much of Solomon's wealth to the LORD's blessings:
 - a. Some of the gold and silver Solomon acquired came from what King David stored up for the temple (READ 1 Chronicles 29:1-9)
 - b. 10:14 lists another 666 talents (22 tones or \$1 billion) of gold PER YEAR flowing into Solomon's coffers:
 - 1) Some of this was in the form of gifts and tribute from other nations (King Hiram and the queen of Sheba brought him gold, as did other kings who sought his wisdom; RE-READ 10:25)
 - 2) Some of it was in the form of business enterprises setup by Solomon: He sent ships to Ophir and Tarshish to bring back gold (READ 1 Kings 10:11; 10:22)
 - c. In addition to the 666 talents of gold acquired through the sources just mentioned, verse 15 states that Solomon acquired additional gold and silver from other sources as well:
 - 1) Traders and the traffic from merchants (likely taxes paid in the form of gold)
 - 2) The kings of the Arabs—likely gifts and tribute
 - 3) Governors of the country—the 12 district governors that collected provisions from Israel to provide for the government (referenced in chapter 4)
 - d. This is just the wealth from gold and silver—there's no way to estimate how much wealth came from the other goods given in gifts or tributes like precious stones, animals, garments, etc.
2. Now, so far, the author hasn't indicated that Solomon's accumulation of gold, silver or other wealth was sinful, in this passage or anywhere else in the book; so we have to be careful not to read something into the text that might not be there
3. However, with that said, there is another passage that reveals Solomon did indeed pursue gold and silver for himself:
 - a. Before we turn there, however, I want to review Deuteronomy 17:16-17 (RE-READ):

- 1) Notice that the rules for the king didn't prohibit multiplying gold or silver, but rather multiplying it **"for himself"**
 - 2) In other words, the king was not to use his position as a means to enrich himself
- b. Now, turn to Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 (READ):
- 1) Perspective on the book—either Solomon wrote the words, or an unnamed author wrote them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
 - 2) Either way, they reveal that part of Solomon's wealth was acquired through his own personal pursuit of gold and silver (along with other things)
 - 3) Certainly, the gold and silver that David left him for the temple, and the gifts brought to him by other kings, were not of his own doing; I think we can safely declare that those were simply the blessings of the LORD
 - 4) However, it does beg the question whether the tributes he extracted from neighboring kings and the ships he sent to Tarshish and Ophir to gather gold were motivated by his own desire to multiply gold and silver for himself
 - 5) This might also explain the **"heavy yoke"** (tax burden) he placed on Israel and collected through the 12 governor's that's described in 1 Kings 12 (when Israel complains to Solomon's son, Rehoboam); what likely started out as a very manageable contribution to by each district to support the government grew to be an unbearable burden
4. It's not clear when this became the case for Solomon:
- a. It doesn't appear to have happened in the first 20 or 30 years of his reign because nothing in chapters 1-9 suggest anything other than faithfulness and obedience to the LORD
 - b. However, 11:4 says when he became old his heart was turned away from the LORD and he was no longer wholly devoted to Him
 - c. So, it's reasonable to assume his desire to multiply gold and silver for himself developed later in his reign
5. Takeaway:
- a. The LORD blessed Solomon with riches, but He also warned him through the Law not to pursue them:
 1. As king, Solomon was to serve the LORD and Israel, not use his reign to enrich himself
 2. He clearly understood that for much of his reign, but at some point it he was no longer content with the incredible wealth the LORD blessed him with
 3. So, he began to pursue more
 - b. Can we not be tempted by the same thing, not being content with what the LORD provides, whether little or much?
 1. Jesus warned that we cannot serve God and money (Luke 16:13): **"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."**
 2. Paul wrote that those who desire to be rich fall into temptation (1 Timothy 6:9-10): **"But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."**

B. Solomon multiplied horses for himself (READ 10:23-29)
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1. Just as the Law didn't prohibit the king from owning some gold and silver, it also didn't prohibit the ownership of horses or chariots
2. What it did prohibit the king from doing was **"multiplying horses for himself"** and from acquiring horses from Egypt—this likely refers to building up a military force based on horses and chariots
3. Most scholars agree that the prohibition against multiplying horses served a few different purposes:
 - a. One reason may have been to prevent Israel from relying upon or returning to Egypt; Egypt was the premier exporter of war horses in the ANE
 - b. A second reason was that chariots were primarily used as offensive weapons; without such advanced military weaponry Israel would be forced to focus on defending their boundaries rather than expanding them (something God never commanded)
 - c. A final reason is actually revealed in the Bible: the LORD knew that Israel would be prone to rely upon their own military strength if allowed to amass horses and chariots, rather than on Him for their protection:
 - 1) When King David conquered King Hadadezer and captured his seven thousand charioteers, he hamstringed all but 100 of the horses and we see why in Psalm 20:7: **"Some boast in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God."**
 - 2) Later kings relied upon their horses and chariots and the LORD rebuked them for it (Isaiah 31:1): **"Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help And rely on horses, And trust in chariots because they are many And in horsemen because they are very strong, But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!"**
4. So, where does this leave us with Solomon:
 - a. Back in 4:26 we read, **"Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen."** (40,000 is likely a copyist error; 2 Chronicles states it was 4000 stalls)
 - b. Here in 10:26 we are told that he had 1400 chariots and that he stationed these in chariot cities (likely along the borders of Israel) and Jerusalem, the capital
 - c. Compared to Israel's enemies, this was a fairly small amount of chariots, but compared to what David kept after he defeated Hadadezer it was fairly sizeable (100 vs 1400)
 - d. Even more troubling, however, was what we read in vs. 28: **"Also Salmon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue..."**—this was a direct violation of the LORD's prohibition against acquiring horses from Egypt
 - e. And if that's not bad enough, Solomon even traded in horses and chariots, supplying them to the Hittites and the Arameans for profit (29); the Arameans were actually enemies of Israel before and after Solomon and continue to torment Israel throughout the divided kingdom!
5. Takeaway:
 - a. It appears Solomon may have fallen prey to thinking he had to rely on military power and might to protect Israel, rather than relying on the LORD
 - b. Do you think we ever struggle with the same thing? Do we ever fail to trust the LORD and fall back to relying on our own wisdom and strength?
 - c. A popular memory verse is Proverbs 3:5-6: **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight."**

- d. What many miss with these verses is that the context has to do with trusting the LORD by obeying His command (go back and read the chapter when you have time)
- e. My point is that failing to trust the LORD and relying on our own wisdom and strength is not only a form of sin itself, but it often leads us into sin just as it did Solomon

C. Solomon multiplied wives for himself (11:1-4)

- 1. So, today we've seen evidence of how Solomon disobeyed the LORD by multiplying gold and silver for himself
- 2. We've also seen evidence of how he disobeyed the LORD by multiplying horses and chariots and importing them from Egypt
- 3. There's an idiom that things always happen in threes and unfortunately, we see one more area where Solomon disobeyed and sinned against the LORD: he multiplied wives for himself
- 4. I'm only going to read these final few verses because we will cover them in more depth next week but I just want to read the opening verses of chapter 11 (READ 11:1-4)

Final Takeaway

- 1. The one overarching take way for me on this passage is how even the mighty can stumble and fall
- 2. We saw it with David, a man after God's own heart, who committed both adultery and murder
- 3. We've now seen it with Solomon—a man whom God had given everything
- 4. What a profound warning for all of us; if men like these can stumble and fall, what does that say about us if we are not careful to faithfully follow the LORD's commands?