

Reading: 1 Kings chapter 11

Key Thought: Put God first – and never lose focus. *“Thou shalt have not other gods before me.”* (The first of the Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20 verse 2)

Context: (With reference to 1 Kings 3 verses 5-13 and 1 Kings 9 verses 1-9)

Solomon was privileged in a way that most of Israel's kings were not. God not only spoke to Solomon through prophecy, but He actually appeared to Solomon twice, and spoke directly to him. After such encounters (the second of which was a conditional covenant of promise) we would expect Solomon to stay close to God and His ways – but not so.

Content:

Solomon's wives were his downfall. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines! In the world culture of the time, wives were a statement of success and greatness. They were also a way of forming political alliances with other countries. Solomon had been disobedient to God on two counts. Firstly, he disobeyed God's law on marriage; and secondly, he wanted to please his wives more than he wanted to please God. As a consequence, he began to build altars and High Places for the worship of their gods:- Chemosh the god of Moab; Molek the god of the Ammonites; and Ashteroth the goddess of the Sidonians.

In so doing, Solomon broke covenant with God and there was a price to pay. The wonderful United Kingdom of Israel was about to lose its glory, suffer civil war, and split into two – north and south. Solomon had broken the first commandment. His throne would not stand forever. But God would save the Tribe of Judah as a token of his promise to King David and to protect the Line of The Messiah. God spoke through a prophet to Jeroboam, one of Solomon's officials, to confirm this (see verses 29-32).

After a reign of 40 years, Solomon died (verse 42), and was succeeded by his son, Rehoboam, as king. Prophecy would come true as Jeroboam revolted against Rehoboam, and subsequently the Kingdom was split into two.

Challenges:

God had said, “Put no other gods before me” (Exodus 20 verse 2). It is easy to see what Solomon's “other gods” were – he was greedy for status in the world; greedy for more wives; greedy for more riches; and he gave space for extra gods and even built places of worship to them. You only need to read the Book of Ecclesiastes, to see that none of this brought him true joy or satisfaction.

What things could be “other gods” in our lives?

This answer will be different for each of us. But if there is something we would prefer to do, rather than: have fellowship, worship, pray, or read our Bible, then we need to consider our commitment. If we love our family members (or even our dog, our house or our job) more than the Lord, then we need to question how much we really do love Him. If our goal is anything other than God's Kingdom and a place in His heaven, then we need to be careful. None of the other things are wrong in themselves – but they can be detrimental when they take first place in our lives. Solomon's own advice was: **‘Think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths.’**

Sadly, Solomon did not follow his own advice! Solomon died in a time of peace. But, his actions at the end, were to result in division, dissent and war – which ultimately culminated in the fall of the Kingdom of Israel. A sober reminder for us to put God first.

Communicate:

Feel free to let us know if you have any questions or comments about this study. Perhaps you have a testimony or word of encouragement that might help others. Or maybe you would like prayer as you begin a new thing for God in your life. We will gladly get back to you.