

King Solomon

'King David and went in to Bathsheba and lay with her and she bore a son whom David named Solomon (in Hebrew, Shlomo). The Lord God loved Solomon and He sent (a message to David) by the hand of Nathan the prophet to nickname Solomon, Jedidiah for the Lord loved Solomon' (2 Samuel 12:24 & 25).

The name Solomon means 'peaceful'. His holy pet name Jedidiah means 'beloved of the Lord'. God Himself told David he would have a son named Solomon years before he was born. "Behold, a son will be born to you who will be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his enemies all around for his name will be Solomon and I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. He will build a house for My name and he will be My son and I will be his father. I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever" (1 Chronicles 22:9 & 10). Solomon was from the tribe of Judah and was the third king in Israel after Saul, a Benjamite (1 Samuel 9:21) then David, Solomon's father (1 Samuel 17:12). David had several wives (2 Samuel 5:13) but it was Bathsheba who was the mother of Solomon.

The fact is, Solomon should never have been born. His mother Bathsheba was married to Uriah. 'At New Year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab and his servants with him with all (the warriors) of Israel and they destroyed the children of Ammon and besieged Rabbah but David stayed at Jerusalem. One evening David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house and from the roof he saw a woman bathing and the woman was very beautiful to look at. David inquired after the woman. One said, she is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David sent messengers (to invite her to his palace) and took her to David. She came in to him and he lay with her (for she was purified from her uncleanness) and she returned to her house' (2 Samuel 11:1 to 4). David should have backed away the moment he knew she was married but he continued lusting after her. On her part, Bathsheba should never have been bathing naked in a public place – right outside the king's palace, obviously for the purpose of seducing the king. They were both at fault. When David sent for her, she should have protested because she was married but she willingly went into the king's house, had a one-night stand and went home. She deliberately fell pregnant, as the Bible subtly hinted at. She became David's eighth wife. That sordid affair brought about betrayal, promiscuity and death for generations to come. It divided a once united family. Bathsheba's grandfather named Ahithophel betrayed David when he had previously been loyal, then suicided because of this affair.

The Bible does not openly record the motivation for Ahithophel's incredible betrayal of King David, as if the reason were so obvious to people living in that day, there was no need to comment on it. The answer to this great mystery is found in several scriptures scattered through the Bible, that often cause readers to skip forward because the list of names seem to have little relevance. However, the solution to this puzzle about Ahithophel's motive to betray David is written in the Bible. To learn the solution to the mystery of the betrayal during Absalom's rebellion, we need to turn back to David's adultery with Bathsheba. Most people would think the adultery was a moment of weakness when David happened to observe Bathsheba bathing. The whole story was somewhat different. David was supposed to be at war but he stayed in Jerusalem instead (2 Samuel 11:1). David's first mistake, he was not where he was supposed to be, at war leading his nation against their enemies as their king.

Bathsheba was no stranger to the king. Bathsheba's father Eliam (2 Samuel 11:3) was the son of Ahithophel (2 Samuel 23:34), therefore Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. We can begin to understand what was occurring behind the scenes. Bathsheba's husband Uriah and her father Eliam were part of an elite force of thirty-seven men (2 Samuel 23:13 & 39) that fought for the king and so they would not have been strangers to David. The Scriptures tell us Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah, and she was lovely to behold (2 Samuel 11:2 & 3). We can also see forward-thinking Bathsheba knew she could fall pregnant during that exact time when she bathed naked in front of the king because it is written, 'she was purified from her uncleanness'. That meant she had just finished a menstrual period and women even in those ancient of days knew they could fall pregnant soon after the period ended. Another point to think about, was according to Jewish law, she could not even have sex with her own husband for another week (Leviticus 15:28) yet she was willing to go to the king, thus ensuring the child would certainly be the king's offspring. King David fell for Bathsheba's deliberate seduction. Did she warn him she could fall pregnant at that time of the month? Did she protest and say she was married and therefore could not have sex with the king? If she could not refuse the king, did she tell her husband Uriah, the king had insisted she sleep with him? It seems not. If Bathsheba was innocent she would have protested and told her husband. Bathing naked in public was not acceptable behaviour either and she was seen by other people, not just David. They were as guilty as each other in this time of adultery.

If we read the whole story from the beginning (2 Samuel 11:1 to 17), we can see that David was desperately trying to cover up for his sin with Bathsheba by encouraging Uriah to go to his wife, but Uriah publicly

refused. If Uriah had gone into Bathsheba, the child could have been accepted as his but Uriah said, "As you live and as my soul lives, I will not do this thing." Uriah would not touch his wife to cover for the king. David even tried to make Uriah drunk so he would comply. King David betrayed one of his loyal friends then had him murdered. They were friends who had fought back to back against their enemies and would have sat around campfires at night during military campaigns. Uriah was a faithful bodyguard so he had a house close to the king's palace. Bathsheba's father Eliam was also a loyal bodyguard. They could have attended royal banquets together. When one looks at the whole picture and sees these Scriptural facts, it takes on a different complexion. When David took Bathsheba, he took the wife of Uriah, the daughter of Eliam and granddaughter of Ahithophel, all loyal servants. Then when Bathsheba became pregnant David tried to get Uriah to visit his wife to cover his sin. When Uriah refused to visit his wife, David conspired to have him murdered. Another shocking thing about this story, is the very faithful and loyal Uriah took a letter from David to Joab and in that letter was Uriah's own death sentence. Uriah could have opened the letter and peeked in to see what was written but being so faithful he delivered the letter unopened to Joab who then had him murdered by order of the king (2 Samuel 11:14 to 17).

David's sin upon sin caused 'the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme' thus causing God's wrath (2 Samuel 12:14). The people in the palace would have known Bathsheba's child was David's because he married her, and prayed and fasted for the gravely ill infant (2 Samuel 12:16). Eliam and Ahithophel would have seen the defilement, the public humiliation and the sorrow of bereavement of their daughter and granddaughter Bathsheba, all caused by King David. Ahithophel and Eliam must have burned with rage but there was nothing they could do about it. If they had risen up in anger, David would have had them killed too so they waited secretly until an opportunity arose for revenge and to destroy David. Years later, Absalom rebelled against his father David, and Ahithophel saw his chance and advised Absalom to have sex with all of David's concubines in sight of all Israel, just as David had done with Bathsheba. The Lord said to David, 'Thus says the Lord, "Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbour and he will lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun"' (2 Samuel 12:11 & 12). That was fulfilled when Absalom went in to his father's harem in the sight of all Israel (2 Samuel 16:20 to 22). The sin of David and Bathsheba caused David's wives and concubines to have to endure public rape and humiliation. Ahithophel tried to have David killed (2 Samuel 17:1 to 4). These Scriptures help us to solve the mystery of Ahithophel's betrayal of David. The Scriptures do not tell us what became of Eliam. Sadly it did not end well for Ahithophel. He must have given up in despair at trying to avenge Bathsheba. He 'saddled his donkey, went home to his city, put his household in order, then hanged himself and he died' (2 Samuel 17:23). That was a tragedy. Ahithophel was Solomon's maternal great grandfather. All of these events would have cast a negative shadow over Solomon's life. The burden of being born into such dreadful circumstances possibly influenced his downfall in later years.

The Bible does not give Solomon's exact age when he inherited the throne but he was already married with two daughters Taphath and Basemath (1 Kings 4:11 & 15) born before he became king so he must have married when he was still a teenager. Solomon's eldest son was Rehoboam whose mother was Naamah (1 Kings 14:21). It is not known if Naamah was the mother of Taphath and Basemath. If we look at the events beforehand, the time frame points to Solomon being about 20 years old when he inherited the throne. It is estimated Solomon was born about 990 BC and ruled from 970 BC to 931 BC so that would confirm his age when he began his forty year reign so he would have been about sixty when he died. Solomon had every chance to succeed at being king but after a few years he sadly failed. He was born into a royal household, was well educated as a king's son and his greatest example was his father King David who gave him wise advice (1 Kings 2:2 to 4). After David had announced Solomon would be his successor, he had strong support from several people and after becoming king his support increased. His greatest supporters were Bathsheba his mother, Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the mighty warrior among others.

Solomon had a very strong and personal encounter with God when he received the gifts of wisdom and understanding. 'In Gibeon God appeared to Solomon in a dream by night and said, "Ask what I can give you." ... Solomon answered, "Give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people so I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to judge this Your great people?" The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, neither have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold I have done according to your word. I have given you a wise and an understanding heart so that there has been none like you before you, neither after you will any arise like you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honour, so there will not be any among the kings like you, all your days" ... God gave Solomon exceeding wisdom and very great understanding. Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt' (1 Kings 3:5, 9 to 13; 4:29 & 30). We know in those ancient days, Egyptians were a very clever nation but Solomon's wisdom and knowledge surpassed them.

There were very specific rules for kings in Israel. The king must be chosen by the Lord; he must not be a foreigner; he should not have any horses because they pulled chariots and owning them was a sign of military strength when they had to depend on the Lord (Psalm 20:7); he would not allow his people to return to Egypt; he could not have many wives; he should not have silver and gold or great riches for himself so he would not depend on wealth; he had to write a copy of the Laws of Moses for himself and had to read it every day to learn to fear and obey the Lord and His statutes and not go after false gods; he was not to expose the Land of Israel and its people to pagan worship and he was not to be puffed up with pride. These rules and regulations would limit the power of any future king. He would not depend on military strength and could not be a tyrant or despot but a king who ruled in accordance with God's revealed will as is written in the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 17:14 to 20).

The Bible tells us something about Solomon's annual income and supply of gold. The Queen of Sheba could have been from Saba in Arabia or a Sabean from Africa but to date, no actual archaeological evidence regarding this queen has been discovered anywhere. According to the Bible, she gave Solomon a vast amount of gold, spices and precious stones (1 Kings 10:10). The ruler of Hiram gave Solomon gold, precious stones and almug trees (1 Kings 10:11 & 12). Those trees were huge and were used as pillars in the Temple so bringing them to Jerusalem must have been an enormous undertaking in those ancient days. Almug is a Hebrew word for the trees, which in English are the fragrant Red Sandalwood, are very heavy, hard and fine grained and of a beautiful garnet colour. They were used to make musical instruments and railings and terraces in the Temple. The amount of gold given to Solomon in just one year was worth a vast sum. In today's money it would have been worth many millions of dollars (1 Kings 10:14).

The Lord used Solomon to build the first Temple with exact specifications for the design. The dedication of the completed Temple was marked by a manifestation of our holy God. 'When the priests had come out of the holy place, the cloud filled the house of God so the priests could not stand up to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God' ... 'When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices. The glory of the Lord filled the house so the priests could not enter into the house of God because the glory of the Lord filled His house (Temple)' (1 Kings 8:10 & 11; 2 Chronicles 7:1 & 2). It took twenty years to complete the building of the Temple and the King's palace (1 Kings 9:10). God appeared directly to Solomon for a second time after the Temple was completed, warning him to remain faithful to God and not cause Israel to sin or the consequences would be dire (1 Kings 9:1 to 9; 2 Chronicles 7:12 to 22).

Solomon had an intimate walk with the Lord in the beginning of his reign. He enjoyed divine encounters. God spoke directly to him to give him guidance. He exalted the Lord (1 Kings 8:22 to 54). Solomon's prayer was one of dedication, blessing, prayer for future scenarios like famine and drought, wars, plagues and he prayed for foreigners who came into the Temple. Solomon was inspired to write 3,000 proverbs, 1005 songs and scientific works on botany and zoology (1 Kings 4:32 & 33), he wrote the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and some Psalms. Solomon had gigantic public works and areas of commerce built. He made a deal with the king of Tyre to use his navy on the Mediterranean Sea. He had a navy at Ezion-geber and controlled trade routes south through Edom to the coasts of Arabia, India and Africa, building his empire by peaceful commerce. Solomon told the Children of Israel to, "Let your heart be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep all His commandments" (1 Kings 8:61).

This was the golden era of Israel's history. David was a warrior and built the kingdom with the help of God. Solomon was a builder and built the Temple for worship and fellowship. It was a time of peace. Away from Israel, this was the time of Homer and the beginning of Greek history. Egypt was a clever nation but it was not strong. At that time, Assyria and Babylon were weak nations, making Israel the strongest nation, monarchy and kingdom in the known world. Jerusalem was the most magnificent capital city. The Temple was the most beautiful building on earth because it was made using cedar trees, pure gold, pure silver with brass and jewellery for fittings. People came from all over the known world came to see the splendour of Israel and to listen to Solomon's wisdom. It would have stayed that way if only Solomon had not turned his back on the Lord. Solomon had all the opportunities he needed to become one of the world's greatest kings but he sinned and fell away from God's grace. Solomon's leadership record is worse than David's. He was the man known for his divine wisdom and author of some Scriptures. He broke all the rules regarding kings of Israel especially the rules about having too much money, too many wives and too many horses. He believed he could break all the rules and remain uncorrupted but he was very wrong. His divine wisdom diminished and he became a lost soul. Solomon turned to false gods, did evil in the sight of God and incurred His wrath (1 Kings 11:1 to 41).

Although kings were prohibited from owning horses, Solomon had stables build to house them within his empire. 'The storage cities Solomon had and the cities for his chariots and the cities for his horsemen and

what Solomon desired to build for his pleasure in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and in all the land of his dominion' (1 Kings 9:19). He made slaves of the non-Israelites who lived in the area (1 Kings 9:20 to 22). 'Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, twelve thousand horsemen that he bestowed in the chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem ... The horses which Solomon had were brought out of Egypt and the king's merchants received them in droves, each drove at a price' (1 Kings 10:26 & 28). Ancient ruins of some of Solomon's stables, complete with stone hitching poles and feeding troughs have been unearthed by archaeologists in the Valley of Megiddo.

To have many wives was often an indication of alliances with pagan cultures and thus false pagan gods. 'Solomon had seven hundred wives, princesses and three hundred concubines and his wives turned away his heart from God' (1 Kings 11:3). He also sired hundreds of children. His many wives and mistresses were daughters of pagan kings and princes, married for the sake of political alliances. The man credited for building the Temple, the holy house of God, then went on to build heathen altars, some of which were used for human sacrifices to the evil false god Molech (1 Kings 11:7 & 8). Solomon started off well but later dedicated his life to luxury and women instead of being wholly dedicated to God. His pagan wives led Solomon away from the Lord. Solomon's marriages and subsequent backsliding is a warning to all believers not to marry a non-believer because of the danger they could entice believers away from God like Solomon's women did. 'Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? What fellowship has light with darkness? What agreement has Jesus with Belial? What portion has a believer with an unbeliever? What agreement has a temple of God with idols? You are a temple of the living God. God said, "I will dwell in them, walk in them and I will be their God and they will be My people. Come out from among them and be separate. Touch no unclean thing and I will receive you. I will be to you a Father. You will be to Me sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty' (2 Corinthians 6:14 to 18).

Solomon's backsliding is an example of what extreme luxury and constant pleasure can do to even the most faithful of people. Solomon could have been a great king, instead he was a great failure. We can all learn from Solomon's mistakes because if it were not for the grace of God, we could all fail. As people in leadership we all need to keep our eyes on the Lord and our ears open to His inspiration, direction and guidance. We need to remain humble before the Lord and not fall into the 'power' trap. It is the Lord Who calls us. It is the Lord Who sets us in our place. Our individual ministries are not really ours but they belong to God and are His ministries given to us so we can use our talents and individual gifting. We are not above reproach because of our gifts, because it is the Lord Who gives us the gifts and talents. Our success is actually His success. We cannot do anything of ourselves Spiritually speaking, because we are incapable and what we do is driven, led, balanced and ordered by the Lord. We cannot even breathe without Him for He is our breath (Genesis 2:7). We must never be proud of our ministries or our achievements because it is only through the grace of God we can succeed. We need to guard ourselves against pride so we do not fall into moral failure. There is no room in our ministries for boasting (1 Corinthians 1:29). If we ever become wealthy we need to understand it is the Lord Who helps us become wealthy (Deuteronomy 8:17 & 18) so snobbishness must never enter our hearts. The love of money can bring destruction (1 Timothy 6:10; Hebrews 13:5). We need to be wise when we make alliances and we should never be unequally yoked with unbelievers either in marriage or business (2 Corinthians 6:14).

We can always learn from others but we need to discern if their counsel lines up with Scripture (1 John 4:1). If it is wrong we must push it away and remain focused on God. Only a close relationship with God can stop us from following other gods. Those gods may not be wooden or stone idols but anything we put before the Lord is a false god. God wants our heart's total loyalty, honesty, allegiance and we need to yield everything up to Him (Matthew 10:37). Temptations do not come from God for He never tempts anyone (James 1:13). Being tempted is not sin but yielding to temptation is sin. We can be tempted in the flesh, by power, by influences, by riches or by our own weaknesses and there are many church leaders who began their ministries with the correct attitude but were tempted and sinned. All church leaders need to keep their hearts focused on the God of Israel so we can be blessed in our ministries, as we bless others with our ministries. "I command you before God and the Lord Jesus Who will judge the living and the dead at His (second) appearing and His Kingdom, preach the Word, be urgent in season and out of season (when the time is right), reprove, rebuke and exhort with all patience and teaching. The time will come (is here now, today) when people will not listen to sound doctrine but having itching ears will heap up for themselves teachers after their own lusts and will turn away their ears from the Truth and turn aside to fables (like evolution for example), but you be sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist and fulfil your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1 to 5).

Amen and God bless you.

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