

## **The Wise Fool** **1 Kings 9:10-11:43**

Chapters 9 and 10 are sort of like taking a field trip to observe the grandeur of a building or a city. We read of the cities Solomon built and the massive amount of gold he accumulated. We also read of a fascinating meeting with him and the Queen of Sheba. However, the story moves from the golden age to a cold grave. In chapter 11 we read of the sad commentary on Solomon's sins and the devastating consequences of them, followed by a brief statement of his death. We read of massive gold, incomparable wisdom, and then we finish at a graveside.

Solomon is a paradox. On the one hand, he was the wisest man ever, yet he made some very foolish and destructive choices (like marrying 700 wives!). He was an incredibly blessed man, but he did not always steward God's blessings faithfully. He knew God's law, but he did not keep it obediently. He led the nation to a golden age (peace, prosperity, trade, and building the temple), yet he led it into decline, and an eventual collapse.

Solomon serves as both example and warning. Like Solomon, we must learn how to responsibly steward God's gifts. We have a sinful tendency to take good things, and use them wrongly. Sex, money, food, and influence are wonderful blessings when used according for God's glory, but they can be abused and destroy lives.

Therefore, we need to learn from this story – the story Solomon's tainted glory and his tragic downfall. His rise to greatness is something to behold, but it is short-lived and impure at times. Solomon's glory is "under a cloud, destined to fade away" (Provan, 84). We should study the nature of his life in order that we may avoid his sins, and to marvel at the One greater than Solomon.

### **Solomon's Tainted Glory (9:10-10:29)**

Solomon's life and reign reveals glimpses of Jesus' glory. By examining some Messianic categories provided in chapters 9-10, we can navigate through the narrative, and set our minds on the ultimate Son of David, who filled up the categories. Let me point out five aspects of Solomon's kingly glory that were present but not perfect.

***First, consider Solomon's position (9:10).*** The section opens up with some chronology "at the end of twenty years" (10a). Twenty four years of Solomon's reign were completed (cf., 6:1, 38; 7:1). He had the privilege of being the king. But we need to also remember that Solomon served as a *mediator*. In the previous chapters Solomon "built the house of the Lord" (10b) which was a place for sacrifice and prayer. Immediately following this, we find Solomon praying for his people (8:12-66). He offers a seven-fold petition to God (22-53), and God tells Solomon, "I have heard your prayer" (9:3). Solomon is communing with God, interceding on behalf of the people in a priestly way. What a unique privilege he had.

In 2 Chronicles 7, we find a portion not revealed in Kings. After the prayer and the dedication of the temple, we read of a text that has become very popular. God says, "If my people, called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron 7:14). Solomon asked God to hear the people when they pray in the previous seven-fold petition (1 Kings 8:22-53). Now in 2 Chronicles 7, God says that the people do indeed have access to him, and that he will "hear from heaven" (7:14). Remember Solomon's pleaded to God to "hear from heaven" when the people seek him (1 Kings 8:22-53). Thus, the people have a place of prayer in the temple (the new garden), and the promise that God that he will hear their prayer. Solomon serves as a mediator for them.

Of course, Solomon does not fulfill this role perfectly. Only Jesus would become the ultimate mediator. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between man and God (1 Tim 2:5). Through Christ we now have access to the Father (Eph 2:18). He was the way back into "the garden," our new temple, giving us access to God. Because of Jesus, God can and does hear our prayer. We have one who has gone before us, a perfect sinless mediator, Jesus, "who lives to make intercession for us" (Heb 7:25; cf., Rom 8:34).

***Second, consider Solomon's protection and provision (9:11-22, 24).*** We first read of the Hiram, King of Tyre, in chapter 5. He gave supplies for the temple. (A different Hiram built the furnishings for the temple, 7:13-ff). As chapter 5 hints at, chapter 9 shows us that he was very much a "junior partner" in the relationship (Provan, 84). Hiram gives Solomon as much gold "as he desired" and in return Solomon provided him with ten cities (1 Kings 5:10-12). For whatever reason, Hiram is dissatisfied with this trade, so he names the cities "Cabul" (unknown meaning, perhaps "worthless"). This probably had to do with the amount of gold that he gave to Solomon (Konkel, 198). It is unclear why Solomon is giving this hallowed land away (cf., Prov 22:28). Despite the apparent displeasure of the trade, Hiram continues to send men to the sea to bring more gold to Solomon (cf., 26-28; 10:11-12, 22).

While Solomon's trading practices probably continued to bless the people, it seems that we have another example of Solomon looking more on his own interests than the interests of others. This problem seems to have escalated in his later years. We read less about the people and more of Solomon's wealth in chapters 9-11. Before we read that all of Israel lived "under his vine" and "under his fig tree" (4:25). Has Solomon's power and wealth led him to love gold more than people? Is he using his wisdom to do justice and led the nation faithfully, or to acquire more?

Next, the writer tells of Solomon's magnificent construction projects and the massive amount of workers needed (15-19). Many of these workers appear to have been enlisted unjustly (cf., 5:13, 21; 11:28; 12:14). So, we have another example of "glory under a cloud."

Impressively, we read of the following construction projects: "the Millo," "the wall of Jerusalem," "Hazor," "Megiddo," "Gezer," "Lower Beth-horon, "Baallath, and Tamar," "store

cities,” “cities for chariots,” and “cities for his horseman.” Then the writer says, “and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and in all the land of his dominion” (19b). Thus, Solomon strengthened the defenses. Six cities formed a line of defense from North to South: Hazor, Meggido, Gezer, Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tamar. These were fortified towns that protected the people and its trade routes. He had to rebuild Gezer because Pharaoh destroyed it (17). These were strategic passes that Solomon controlled for the benefit of the nation. I have visited the sites of Hazor and Megiddo and have friends who are working at Gezer right now (incredible archeological sites). Hazor was strategically located in the north. Megiddo was an intimidating fortress that controlled one of the major passes along the coast of the Jezreel Valley. Megiddo is notorious for famous battles, and it figures in prophecy as the location for the last great battle of “Armageddon” (“Har” means mountain, hence “mountain of Meggido”). Some believe a climactic end time battle will occur there, in which Christ will defeat the Antichrist. Gezer was on the road from Joppa to Jerusalem. Upper and Lower Beth Horon were areas that controlled access to the highlands of Judea from the coastal plain through the Aijalon Valley. Baalath refers to several cities in Canaan.

In verse 24, we read of Solomon’s wife needs a new separate home. In chapter 11, we will read more of Solomon’s women troubles and the disastrous implications.

In verses 20-22, we read of the subjugation of his enemies. In 2 Chronicles 8:3, the chronicler says, “Solomon went to Hamath-zobah and took it.” Solomon wins a military victory.

The writer tells us of 550 men in particular who worked under Solomon (23). As already mentioned, Solomon’s administrating skills were demonstrations of his God-given wisdom. And, we know that in the kingdom of Christ, a much greater administration exists thanks to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who gives gifts to his people (including administration) so that God’s people can work harmoniously and effectively.

1 Kings 9:26-28, we see that Solomon also built a navy. Sailors are sent to serve Solomon. These ships are probably for both protection and trade (cf., 10:22). Ophir was a place known for an abundance of gold (cf., 10:11).

Therefore, King Solomon serves as a provider and protector to the people, but because of his failures, he pales in comparison to the true Son of David. Christ is our protector, who has all power in heaven and earth (Matt 28:18). He goes forth in Revelation as a victorious warrior (Rev 19:11-16). Paul says that the lawless one will be revealed and Jesus will kill him “with the breath of his mouth” (2 Thess 2:8). And in our present suffering, we can rest that “we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom 8:37). Who are you testing to protect you from your greatest enemies?

And of course, our King not only protects, but he also provides all good things to those who seek his kingdom (Matt 6:33). He supplies our needs according to his riches in glory (Phil 4:19). And unlike Solomon who acquired a lot of gold for his own selfish purposes, we have one who shares his spiritual riches with us. Paul says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich (2 Cor 8:9). Do you know this “grace?” If so, it should make you a generous person.

***Third, consider Solomon’s piety (9:25).*** The writer of Kings describes Solomon’s sacrificial offerings (25). The chronicler goes into more detail in 2 Chron 8:12-16. (As a whole, Chronicles provides a more idealistic vision of the monarchy than Kings. Many of Solomon’s problems are not present in Chronicles). Chronicles shows Solomon obediently keeping the feasts and making the sacrifices. He was setting an example, a pattern of righteousness. However, his pattern of righteous was not perfect because Solomon was disobedient to the covenant.

But Christ fulfilled all righteousness. Peter says Christ gave us an example that we might walk in his steps (1 Pet 2:21). Peter says that Christ alone committed no sin (1 Pet 2:22). And not only did he not commit a sin, but he died on behalf of those who did, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Pet 2:24). We can only be righteous through Christ, our perfect example and ultimate sacrifice.

***Fourth, consider Solomon’s wisdom (10:1-13).*** Here we read of the Queen of Sheba (present day Yemen). This area was famous for perfumes, incense, gold, and gems. She is attracted to Solomon because she heard of his fame and “concerning the name of the Lord” (1). The nations are being drawn to the God of Israel (cf., 8:41-43, 60; cf., Jos 9:9). Once again, we see that God is not a village god, but a global God.

When she comes, she tests him with hard questions and gave him “very much gold” (2). Solomon then answers all her questions (3). She then marvels at Solomon’s wisdom, his house, his servants and his splendor (4).

Verses 6-9 continues describing how her breath was taken away by the king’s wisdom, prosperity, the happiness of his servants, and his execution of justice. Again, we read of more gold, spices, and precious stones being given to Solomon in unparalleled proportions (10).

Christ also marveled everyone by his wisdom (Mark 6:1-2). His fame spread because of his authoritative teaching (Mark 1:27-28). He answered all of their questions, and left them silenced (Mark 12:34).

But there is another obvious and powerful connection to Christ here. For Christ refers to the Queen of Sheba in Matt 12:42 and Luke 11:31, and tells us that we have not seen the last of her. He uses her as an example of the effort others should take to hear his word. The Queen of Sheba traveled hundreds of miles to hear Solomon. Like the Ninevites (also mentioned in Matt 12), she had a small portion of God’s truth but responded positively. Jesus compares the Gentiles to the Queen who were “not in the loop” like the religious leaders, yet they responded to Christ’s word. Jesus said that those who reject him will stand condemned, and the Queen of the South will be “pointing her finger at you” (Davis, 109).

The application is clear: You know far more than the Queen of Sheba, the Ninevites, and even the religious leaders because we have the whole Bible. Do not be resistant or indifferent! You must listen and believe or face the consequences. Seek Jesus. Study his word – even if you have to travel far, make sacrifices, relocate, get up early or stay up late. Hear wisdom and of the good news of his kingdom. You have no excuse. Paul says, “all the treasures of wisdom are in him” so come to him and pay homage to him, for there is no one else like him.

Are you taking every effort to study the Scriptures personally? What about attending corporate worship? If you are not a Christian, are you earnestly seeking the truth?

I was in Boston a few years ago speaking to a large group of college students from universities around New England. A group of international girls were on the second row taking avid notes. During the break, I asked them “When did you become a Christian?” One said, “We’re not Christians. We are searching to see what we believe.” That sounds very much like Queen of Sheba – diligently seeking truth. I was happy that they were spending their weekend to study God’s word. Do not put Christ on the shelf. Consider his claims and his word, or you will face the consequences of indifference and unbelief.

As we think about Solomon’s glory is spreading to the gentile nations, we are reminded that this too pales in comparison to the global glory of Christ. Psalm 72 reminds us that though some of Solomon’s prayer came to pass, not all of these petitions could be accomplished through him. The King of Kings would only be able to have this happen: “May all the kings fall down before him, and all the nations serve him!.... May his name endure forever, his fame as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!” (Ps 72:11, 17). We read that one-day, “the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev 11:15). Concerning the greater Solomon’s kingdom, we can say indeed, “the half has not been told” what is about to be displayed to his people.

***Finally, consider Solomon’s wealth (10:14-29).*** The word “gold” appears ten times in 10:14-22. In chapter 9, we read of 120 talents of gold (14), then 420 talents of gold (28), and here in chapter 10, 666 talents of gold (14). He made stuff with this gold, such as decorations for his palace (16), overlaid his throne with it (18-20), and made household items with it (21). He accumulated silver (21), chariots and horses (26). We read of a summary statement of his wisdom and wealth in verses 23-25, and how rulers brought tribute to Solomon. Solomon was a rich man.

But problems abound here. In Deuteronomy 17, a very important text on how the king should live and rule, Solomon breaks God’s commands. He “acquired many horses for himself” (16a), he caused the “people to return to Egypt” (16b). He “acquired many wives” (17a), and he “acquired for himself excessive gold” (17b). Further, we read that God wanted the king to not “have his heart lifted up above his brothers” (20).

While God promised to bless Solomon with wealth, Solomon has become “the rich fool” who is laying up treasure for himself instead of “being rich toward God” (Luke 12:13-21, notice how Jesus mentions Solomon in this passage). Jesus said, “Be on your guard against all covetousness, for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). His wealth started out as a blessing, but he is not responsible with it, and lusts for more of it. At the end of his life he wrote, “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity” (Eccl 5:10). Indeed, Solomon had the pleasures of this life (Eccl 1-2), but ended up saying that what matters most is that one “Fear God and keep his commandments” (Eccl 12:13).

Paul provides some important teaching on wealth saying:

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin [so Solomon]. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.... As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty [a temptation of Solomon], nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches [Solomon wrote about this, but did not live in accordance to it], but on God [not idols], who richly provides us with everything to enjoy [enjoy God’s gifts, use God’s gifts, but do not abuse them or idolize them]. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share [notice financial and physical service], thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of life that is truly life [true life is not found in accumulating on earth, but in giving generously and serving others].

1 Timothy 6:9-10, 17-19

So notice that the wealthy are not to become poor, but to learn how to use their wealth and they are to treasure God above all, and serve others faithfully.

Despite Solomon’s personal, inordinate desire for gold, the wealth of the kingdom does remind us of the future Messianic kingdom. Isaiah says, “... the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord” (Isa 60:5b-6). He uses images of an Arabic caravan, bringing in massive amounts of gold. Resting camels cover the ground like flies. Of course, the gold and frankincense are symbols of wealth of the East, used by the wise men that brought gifts to the infant Jesus partially fulfilling this picture. What is the goal of all this ultimate fulfillment? It is not to repay anyone. It is not to say the Jews are a superior race. It is “praise the Lord.” That is it. Jesus deserves our praise and our grateful offerings (Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 541). In Revelation we read, “The kings of the earth will bring their glory into [the city] (Rev 21:24b). And “those whose names are in the lamb’s book of life” (Rev 21:27) will be there.

Solomon’s glory is magnificent in many ways, but his glory was incomplete, short-lived, and tainted. He and others may have thought that he was at the pinnacle of his reign, but he did

not care for his soul appropriately. His lack of attention to his spiritual life leads to the fall in chapter 11.

### **Solomon's Tragic Collapse (11:1-43)**

In chapter 11, Solomon's sins are on full display. The first ten verses show the tragic fall, and the following verse reveal the devastating consequences. What led to Solomon's downfall? Let me point out six characteristics of Solomon's downfall. It is important that we understand the nature of this collapse so that we may avoid one of our own.

***First, his downfall was predictable (1-2).*** The opening verses should not shock us in light of 1 Kings 3:1, where he wrongly married Pharaoh's daughter (cf., Deut 7:17). Solomon began down the wrong path and never corrected it. "We start falling into sin long before we ever fall into disgrace" Ryken rightly says (295). Dever says, "A small difference in trajectory can make a big difference in destination" (293).

He is a case study on the subtlety of sin. Along with marrying Pharaoh's daughter, we have also mentioned other warning signs like his questionable political actions in chapter 2, worshiping at the high places, his taking horses from Egypt, his debatable actions in building his own palace, the integrity of his trading practices with Hiram, his misuse of wealth, and the unjust use of forced labor. Now, these "small sins" leads to this big disaster.

You cannot let sin go unchecked and think everything will be okay. You must deal with it head on, immediately, and aggressively. What sins should you seek to kill? All sin! How many spiders do you need to eat to damage your body? One! The puritans used to compare small sins to baby snakes. They are small but deadly, and if you let them live they will grow into huge serpents (Ryken, 297).

Do not ignore the warning signs of a withering soul. You must care for your soul when others around you do nothing to stop you, or when everyone around you is not caring for their soul. Remember Solomon's own words, "There is a way that seems right to man, but it ends in death" (Prov 16:25). Jesus said that there is a broad road and a narrow road, and most travel on the former (Matt 7:13-14).

***Second, his downfall involved deliberate disobedience (1-3).*** Solomon could not plead ignorance or accident. He knew God's clear word revealed in the Scriptures. He was not to take a foreign wife, nor was he to take many wives (Deut 7:3-4; 17:17). He was to be different from pagan kings. Further, the Ten Commandments forbid coveting and adultery, as well (Ex 20:14, 17). Ultimately, he broke the first commandment, which will cause you to break the others, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3) Solomon knew all of this, but chose to intentionally, and defiantly, disobey God for political and selfish reasons.

As mentioned, he deliberately disobeyed Deuteronomy 17 in multiple ways. God had good reasons for these commands. God's commands are always for our good. Kings were forbidden to take a foreign wife because of the threat of idolatry (God is not opposed to marrying someone of other races, but of other faiths). The command to not take many horses passage was because the people were to trust in God, not in horses and chariots (Ps 20:7; Deut 20:1). They were not to return to Egypt because God rescued them from Egypt and whose horses he "has thrown into the sea" (Ex 15:1).

What makes matters even worse is that Solomon wrote about these issues. Concerning forbidden women, he wrote three chapters in Proverbs about staying away from such ladies, yet we read that he had 700 wives, princesses, and concubines! He could not even know their names! Concerning wealth, he wrote, "Whoever trusts in riches will fall but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf" (Prov 11:28). Yet, he lived more for wealth than righteousness.

Once again, it is one thing to know the word of God, and it is another thing to live by it. God does not simply want you to know information about the Bible; he wants obedience to it.

***Third, his downfall stemmed from a heart problem (1-9).*** Six times in the first nine verses we read of Solomon's heart being led astray, "heart after other gods" (2), "his wives turned away his heart" (3), "turned away his heart after other gods (4a), "his heart was not wholly true to the Lord" (4b), "as was the heart of David," and "the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart has turned away from the Lord" (9).

Solomon's story began with the statement, "Solomon loved the Lord" (1 Kings 3:3), now it ends in a tragedy, "Solomon loved many foreign women" (11:1). Notice also the word "clung." Usually, this word to describe someone clinging to God, but here Solomon is clinging to foreign women who led his heart astray.

"All sin is an inside job," someone has said. We live out of the overflow of the heart. To say it another way, "sin problems are worship problems." Because Solomon's heart was given to other lovers, he fell hard. James says, "Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (Jam 1:15). Do you see that? It begins with desire; it leads to death. The problem is not "out there" but "in here" (the heart).

Solomon offered orthodox prayers, spoke good Proverbs, and wrote wonderful poetry, yet his heart was not wholly true to God. He "lost his first love" (Rev 2:4). What about you? Do you find your heart flirting with different sins? Are you headed for a tragedy?

We will worship something or someone. Who will you worship? If it is not the God of the Bible, then you will experience what the Psalmist said in Psalm 16:4, "The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply." My friend, you are multiplying your sorrows when you give your heart to idols (sports, peer approval, success, sex, power, money). And you are

turning from the only source of everlasting joy. The Psalm goes on to say, “In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand our pleasures forevermore” (16:11).

***Fourth, his downfall involved persistent sin (2-9).*** Notice how the writer says that Solomon’s heart was turned “when he was old.” He did not have a brief lapse into sin. The progression of sin seems to have gone on gradually, until eventually when he was old, he collapsed. “The persistent nature of his turning from following Yahweh is shown by the repetitions: *turn* (2, 4, 9), *follow* (5, 6, 10), and *heart*” (Olley, 116). The writer says in verses 9, “the Lord appeared to him twice” (9b). But he continued down the wrong path.

Notice also how the writer says that his heart was not “wholly true to the Lord, as was his father David” (4b; cf., 6). The writer uses David as an example here, and in other places (see 11:38; 14:8; 15:5). We know David sinned with Bathsheba (and at other times), but David’s fall was followed by a broken and contrite heart and repentance. From David we have Psalm 51, a prayer of repentance and renewal. Consequently, the biblical writers can speak positively of David (eg., Acts 13:36). Despite his moments of disobedience, he never worshiped false gods. But Solomon’s disobedience was different. David’s sin seems to not be reflective of his heart, but not so with Solomon.

How will you finish your life? Simon Peter had a grave lapse in sin, but Jesus restored him and he died heroically, serving Jesus faithfully. You cannot change the past, but by God’s grace, you can be restored and finish well.

If you have fallen into sin, follow the model of David, not Solomon! Solomon saw the problem, but did not get right with God. That story provides a warning. David’s story gives us hope. What should you do if you sin? You should repent like David. But that is not what we normally want to do. Instead, we prefer to do one of the following:

- Deny it – Act like nothing ever happened.
- Hide it – Do not share it, and be isolated from others (exactly what Satan wants).
- Blame-shift it – Try to explain it away by pointing fingers at something else (the context, the other party, our personality, our age, the devil, etc).
- Minimize it – Treat sin the opposite of the way Jesus said to treat it (eg., “Cut out your eye, cut off your arm”).
- Manage it – In the words of a magazine about Vegas, “Just the right amount of wrong.”
- Rename it – Do not call it sin. Call it “The Gentleman’s Club.”

Christians sin, but we must never persist in rebellion. We should hate sin, and be constantly repenting of sin. Believers admit their sin, accept God’s mercy, find help among God’s people, and change the way they live.

Your soul is hidden and therefore, you can appear to be doing fine, but actually be withering away spiritually. If your soul is withering away, do not persist in sin. Surely Solomon

thought he was doing well. Israel was formerly a punching bag for others but now they are a mighty force and national power, yet Solomon ignored the warning signs.

You can be a supermodel but be spiritual empty. You might have just received a raise, and find no joy in it because your soul is not at peace. You could be on the fast track to success as a young 30 year old, but not be in sweet communion with God. You could have straight A's as a thirteen year old and be in constant darkness spiritually. On the flip side, you could have cancer, and have no physical strength, but on the inside be singing! You might be unemployed, but you can still dance when you hear of God's faithfulness and grace.

Daniel Dorioni told how Henri Nouwen asked this question to himself. Nouwen was a tenured professor at Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard. He was internationally known for his writing and instruction. He then shocked everyone when he decided to leave Harvard to work with people with mental handicaps in Toronto while in his mid-fifties. He was not going to be training the best and brightest, but to those who could not dress themselves. Some were mute. While he was the "spiritual advisor" of the place, but he also changed diapers and cared for others physically. Why would you leave Harvard to go work with mentally disabled individuals? Nouwen said it was motivated by love for God who loved him when he was poor and weak, and commands us to do the same. He also stated in his book *In the Name of Jesus*, that he was trying to answer this question, "As I'm getting older, am I getting closer to Jesus?" He was praying poorly. He was isolated from others. He sensed that his soul was withering away even though he was teaching spiritual disciplines to the best and the brightest. He prayed, and believed that God wanted him to leave the world of fame and care for these precious individuals. (Dorioni, "Solomon's Rise and Fall").

Solomon's story is the flip side to this story. Nouwen's friends told him that he was doing great, like Solomon. But Nouwen was not sure. Solomon was doing some things well, but he disregarded vital spiritual warning signs. As a result, he eventually collapsed.

***Fifth, his downfall was a gateway to apostasy (5-8).*** In verses 5-8, the writer mentions the evil worship Solomon practices. Once his heart was drawn away from the Living God, widespread idolatry occurred. Strangely, Solomon worships the gods who nations he has conquered and already controls (House, 167). This makes no sense, but then idolatry makes no sense.

He worships the fertility goddess Ashtoreth (5a). This false goddess appears throughout the Old Testament (cf., Judge 2:13). Not only does he worship the sex goddess, he also worships Milcom (whom some scholars identify as Molech). The worship of Molech involved the incineration of infants (5b; cf., Lev 20:2-5; 2 Kings 23:10; Jer 32:35). Molech had a burning belly with hands reached out, and worshipers would give their children to him and the child would be consumed. They would do this to appease Molech. He also builds a high place for Chemosh (7). Solomon accommodates to these foreign women's wishes by building them a place for this abominable practices. All of this was "evil in the sight of the Lord" (this phrase will appear throughout Kings). Verse 8 also implies other gods were involved.

A contemporary example of this is not hard to find. Your morality often shapes your theology. If a person does not repent of sin, they will end up changing what they believe to justify their immoral lifestyle. Solomon should have stopped and repented, but instead he practiced syncretism.

***Finally, his downfall caused devastating results (9-40).*** Notice a three-part response from the Lord. First, in verse 9-13, we see the anger of the Lord (9). While God is slow to anger and abounding in love, idolatry provokes God to anger causing him to act swiftly and justly (cf., Ex 32-34; Num 20). God blessed Solomon tremendously, but he turned his back on God. Second, God speaks to Solomon and tells him that the kingdom will be torn away from him (11). Third, the only reason he and his descendants keep the throne at all, is due to the promise God made to David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17 (12-13). It is only for David's sake that Solomon remains king, and it is only for David's sake that his descendants will rule a fragmented nation. Despite this grace, the resulting punish is irreversible and tragic. Division, idolatry and exile await Israel.

In the following verses, we read about adversaries that God used up to oppose Solomon. Neighboring adversaries are mentioned in 14-25. Jeroboam, adversary from within is described in 26-40.

Hadad the Edomite was from the Southwest, and he will harass Solomon from below (14-22). Next, we read of Rezon from Damascus in Syria who hated Israel (23-25). He was from the Northeast. These men will pose an ongoing threat to Solomon, one from the North and one from the South.

Jeroboam, who was once an employee of Solomon, becomes an agent of God's judgment (26-40). As a young man, Jeroboam impressed Solomon, and Solomon gave power to him – the man who will end the Davidic dynasty's rule over Northern Israel (28).

God informs Jeroboam that he will have a kingdom through the prophet Ahijah (29-39). The prophet tears a clock into twelve pieces, giving ten pieces to Jeroboam to illustrate that he will have ten tribes, while two will remain for David's descendants (Judah and the unmentioned tribe of Benjamin). Thus the Promised Land will be divided and weak. The reasons are also provided. God will preserve Judah because of his faithfulness to David (32, 34, 36); and God will bring judgment because of idolatry of Solomon and the people (33). Jeroboam is also promised blessing if he walks in the ways of David (37-38). As a result, Solomon seeks to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam flees to Egypt until the death of Solomon (40).

Prophets begin to appear more often in the story now. One wonders where the prophets went during Solomon's decline. We will soon find them anointing kings, doing miracles, and serving as a theological conscious to the people.

Finally, we read of Solomon's death (41-42). House says that no one knows the exact contents of this "book of the annals of Solomon" but it probably contained both narrative and chronological materials (173). He reigned for forty years, the same amount of time as David. His

successor is also mentioned: Rehoboam. However, his reign will be under a cloud, for his kingdom will be smaller since Israel's glory days are over.

So, we began our tour with the glory of Solomon, and now we end at a funeral. What should we say at the graveside? He definitely had some positive traits; namely wisdom. He used his wisdom to write, organize, have some efficient foreign policy, build the temple, grow the economy, trade, and build great fortresses. He also offered an incredible prayer to God in chapter 8. We should remember these positive traits about Solomon.

Unfortunately, we have to also note his flaws: he broke clear commands, like taking many foreign wives; he used oppressive measures to gain wealth; and worst of all, he enabled and committed gross idolatry, which led the nation to disaster. House states, "At worst then, then, this wise leader of Israel acts no better than the most foolish of his subjects. He thereby serves as a warning to those who take their God-given gifts for granted or, worse, come to believe they have achieved greatness on their own" (House, 174).

Perhaps you have gained it all -- wealth, power, sexual pleasure, big home -- but you do not have Christ. "What good is it to gain the whole world and lose your soul?" Do not waste your life and lose your soul. Come to Jesus.

We can die well because our King finished well. For David's sake, God remained faithful to his people (2 Sam 7:14-15). God left a lamp burning (11:36). He does not wipe out Israel, though they will face dreadful consequences. Eventually, the One greater than Solomon did come. He is the perfect mediator, the ultimate protector and provider, the perfectly righteous one, the ultimate wise King, and the one with infinite riches. This King will not turn away from God's law, but will keep it perfectly and then die on behalf of idolaters. This King would also go to a grave, but he would only sleep with his fathers for three days. Paul said, "Of this man's [David's] offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.... Through this man forgiveness of sins proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:23, 38-39). Our hope is this Savior-King whose kingdom is forever. If you are not a follower of the King, then bow to him. As the Queen of Sheba came and marveled at Solomon, so come to Jesus and experience his salvation. If you have failed him, then do not let sin go unchecked. Repent of sin and experience his renewing mercies today.