

A COMPARISON OF THE SPIRITUAL WALKS OF KING DAVID AND SOLOMON

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“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.”

I Kings 11:4

“And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.”

Acts 13:14

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DAVID AND SOLOMON'S WALK WITH GOD

I Kings 9:4-5

“The idolatry into which Solomon fell in his old age appears so strange in a king so wise and God-fearing as Solomon showed himself to be at the dedication of the Temple, that many have been quite unable to reconcile the two. . . . But great wisdom and a refined knowledge of God are not a defense against the folly of idolatry.” (K&D. Vol 3. P. 166) Many, through the years have sought to understand how the wisest man who ever lived, and who also lived a devout life of obedience to the Lord God Jehovah could have failed so profoundly at the end of his life. It may never be known exactly why Solomon forsook the Lord and began to worship false gods in his old age. Since the scriptural account often references the spiritual life of King David as compared to Solomon's spiritual life, a study of that comparison may prove instructive.

I. David, a man after God's own heart

Early in the history of Israel the people demanded of God a King so they could be like all the other nations of the earth. God gave them King Saul. He proved to be a great disappointment to God and the people. God said to Saul, *"But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee."* (I Samuel 13:14) The Lord found such a man in King David. It is truly amazing to think of David as a person who was so devout as to be worthy of such a title. Yet, that is exactly what Paul said of him in Acts 13:22. God *"raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will."* To be sure David was not a man who lived perfectly before the Lord. He showed that he had issues with anger in the incident with Nabal and Abigail. (I Samuel 25:2-38) He suffered from a lack of faith when he

numbered his people. (I Chronicles 21:17). The circumstances with Bathsheba and Uriah demonstrated that he could be guilty of the sins of lust, lying, murder, and treachery. (Numbers 11:1-27) How could a man of such character; who could commit such acts of sin possibly be called “a man after God’s own heart”? The answer is to be found in the 51st Psalm. This is a psalm of David that he wrote after his sin with Bathsheba became known. It is his psalm of repentance and cleansing. Scofield, in his notes on Psalm 51 said, “This Psalm must ever be, in its successive steps, the mould of the experience of a sinning saint who comes back to full communion and service. The steps are;

- (1) sin thoroughly judged before God (vs. 1-6);
- (2) forgiveness and cleansing through the blood (v. 7, f.c.);
- (3) cleansing (v. 7, 1.c. to 10. Cf. John 13:1-10; Eph. 5;26; I John 1:9)
- (4) Spirit-filled for joy and power (vs. 11,12);
- (5) service (v. 13);
- (6) worship (vs. 14-17);

(7) the restored saint in fellowship with God, not about self, but about the blessing of Zion. Personally, it was David's pathway to restored communion after his sin with Bathsheba."

(From the Scofield's notes on Psalm 51:1)

David returned to the Lord in repentance after each failure. He learned that he could not depend on himself. After each failure the Lord became more real and personal to David. David had learned to run to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness. David had to struggle for his faith. He also had earthly enemies that challenged his faith. In these trials of faith, his trust in God became more real and precious. As he suffered, the reality of God in his life was re-enforced. This was his walk in the Lord.

II. Solomon's heart was not perfect with the LORD his God

As Solomon was growing up, he had the opportunity to witness firsthand the life of King David. He surely saw the human side of his father as well as the side that loved God

and sought to follow Him. He saw that David's heart was "perfect with the Lord". What that means is that David kept short accounts with the Lord. When he failed God, he repented and confessed those sins. He often was required to endure the consequences of those sins. He endured the turmoil and pain in his own family that resulted from his sin with Bathsheba. He saw the death toll from the numbering of the people. Solomon tried his best in the early years of his reign to honor God and obey His commandments. He built the Temple in a sincere effort to please and honor God. He was moved each time God spoke to him with instructions and promising to bless him and his reign when he followed the Lord. In reading the story of Solomon in the Scriptures we can note that Solomon seemed to have none of the spiritual challenges that David did. He had no foreign enemies against whom he had to struggle. No one sought for his life as Saul did for David. Solomon had no "Cave of Adullam" experience. (I Sam. 22:1) He spent his reign building and in philosophic pursuits. Ecclesiastes reveals how disillusioned with

his life and accomplishments he became. He sought mirth, work and the accumulation of things. He sought much learning and yet his ultimate conclusion was, *“Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”* (Eccles. 2:17) By the end of life he forsook the Lord and began to worship false gods. (I Kings 11:33) I Kings chapter 11 tells us that Solomon married many wives. This was in disobedience to the Lord's command in Deuteronomy 17: 16-17. He began to follow his wives in the worship of these gods. He even built places of worship for them. They drew his heart away from the Lord. The public endorsement of these gods caused the people to follow him in his idolatry. The result on his walk with God was; *“And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.”* (Vs. 11:9-10) It may never fully be determined just how destructive Solomon's apostasy was. The

things he did, “were sins that drew his heart away from the living God. Furthermore, there is no written indication that he ever repented of them.” (Wycliffe. P. 322) The reasons he did what he did were probably as complicated as he was as a man. They cost him dearly, as the rest of the chapter details. He knew that God was calling him to answer for what he had done. His conclusion to the whole matter is found in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”*

K&D = Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes.
C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. Vol. III. William B. Eerdmans
Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1982.

Wycliffe = The Wycliffe Bible Commentary. By Charles F.
Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison. Moody Press, Chicago, Il. 1962.