

# The Rise and Fall of Solomon: Wisdom, Wealth, and Warning

## 1 Kings 10-11

### Key Bible Texts

1 Kings 10-11

### Key Bible Verse(s)

“And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father.” (1 Kings 11:6)

## Background to the Study

The Queen of Sheba visited Solomon to test reports of his wisdom and wealth. As ruler of a prosperous nation, possibly in present-day Ethiopia or Yemen, she brought lavish gifts—including spices and four-and-a-half tons of gold, likely showcasing her country’s trade goods. In return, Solomon granted her requests from his royal bounty.

Solomon amassed 666 talents of gold annually (about 25 tons) through taxes, trade, and gifts, using some for ceremonial shields and throne room decorations. He also purchased horses from Egypt, defying Moses’ prohibition (Deuteronomy 17:16), and became a horse trader. Though warned in Deuteronomy 17:17 against excessive wives and wealth, Solomon pursued both. Foreign dignitaries visited him, fostering trade, but Israel, rather than influencing others toward God, began adopting their customs. Despite Israel’s peak under David and Solomon, spiritual decline began under Solomon’s leadership.

1 Kings 2–10 highlights Solomon’s dedication in building the Temple, the overwhelming presence of God at its dedication, his humility, wisdom, wealth, and influence. However, chapter 11 reveals his downfall—marrying foreign women, many of whom worshipped idols. He “clave to these in love” (1 Kings 11:3), building temples for their gods and introducing practices his father had suppressed.

Though blessed by God, Solomon allowed his wives to sway his heart. Instead of honoring God, he catered to their desires (1 Kings 11:3–8). Verse 6 states, “Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord and went not fully after the Lord.” God had warned against intermarriage with idolaters (verse 2). Though polygamy was practiced under the Law of Moses, it contradicted God’s plan for marriage, and kings were specifically warned against it (Deuteronomy 17:17). Solomon married for political alliances and prestige.

Among the false gods he embraced were Ashtoreth (goddess of love and fertility, widely worshipped in Palestine), Chemosh (the Moabites’ national god), and Molech (the god of the Ammonites,

associated with child sacrifice). Solomon's acceptance of these practices weakened Israel's faith, marking the decline of his reign and corrupting the nation's worship of the true God.

## TESTIMONIES FROM OUR DAY

*As a construction business owner, finding reliable employees can be challenging. One young man approached me for work, and I gave him a chance. Initially, he performed well—experienced, hardworking, and willing to follow instructions. However, over time, he began arriving late, despite repeated warnings. His punctuality would briefly improve, then decline again, sometimes by an hour and a half. Eventually, though I knew he had a family to support, I had to let him go. One poor choice can overshadow past good work, and if asked for a reference, I would have had to say, “but he can’t get to work on time.”*

*Today's text begins with a concerning phrase: “But King Solomon...” What follows marks a turning point in his story. By marrying hundreds of women from nations with false religions, he directly disobeyed God's command. These wives led him astray, introducing practices he once would have rejected. Disobedience—absent from his past—was now on his record, costing him God's favour.*

*This account is a cautionary tale: A strong start is valuable, but a good finish is even more important. Choosing to follow our own path instead of God's will can undo all prior faithfulness. If we remain steadfast in obedience, we can avoid tarnishing the “resume” of our lives. May God help us to see that details matter—and that His best is ours if we simply continue to obey Him.*

## A Closer Look

### Question 1

What was the intent of the Queen of Sheba when she came to visit Solomon? (1 Kings 10:1) What was her reaction after she had spent time with him? (1 Kings 10:5)

### Question 2

Looking at the vast possessions of Solomon, what do we learn about having riches as believers? (1 Kings 10:9,23) In your own life, list the blessings that make you rich. Why do these things stand out?

### Question 3

How did Solomon's acceptance of wives from foreign religions affect the course of his life? (1 Kings 11:1-4, 9-11) Does compromise affect Christianity today? Explain.

### Question 4

God told Jeroboam that He would take ten tribes from the hand of Solomon's son, and thus the kingdom would be divided. Why did God not take all twelve tribes from Rehoboam? 1 Kings 11:29-32

**Question 5**

How would you sum up the reign of Solomon? What were his strengths? What eventually led to his downfall?

**Question 6**

What principles or precepts did you learn from the study of Solomon that you can apply to your own life? Perhaps you remember a time when it was hard to follow your own advice. How can we be sure that we act with wisdom?

## Take Home

How wonderful it is to know that, with God at the centre of our lives, we never have to settle for less than the best. Wisdom must be applied in order for it to help us. We may have knowledge, but we must put it to use in order to benefit from it.