

## Better Wise Up

By Renee Coates Scheidt

His reputation preceded him. Famous for his wisdom, all the earth sought the presence of King Solomon “to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart”(I Kings 10:24). Even still, when it was all said and done, Solomon, like so many before him, wrecked his life. Scripture tells us that “when Solomon was old, his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David” (I Kings 11:4). In fact, his disloyalty grew to actively doing evil in the sight of the Lord by building altars to false gods! How could one who started off so strongly, gifted by God to be wiser than any other person on earth (I Kings 4:31), end up in such disgrace? It is such a sad commentary that Solomon rejected the One who gave it all to him. Two personal appearances by God were not enough to keep his heart faithful. The granting of wisdom, understanding, and wealth unparalleled, everything one could ever want or imagine, were not enough to keep him from straying. Building the costly, magnificent Temple, and the glorious dedication that followed were not enough either. Somewhere along the line, Solomon went AWOL. Where was all that wisdom then? Perhaps by taking a good look at his mistakes, we can keep from winding up on the same road to destruction.

Could there be a better start for a young person than the one given to Solomon? Son of handsome King David and gorgeous Bathsheba, he was hand selected by God to be the next ruler of Israel. David’s dying words were a charge to his young son to be faithful to God, and walk in His ways. In doing so, Solomon could rest in God’s assurance that all he did would prosper (I Kings 2:2-4). Surely this advice from his father, who knew first hand the price of disobeying God, greatly impacted his young son Solomon. After all, Solomon had personally experienced tremendous turmoil in his own family due to sinful

choices his parents and siblings made. Humbly he began his reign, realizing his own inadequacies to govern. Seeing this, God actually appeared to him in dream, and asked him, “What do you want me to give you?” (I know this sounds like a genie in a bottle story, but read it for yourself—I Kings 3:5!). Of all things, Solomon asked for wisdom! This so impressed God that He not only gave Solomon wisdom and understanding, but also threw in everything else to boot! (OK—be honest—what would YOU have asked for?).

One appearance by God to an individual is more than most of us will ever know on this side of Eternity. How blessed was Solomon! But God didn’t stop there. Twenty years later, after the completion of the Temple and his own house, “The Lord appeared to Solomon the SECOND TIME” (I Kings 9:2), encouraging him to continue being faithful.

I’m sure some of you are thinking, “If God appeared to me even once, I’d never be unfaithful again. How could this man get so messed up?” Good question. The answer?

Disobedience. It started as a simple thing. Good politics, but not good obedience to God. Politically correct, but not biblically true. One thing led to another, and before he realized it, the web of sin had entangled him. The Bible tells us that “King Solomon loved many foreign women” (I Kings 11:1). You know, those beautiful daughters of the kings of other countries. Rich, sophisticated educated, striking women. They had it all. Just one problem----they didn’t love the Lord. Can’t you just imagine Solomon trying to rationalize this in his mind? All these pluses, and only one negative (not that you or I would ever do that, right?) Although God warned Solomon not to intermarry with them, even saying, “they will turn away your heart after their gods, Solomon CLUNG to these in love” (I Kings 11:2). And we’re not talking one, two or three here. How about SEVEN HUNDRED wives! That’s not to mention his little harem of THREE

HUNDRED concubines! All these women equaled this conclusion: “When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart after other gods” ( I Kings 11:4).

What happened to the wisdom? What happened to the humility of acknowledging his own limitations? How could he forget what his father told him on his deathbed? Undoubtedly wisdom was thrown away to give way to the lust of the flesh. Tempted in a vulnerable area, he let down his guard and gave in (I can’t help but think, “exactly like your father!”) For whatever reason, Solomon chose to disobey God’s Word. The results were as just as David had warned, just as God had warned in the earlier years of Solomon’s reign, just as Adam and Eve were warned in the Garden of Eden.

The lesson for us is clear. No matter how much wisdom and understanding one may have, it counts for nothing if you don’t obey God! Just knowing and understanding is not enough! We must ACT ON IT. Be a “doer of the Word”, not just a hearer (James 1:22). Ask God for wisdom (which he promises to provide—James 1:4), and then pray for courage and strength to do what wisdom dictates! The temptation to choose our own way may come from a different avenue than Solomon’s. Sexual pleasures may not be our weak point. But be assured, Satan knows where we are vulnerable and aims his darts there. Regardless of the various avenues from which temptations may arrive, they all come to the same dead end street. Different temptation to disobey --- Same disastrous results. Solomon found out the Word of God stands true. Let’s wise up, and learn from his disaster. Choose to refuse to walk that same meaningless path. God promises that the straight and narrow road leads to victory. Unlike the path of disobedience, it won’t result in a “No Outlet, Dead End Street.”