

Title: CAN A WISE MAN BE A FOOL, 1 KINGS 11:4-12?  
(Chatham NJ; 02/03/08, AM) [S-P, Narrative with Question and Answer format]

Theme: Solomon's fall from favor with God illustrates the tragedy of allowing anything to destroy one's faithfulness.

Purpose: To help us determine what destroys faithfulness and to encourage us either to change course or to fight directly against our loss of faith.

Introduction:

1. Solomon's downfall is the stuff tragedies are made of, on par with any Shakespearean tragedy.
2. One of the greatest of Israel's kings falls out of favor with God because at the end of his life he rejects God.
3. The spiritual implications are enormous; the questions are perplexing.
4. Why would a man favored so much by God reject him in the end? What do we think of a man who didn't take his own advice to fear God? How could a man of such wisdom become such a fool?
5. He is testimony that success does not always equal faithfulness.
6. Whereas in David we see his blatant failure followed by repentance, in Solomon we see his failure come late in life without any change of heart.

I. Not all is well in this house of wealth and wisdom.

- God appeared to Solomon a second time, after he had built his house and the Temple.
- The warning is clear: don't forsake the Lord, 1 Kings 9:3-9.
- Solomon's wisdom and fame spread far and wide; the Queen of Sheba finds it even more incredible than the stories she had heard, 1 Kings 10:6-7.
- This time is often referred to as the golden age of Israel: the nations around her had been subdued by David, the Temple was completed and the Ark put in place, economically Israel prospered, and Solomon became famous for his wisdom from the Lord (10:23-25).
- But then...he acts without any good sense, 1 Kings 11:1-8: he worships other gods.
- Ashtoreth: a goddess of fertility, love and war.
- Milcom (5) or Molech (7): associated with child-sacrifice.
- Chemosh: also associated with child sacrifice.
- Several of these high places were demolished later in Josiah's reform.
- The text states simply that his many wives turned his heart away when he was old.
- Solomon apparently married many of them out of political alliances with the surrounding nations.
- Israel had been warned about intermarrying with nations around them.
- Here is the wisest man in Israel acting out of foolishness under the influence of his wives.

II. Why? What made him turn away?

- A. The simple answer is his wives.
  1. Their influence was powerful.
  2. He had many of them so their influence was magnified.
  3. But we have to extend the question: what makes anyone turn away from God?
- B. How about money, wealth, prestige and fame, or power?
  1. Solomon had more of this than anyone else. It didn't keep him faithful.

2. He even said in Ecclesiastes that it brought only meaninglessness to his life.
3. Jesus raises the issue by asking a question, “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?”

C. Does sexual immorality keep us from God?

1. Solomon had many wives; dare we say this was his downfall?
2. I think for Solomon it goes deeper than this. Surely out of the many wives he had there must have been a few who would have supported his refusal to worship other gods.
3. Ephesians 4:18-24 speaks of a “hardness of heart” and corruption through “deceitful desire” that have kept many from turning to God.
4. Without watchfulness over your heart, desires of the flesh can do the same thing.

D. How about suffering or pain? Does that destroy one’s faithfulness?

1. The Book of Ecclesiastes recognizes that tragedy and injustice are a part of life but manages to cling to the notion that we can still find meaning in obeying God.
2. Anger over past hurts and injustices are one of the biggest means Satan employs to destroy our faith.
3. James 5:9-11 reminds us to endure patiently even through hurts and pain.

Conclusion:

1. Can a wise man become a fool? Apparently.
2. Can a person of faith lose his faith? Apparently.
3. I suspect that each one of us must keep a close eye on our own heart; don’t leave out the need for help from others. Ask for help if you see your faith slipping.
4. Look at the Parable of the Sower, Mt. 13:1-9 & 18-23. Which type of soil are you? Or better, which soil are you determined to be?