

# 1 Kings 11:1-25 // Trouble and Strife

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Date: 19 April 2026

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our reading this morning is from 1 Kings chapter 10, starting at verse 14.

And you can find that on page 349 on the Bibles in front of you. The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all the Arabian kings and the governors of the territories.

King Solomon made 200 large shields of hammered gold. 600 shekels of gold went into each shield. He also made 300 small shields of hammered gold with three miners of gold in each shield. The king put them in the palace of the forest of Lebanon. Then the king made a great throne covered with ivory and overlaid with fine gold. The throne had six steps and its back had a rounded top.

On both sides of the seat were armrests with a lion standing beside each of them. Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom.

[ 1 : 14 ] All King Solomon's goblets were gold and all the household articles in the palace of the forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's days.

The king had a fleet of trading ships at sea along with the ships of Hiram. Once every three years it returned carrying gold, silver and ivory and apes and baboons.

King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. Year after year everyone who came brought a gift.

Articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices and horses and mules. Solomon accumulated chariots and horses. He had 1400 chariots and 12,000 horses.

Which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones and cedar as plentiful as sycamore fig trees in the foothills.

[ 2 : 18 ] Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kew. The royal merchants purchased them from Kew at the current price. They imported a chariot from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver and a horse for 150.

They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans. We're going to come to God's word again with our second Bible reading shortly.

But let's just pray and ask for God's help having heard his word already and hearing him speak to us later. Mighty God and loving Heavenly Father. We thank you for this opportunity to meet with you and to hear you speak to us.

And we pray that you will open our ears to hear your voice. And open our hearts to grasp more deeply your love for us. And to love you better in return.

For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well in church here we've been in a series in recent weeks in this amazing book First Kings. about life for God's people Israel just under a thousand years before Jesus came.

[ 3 : 30 ] And it was life under David's son, King David's son Solomon. And the story so far in 1 Kings is that life has been totally brilliant for the people of God under King Solomon.

One thing I don't know if you noticed as it was read. That one of the big things that shows us that is the gold. There is gold everywhere under Solomon's reign. He earned about over a billion pounds a year in today's money in terms of the gold that was coming in every year.

He was phenomenally rich. And gold is a good thing created by God. And God was blessing the king and his people with prosperity. But another thing that was amazing in Solomon's time was that the king was so wise.

He was the wisest man who's ever lived. Early on in Solomon's life God appeared to him in a dream and said ask for whatever you want. And he asked for wisdom, a wise and discerning heart to govern God's people.

And God gave him that, made him the wisest man who's ever lived. And he wrote books of the Bible for us. He was phenomenally wise and the people were blessed by that as God smiled on them.

[ 4 : 42 ] And under King Solomon, best of all, God moved in to be with the people. Solomon built the temple, the home for God to dwell among his people. Magnificent building, a wonder of the ancient world.

And God came to be with his people. And that's brilliant because the greatest gift that God can give us is himself. And he did that for them. So putting it all together, the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon, a far off queen because the world was hearing about these people and how they were being blessed by the living God.

And she said, how happy your people must be when she saw what it was like. What a time to be alive under King Solomon. That's one king so far to chapter 11.

If you pick up one kings after chapter 11 and you read it to the end of two kings, it's a book about total disaster. It's horrendous. The kingdom gets divided.

The people fight among themselves, never to be united again. Then the northern kingdom rejects God. The kings reject God. The people reject God. They go into exile under conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC.

[ 5 : 49 ] And then the southern kingdom that was loyal to the king and David's line around Jerusalem. They reject God and they go into exile in 587 BC under the Babylonians.

It's meltdown. It's a horror show of a book. A sad story. And so if you had those two sides of it, you start to think, how on earth does it go so wrong?

How do you go from the good times of Solomon to complete meltdown for the people of God? And that's the chapter we're looking at today. It's the story of a man who ruins his life.

And we're going to look at it together and what it means for us. So Katrina is going to come and bring our second reading from 1 Kings chapter 11. So back on page 349 and we're reading the first part of chapter 11.

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter. Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites.

[ 6 : 59 ] They were nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, you must not intermarry with them because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods. Nevertheless, Solomon had held fast to them in love.

He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord, his God, as the heart of David, his father, had been.

He followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He did not follow the Lord completely as David, his father, had done.

On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a palace for Chemosh, the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command.

[ 8 : 12 ] So the Lord said to Solomon, Since this is your attitude, and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.

Nevertheless, for the sake of David, your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David, my servant, and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.

This is the word of the Lord. So where does it all go wrong for Solomon? Our first point today is the warnings the king ignores.

Solomon doesn't think that the rules apply to him. The rules for a king were set out in Deuteronomy chapter 17 for the future kings of God's people.

The first rule we see in Deuteronomy 17 that we're going to look at is think about horses. In chapter 17 of Deuteronomy, it says, The king must not get large numbers of horses for himself.

[ 9 : 20 ] And there's a special command about Egypt. God's people had been slaves in Egypt. God had rescued them out of Egypt. And so he doesn't want them to go back and get tied in with Egypt again.

And so he says of the king, He must not make the people return to Egypt to get more horses. The Lord has told you, you must not go back there again. Okay. And then in chapter 10, verse 26 of 1 Kings, we read this.

Solomon had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses. He kept some of his horses and chariots in the chariot cities. He kept others with him in Jerusalem.

Solomon got horses from Egypt and from Kew. How was he doing? This is not good. This is Solomon who loved God in chapter 3.

But as God is blessing him with money and with power, is he starting to love those things more than holding fast to God's word? But then God says in Deuteronomy 17, 17, The king must not have many wives.

[ 10 : 26 ] If he does, they will lead him astray. That's the warning. Well, how's Solomon doing there? Chapter 11, verse 3 of 1 Kings, He had 700 wives who came from royal families, and he had 300 concubines.

His wives led him astray. So predictable. He gets the marriage rule wrong at least 999 times. And the issue with the wives isn't just how many Solomon had.

Just to be clear, the Bible does teach that any more than one is a really bad idea. But the biggest problem here is that his wives don't worship the God of the Bible, the one true God.

So look at verse 2 of 1 Kings 11. That's where it brings out so clearly for us, the problem. The Lord had warned Israel about women from other nations. He had said, You must not marry them.

If you do, you can be sure they will turn your hearts towards their gods. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.

[ 11 : 33 ] Solomon ignored the warning. And the first wife he marries, who isn't a God follower, is like the first domino that goes down in a domino rally.

Everything else that happens to Solomon is inevitable after that. You just have to wait and watch the collapse. Have you ever seen a good domino rally? I'm sure you have.

We're going to watch one now. It took eight days to prepare. It was too much for me to do. But we'll watch a bit of it now.

Wesker, can we spin on? We're supposed to be at 30 seconds. Or we just watch it. We weren't supposed to watch her making it. But we'll watch it for a minute. We'll see you next time.

We'll see you next time.

[ 13 : 16 ] Okay. So, strangely relaxing to watch.

But not this one in 1 Kings chapter 11. This one is not a sort of pleasant watch. That incredible collapse we just saw of those dominoes all starts with one domino. And for Solomon, by the time we get to verse 7 of 1 Kings 11, we're reading this.

On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So, this is astonishing.

The man who built God's house on the hilltop that is Jerusalem, on the hill next to it, on that ridge, is building high places for people to make sacrifices to gods that are not really there, that the nations around them and his wives worship.

When it says about the detestable god of the Ammonites. These are gods people thought you had to kill children for. It's horrendous that this is going on.

[ 14 : 29 ] How did Solomon get here? How did he ruin his life? He fell in love. That's all that went wrong. Maybe it started when he just went out for coffee one day with a beautiful princess who didn't follow the god of the Bible.

God says to him in his word, Don't go there. She will turn your heart towards the god she worships. Solomon thinks, It'll be fine. Other gods?

I'm so far from that. I've got nothing to worry about. And he knocks over. Domino one. When he meets another princess, you can imagine him thinking, Well, I've done this before and I didn't get struck by lightning.

By God, I'm still here. It'll be fine again. And again. And again. By the time he's building those high places to false gods, you wonder if his younger self could have seen him.

He'd have gone, Solomon, what on earth are you doing? How did it end up like this? And the answer would be, Well, I got here one domino at a time. I took a wrong turn one day.

[15:33] And maybe we need to think, Grownups, youth, children who are here, What is domino number one for you? What's the decision you would make that seems small, but it sets you off on the road away from God?

Like moving to a new place that's far from a good church. Or taking up a hobby that means that you'll be doing that on a Sunday instead of being at church.

Or for lots of us, Domino number one is tying up your life with someone who doesn't love the God of the Bible. In a relationship. In a marriage.

Even, by extension, in a close friendship. If you find that you don't have any friends who love Jesus, but you have all your friends are good friends, but they love something else instead.

That it would pull your heart away to the things they love instead of him. And lots of us will be able to think of someone for whom that happened. Someone we know who loved Jesus, and then they went out with someone who doesn't love Jesus.

[16:42] And then they got married, and now they're spiritually nowhere. That's our first point. The warning that the king ignores. But why does it all matter so much?

Well, secondly, we hear about the love the king forgets. We've got our heart here, as said earlier, because Solomon's story is a love story. It's a story about what he really loves.

Back in chapter 3, verse 3, we heard that Solomon loved the Lord, like his father David had. But listen to where his love goes now in 1 Kings 11. In verse 1, King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women.

Verse 2, Solomon held fast to them in love. So he loves the women. And then verse 4, as Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God.

So Solomon follows his heart, first to the 700 wives and 300 concubines, and to love their false gods.

[17:44] And we might wonder how busy he must have been. He reigned for 40 years. So I've worked out that means that if they were evenly spaced, he had a wedding day every three weeks.

Just think of the hassle that must have been. The wedding planning, all the speeches he had to write, all the wedding cake he had to eat. But the Bible isn't concerned with the speeches, and the cake, and the venues, the first dances.

The heart of it all is Solomon's heart. How is his love for God going? That's what Bible religion is all about. It's about your heart.

So here's Solomon's heart, and it was meant to be, like this one, tethered. It was meant to be holding on to God because it held on to his words and walked the path of obedience that kept his heart holding on to the living God, rooted in love for his word.

That's how he starts. But Solomon, he ignores the warnings of God's word. And so, as he does that, he ends up with his heart just drifting away.

[18:58] And it goes. It goes from God. And as a result, our next point is the judgment that God announces. Look with me at verse 9. I know you're all looking at the balloon, but look with me at verse 9.

Eyes in the Bible. Come on, we can do this. Verse 9. The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, since this is your attitude, and you've not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.

Now we might be here thinking, well, why does it really matter so much to God that we love him?

But we wouldn't think that about a husband and a wife, would we? If there was a husband and a wife and the wife stopped loving her husband and loved other men instead, we would understand that for the husband, that it would be appropriate to be very upset about that and angry that the love that was due to him was going to other people instead.

And God loves us like that so that it's not a light thing for him to see us loving other things with the love we should have for him, the good God who gave us everything.

[ 20 : 27 ] And so it means that the king loses his kingdom and the kingdom and the king start to lose all the good things that God had given them. It all unravels. In other words, when we choose to follow the road away from God and our hearts drift away from him, we lose him and even if we don't feel too bothered about that, well, we should be, we start to lose all the good things that he has given us.

Ultimately, that's what we'll lose. And did you notice when all of this happened for Solomon in verse 4? It was when Solomon grew old. So, if you're over 55 here, how is your heart today?

We can't rely on what we did or how we felt about God earlier in life, can we? Consider Solomon's past. Consider the spiritual experiences he had. God appeared to him twice.

Consider how gifted he was. The wisest man who's ever lived. Consider what great things he did for God. He built the temple. Consider what a great man of prayer he'd been.

Chapter 8, one of the great Bible prayers is by him. So, the questions for us, I mean, he ends up nowhere and the questions for us are, what's domino number one for you?

[ 21 : 48 ] If the devil wants to set your heart adrift from God, where would the devil start? what would be his first step to pull you on the road away from God?

And another question is, how is your heart today? Have you drifted from the love you had at first for God? If there are things that have become your heart's desire more than Jesus, more than God himself.

And if we feel like that, even in this story, there's hope. Even if we're here today thinking, that's me, I've drifted, I've gone down the road away from God.

Well, our final point is this, the promise that God remembers. In verse 13, God says, he won't take the whole kingdom away because he remembers his promise.

He says, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen. God has committed himself to rescuing a people. And God had promised Solomon's father David that in David's royal line, a king would come who'll be God's forever king, his rescuing king, his Messiah.

[ 23 : 02 ] And we know how that story ends, that God has now sent Jesus who invites each of us, wherever our hearts have gone, come to me. And I will give you rest.

And did you notice where Solomon built the high places to these false gods? On the hill east of Jerusalem, that hill is the Mount of Olives. The same hill and ridge where our king, Jesus, went, not to turn people from the living God, but to resolutely commit himself in prayer to God's plan and God's mission to save us.

As he said to God on that same mountain, not my will, but yours be done. Knowing God had sent him on a rescue mission because God is absolutely committed in love to us.

So it may be, especially, you need to hear that this morning, if you're here thinking, but I already knocked over domino number one. In fact, it seems that in my life, the dominoes have kept coming down.

And my heart's gone quite far from God today. Well, let's remember that God, moved by his deep love for us, sent King Jesus on that rescue mission for us so that he would be betrayed and arrested and go to the cross so that he would be treated as though his heart was far from God, like ours has been, in our place so that God can unconditionally welcome us home to him.

[ 24 : 37 ] And it means that if you're someone who thinks, well, my heart's far from God today, but I kind of don't really think I'm as bothered as I should be, what would bring my heart back and tether it to God?

Well, how about remembering that, reflecting on how God's love for us is so unconditional and wonderful and sacrificial and delighting in us and welcoming that it can draw our wayward hearts back to him and bring us back so that we're moved by Jesus' embrace of us to tether our hearts to him and walk the path of obedience because we want to heed the warnings and we don't want to drift from a love so wonderful.

So let's pray together. Heavenly Father, even though this is a sad story, we thank you that in Jesus you've given us one so much more faithful than Solomon, the faithful king we needed, the king whose love for you and for us never changes, who walked the path of godliness and that you sent him so that you can welcome us home.

And so we pray that with our eyes fixed on him you would guard us from knocking over the dominoes, that you would help us to stay spiritually safe, help us to steer clear of temptation. May our hearts never wander from being home with you. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.