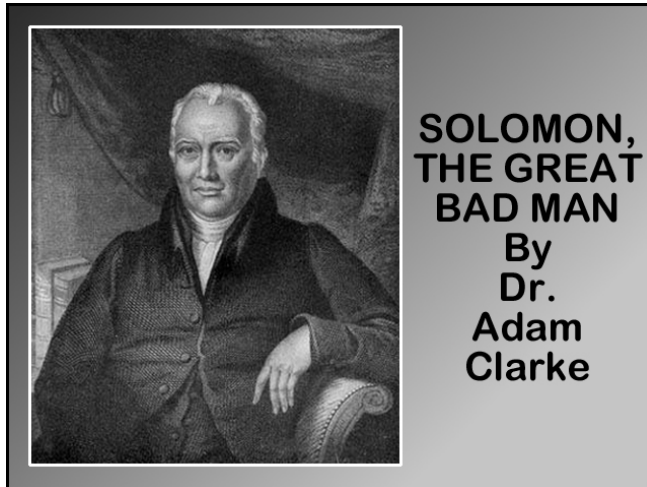


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**SOLOMON, THE GREAT BAD MAN**  
**Compiled From The Adam Clarke Commentary**  
**By Duane V. Maxey**

**Dr. Adam Clarke's assessment of Solomon's character was very low. In addition to calling him a "GREAT BAD MAN" Clarke says: "He seems to have gone as far in iniquity as it was possible." Clarke even goes so far as to liken the Final Fall of Solomon to that of Fallen Lucifer: "To what an indescribable state of blindness and fatuity must this man have been brought, before he could have been capable of such acts as these! O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen!"**

**In Job 32:9, God's Word says, "Great men are not always wise." In Clarke's view, the reverse of this statement was true regarding Solomon: "Wise men are not always Great!" -- at least spiritually.**

**In the following, I shall present a number of verses from 1 Kings 11:1-14, along with Dr. Adam Clarke's comments upon them, and also the Second Part of Clarke's Outline of Solomons character found at the close of the chapter.**

**11:1 -- But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;**

**Clarke's Comment on Verse 1 -- Here then are one thousand wives to form THIS GREAT BAD MAN'S HAREM! Was it possible that such a person could have any piety to God, who was absorbed by such a number of women? We scarcely allow a man to have the fear of God who has a second wife or mistress; in what state then must the man be who has one thousand of them? We may endeavour to excuse all this by saying, "It was a custom in the East to have a multitude of women, and that there were many of those whom Solomon probably never saw," &c., &c. But was there any of them whom he might not have seen? Was it for reasons of state, or merely court splendour, that he had so many? How then is it said that he loved many strange women?-that he clave to them in love? And did he not give them the utmost proofs of his attachment when he not only tolerated their iniquitous worship in the land, but built temples to their idols, and more, burnt incense to them himself? As we should not condemn what God justifies, so we should not justify what God condemns. He went after Ashtaroth, the impure Venus of the Sidonians; after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; after Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites; and after the murderous Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. He seems to have gone as far in iniquity as it was possible.**

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**4 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.**

**5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.**

**6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father.**

**7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.**

**Clarke's Comment on Verse 7. -- The hill that is before Jerusalem] This was the Mount of Olives.**

**8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.**

**9 And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,**

**Clarke's Comment on Verse 9. -- The Lord was angry with Solomon] Had not this man's delinquency been strongly marked by the Divine disapprobation, it would have had a fatal effect on the morals of mankind. Vice is vice, no matter who commits it. And God is as much displeased with sin in Solomon as he can be with it in the most profligate, uneducated**

wretch. And although God sees the same sin in precisely the same degree of moral turpitude as to the act itself, yet there may be circumstances which greatly aggravate the offense, and subject the offender to greater punishment. Solomon was wise; he knew better; his understanding showed him the vanity as well as the wickedness of idolatry. God had appeared unto him twice, and thus given him the most direct proof of his being and of his providence. The promises of God had been fulfilled to him in the most remarkable manner, and in such a way as to prove that they came by a Divine counsel, and not by any kind of casualty. All these were aggravations of Solomon's crimes, as to their demerit; for the same crime has, in every case, the same degree of moral turpitude in the sight of God; but circumstances may so aggravate, as to require the offender to be more grievously punished; so the punishment may be legally increased where the crime is the same. Solomon deserved more punishment for his worship of Ashtaroath than any of the Sidonians did, though they performed precisely the same acts. The Sidonians had never known the true God; Solomon had been fully acquainted with him.

10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.

11 Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

Clarke's Comment on Verse 11 -- Forasmuch as this is done of thee] Was not this another warning from the Lord? And might not Solomon have yet recovered himself? Was there not mercy in this message which he might have sought and found?

12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

Clarke's Comment on Verse 13 -- Will give one tribe -- for David my servant's sake] The line of the Messiah must be preserved. The prevailing lion must come out of the tribe of Judah: not only the tribe must be preserved, but the regal line and the regal right. All this must be done for the true David's sake: and this was undoubtedly what God had in view by thus miraculously preserving the tribe of Judah and the royal line, in the midst of so general a defection. And for Jerusalem's sake] As David was a type of the Messiah, so was Jerusalem a type of the true Church: therefore the OLD Jerusalem must be preserved in the hands of the tribe of Judah, till the true David should establish the New Jerusalem in the same land,

and in the same city. And what a series of providences did it require to do all these things!

14 And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom.

Clarke's Comment on Verse 14 -- The Lord stirred up an adversary] A satan. When he sent to Hiram to assist him in building the temple of the Lord, he could say, There was no satan, see 1 Kings 5:4 -- and all his kingdom was in peace and security, -- every than dwelt under his vine, and under his fig tree. [Also] 1 Kings 4:25: but now that he had turned away from God, three satans rise up against him at once, Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam.

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## PART II OF CLARKE'S OUTLINE OF SOLOMON'S CHARACTER

II. Hitherto we have looked only at the bright side of Solomon's character: we must now take a much less satisfactory view of this singular man; one in whom every thing great, glorious, wise, and holy, and every thing little, mean, foolish and impious, predominated by turns. He forsook the God of his mercies in a great variety of ways.

1. Whatever may be thought of the step in a political point of view, he most assuredly went out of the way of God's providence, and acted contrary to his law, in making affinity with Pharaoh's daughter. The sacred writers frequently refer to this; and it is never mentioned with approbation: it is rather associated with circumstances that place it in a reprehensible point of view. She was doubtless an idolater; and the question of her becoming a proselyte is far from being satisfactorily settled. I believe she was the first means of drawing off his heart from the true God.

2. His expensive buildings obliging him to have recourse to a system of oppressive taxation, was another flaw in his character. Though with great zeal and honourable industry, and at great expense, he built a temple for the Lord, which he completed in seven years, yet the expense here was little in comparison of what was incurred by his own house, called the house of the forest of Lebanon, in which he spent incredible sums, and consumed nearly thirteen years; almost twice the time employed in building the temple at Jerusalem. This would have had no evil operation provided he had not been obliged to impose heavy taxes on his subjects, which produced an almost universal disaffection. Add to this, he had a most expensive household; one thousand women, part wives, part mistresses, would require immense riches to support their pomp and gratify their ambition. The people therefore justly complained of an

**establishment which, notwithstanding the riches brought into the country, must be both odious and oppressive.**

**3. He began his reign by an inauspicious act, the death of his brother Adonijah. This was a sin against God and nature: and no art of man can ever wash out its guilt. If state policy required it, which is very questionable, what had that to do with the feelings of humanity, and the love of God? On no pretence whatever is Solomon justified in this act.**

**4. His inordinate love of women. He had no doubt formed matrimonial alliances with all kingdoms and neighbouring states, by taking their sisters and daughters to be his wives, to the fearful amount of no less than seven hundred! Politicians may endeavour to justify these acts by asserting, that in the Asiatic countries they were matters of a sound policy, rather than an argument of the prevalence of an irregular and unbridled passion. Let this stand for its value; but what can such apologists say for the additional three hundred concubines, for the taking of whom no such necessity can be pleaded? But even allowing that state policy might require such extensive alliances, what are we to say to the flagrant breaches of a most positive law of God? Most solemnly and most authoritatively had he said that his people should not give their daughters to the heathen, nor take the daughters of the heathen to be their wives; lest they should turn their hearts away from serving the Lord. In the face of this most positive declaration, Solomon took wives of the most idolatrous of the surrounding nations; who succeeded, according to what was foretold in turning his heart away from God.**

**5. He became an idolater. He worshipped "Ashtaroath, the Venus of the Sidonians; Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites; and Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon." He did more: he built a temple to each of these; "and to all the gods of all his strange wives which burned incense, and sacrificed unto their gods," 1Ki 11:5-8.**

**6. By this time we may suppose that the light of God had entirely departed from his mind. He who knew so well the true God, now served him not; or, if he did, it was in conjunction with those idols, thus bringing the Supreme Being on a level with demons, or the figments of impure hearts and disordered fancies. We need not wonder at the tale of the mighty Samson betraying his life's secret in the lap of Delilah; or of the unconquerable Hercules handling the distaff among the maids of Omphale, queen of Lydia; when we see the son of David, the once well-beloved of the Lord, the wisest of human beings, for the love of his millenary of wives and concubines, erecting temples to devils, and burning incense to them that were no gods; not considering that an idol is nothing in the world. To what an indescribable state of blindness and fatuity must this man have been**

brought, before he could have been capable of such acts as these! O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen!

7. I have already hinted that Solomon's oppressive taxation laid the foundation of that discontent which shortly after his death produced the separation of Israel and Judah; also the long and ruinous wars which drenched these states in blood: and this was doubtless the cause that tentwelfths of the Jewish people became idolaters; which crime was punished, by the just judgments of God, by the Babylonish captivity, which lasted seventy years; and by the carrying away of the ten Israelitish tribes by the Assyrians, who are lost from the map of the universe, and no longer numbered among the children of men!

8. What greatly aggravates the whole of this most dismal tale is, that this strange defection from God, truth, reason, and common sense, was persisted in to his old age; or that in his old age, meaning undoubtedly his latter days, his wives turned away his heart from God. But his idolatry must have been of many years' standing; he meddled with it in his connection with the princes of Egypt; each of his idolatrous wives in succession increased the propensity: to chastise him for this very idolatry the Lord stirred up an adversary unto him, Hadad, the Edomite, and Rezon, the son of Eliadah, who was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, 1Ki 11:14-25, which surely intimates that this idolatry was not the sin merely of his old age; as to chastise him for it Rezon was an adversary to Israel all his days. And as Solomon reigned forty years, we may fairly presume that a principal part of that time was spent in idolatrous practices.

9. This dismal account has a more dismal close still; for, in the same place in which we are informed of his apostasy, we are informed of his death, without the slightest intimation that he ever repented and turned to God. It is true that what is wanting in fact is supplied by conjecture; for it is firmly believed that "he did repent, and wrote the book of Ecclesiastes after his conversion, which is a decided proof of his repentance." I am sorry I cannot strengthen this opinion; of which I find not the shadow of a proof. 1. The book of Ecclesiastes, though it speaks much of the vanity of the creatures, yet speaks little or nothing of the vanity or sin of idolatry. 2. It is not the language of a man who was recovering from a state of the most awful backsliding. Is there any direct confession of sin in it? Is there any thing in it like the penitential confessions of his father, or like the lamentations of Jeremiah? Is there any where to be heard in it the sighing of a broken heart, or strong crying and tears to deprecate the justice and implore the mercy of a deeply offended God? Does it any where exhibit the language of a penitent, or expressions suitable to the state and circumstances of this supposed penitent king of Israel? Excellent as it is in its kind, is it any thing more than a valuable collection of experimental ethics, relative to the emptiness of the creature, and the folly of earthly

pursuits and worldly anxieties? 3. Nor is it even past doubt that Solomon wrote this book: it certainly does in several places bear evidences of times posterior to those of Solomon. Eminent scholars have discerned a deterioration in the style from the pure classical Hebrew, with an admixture of exotic terms that did not exist in the Hebrew language previously to the Babylonish captivity. But supposing that they are mistaken here, I still contend that it is not the language of a penitent soul. 4. It has been supposed, that, as Solomon was a type of Christ, it is not likely that he has finally perished. To this I answer, (1.) I know not that Solomon was a type of Christ. The reference to Song 3:7; 8:11,12, is to me no proof whatever of the point. (2.) Were it even otherwise, this would be no proof of his repentance, when the Scriptures are silent on the subject. The brazen serpent was a type of Christ, Joh 3:14, and was held in great veneration for a considerable time among the Jews; but when it became an incitement to idolatry, it was called nehushtan, a brazen trifle, taken down, and destroyed; 2Ki 18:4. Typical persons and typical things may perish as well as others; the antitype alone will infallibly remain. 5. Finally, there seems every evidence that he died in his sins. His crimes were greatly aggravated: he forsook the Lord, who had appeared to him twice; his wives turned away his heart in his old age: there is not a single testimony in the Old or New Testament that intimates he died in a safe state. That awful denunciation of Divine justice stands point blank in the way of all contrary suppositions: "If thou forsake the Lord, he will cast thee off for ever," 1Ch 28:9. He did forsake the Lord; and he forsook him in his very last days; and there is no evidence that he ever again clave to him. Ergo,

Reader, let him that standeth take heed lest he fall; not only foully but finally. Certainly, unconditional final perseverance will find little support in the case of Solomon. He was once most incontrovertibly in grace. He lost that grace and sinned most grievously against God. He was found in this state in his old age. He died, as far as the Scripture informs us, without repentance. Even the doubtfulness in which the bare letter of the Scripture leaves the eternal state of this man, is a blast of lightning to the syren song of "Once in grace, and still in grace;" "Once a child, and a child for ever."

I shall close these observations with the account given by Abul Farage, an Arabic writer of the thirteenth century, in his work entitled The History of the Dynasties, p. 55. "But in this Solomon transgressed, because towards the end of his life he took other women of foreign nations besides the daughter of Pharaoh; nations with whom God had forbidden the children of Israel to form matrimonial alliances; but leaning towards their gods, he worshipped their idols. In the thirty-fourth year of his reign he built a house for idols in the mount which is opposite to Jerusalem; and the length of it was one hundred cubits, its breadth fifty, and its height thirty. He made also for himself golden shields, and a brazen sea, supported on the horns of brazen oxen. God reprov'd him for his infidelity, and gave him for

**punishment in this world that he took away from his son the greater part of the kingdom. Moreover, the duration of his reign was forty years; [Arabic] and he died without repentance, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father David."**

**For other particulars relative to the different transactions of this reign, the reader is referred to the notes in the order of their occurrence; and to those treatises which have been written on the probability that Solomon did or did not repent of his idolatry: and also to the notes on Ecclesiastes, where the subject will be again reviewed.**

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