
1KINGS 3: 1 Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the LORD's house, and the wall of Jerusalem all around.

Solomon marries Pharaoh's daughter, 1Kgs 3:1, 1Kgs 3:2. He serves God, and offers a thousand burnt-offerings upon one altar, at Gibeon, 1Kgs 3:3, 1Kgs 3:4. God appears to him in a dream at Gibeon; and asks what he shall give him, 1Kgs 3:5. He asks wisdom; with which God is well pleased, and promises to give him not only that, but also riches and honor; and, if obedient, long life, 1Kgs 3:6-14. He comes back to Jerusalem; and offers burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and makes a feast for his servants, 1Kgs 3:15. His judgment between the two harlots, 1Kgs 3:16-27. He rises in the esteem of the people, 1Kgs 3:28.

Verse 1

Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh - This was no doubt a political measure in order to strengthen his kingdom, and on the same ground he continued his alliance with the king of Tyre; and these were among the most powerful of his neighbors. But should political considerations prevail over express laws of God? God had strictly forbidden his people to form alliances with heathenish women, lest they should lead their hearts away from him into idolatry. Let us hear the law: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son; for they will turn away thy son from following me, etc. Exo 34:16; Deu 7:3, Deu 7:4. Now Solomon acted in direct opposition to these laws; and perhaps in this alliance were sown those seeds of apostacy from God and goodness in which he so long lived, and in which he so awfully died.

Those who are, at all hazards, his determinate apologists, assume,

1. That Pharaoh's daughter must have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion, else Solomon would not have married her.
2. That God was not displeased with this match.
3. That the book of Song of Solomon, which is supposed to have been his epithalamium, would not have found a place in the sacred canon had the spouse, whom it all along celebrates, been at that time an idolatress.
4. That it is certain we nowhere in Scripture find Solomon blamed for this match. See Dodd.

Now to all this I answer,

1. We have no evidence that the daughter of Pharaoh was a proselyte, no more than that her father was a true believer. It is no more likely that he sought a proselyte here than that he sought them among the Moabites, Hittites, etc., from whom he took many wives.
2. If God's law be positively against such matches, he could not possibly be pleased with this breach of it in Solomon; but his law is positively against them, therefore he was not pleased.
3. That the book of Song of Solomon being found in the sacred canon is, according to some critics, neither a proof that the marriage pleased God, nor that the book was written by Divine inspiration;

much less that it celebrates the love between Christ and his Church, or is at all profitable for doctrine, for reproof, or for edification in righteousness.

4. That Solomon is most expressly reprov'd in Scripture for this very match, is to me very evident from the following passages: Did Not Solomon, king of Israel, Sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin; Neh 13:26. Now it is certain that Pharaoh's daughter was an outlandish woman; and although it be not expressly said that Pharaoh's daughter is here intended, yet there is all reasonable evidence that she is included; and, indeed, the words seem to intimate that she is especially referred to. In 1Kgs 3:3 it is said, Solomon Loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David; and Nehemiah says, Did not Solomon, king of Israel, Sin By These Things, who Was Beloved of His God; referring, most probably, to this early part of Solomon's history. But supposing that this is not sufficient evidence that this match is spoken against in Scripture, let us turn to 1Kgs 11:1, 1Kgs 11:2, of this book, where the cause of Solomon's apostasy is assigned; and there we read, But King Solomon loved many Strange Women, Together with the Daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites: of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in unto them; neither shall they come in unto you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon Clave unto These in Love. Here the marriage with Pharaoh's daughter is classed most positively with the most exceptionable of his matrimonial and concubinal alliances: as it no doubt had its predisposing share in an apostacy the most unprecedented and disgraceful.

Should I even be singular, I cannot help thinking that the reign of Solomon began rather inauspiciously: even a brother's blood must be shed to cause him to sit securely on his throne, and a most reprehensible alliance, the forerunner of many others of a similar nature, was formed for the same purpose. But we must ever be careful to distinguish between what God has commanded to be done, and what was done through the vile passions and foolish jealousies of men. Solomon had many advantages, and no man ever made a worse use of them.

1KINGS 3: 2 Only the people sacrificed in the high places, because there was no house built for the LORD's name until those days.

Verse 2

The people sacrificed in high places - Could there be any sin in this, or was it unlawful till after the temple was built? for prophets, judges, the kings which preceded Solomon, and Solomon himself, sacrificed on high places, such as Gibeon, Gilgal, Shiloh, Hebron, Kirjath-jearim, etc. But after the temple was erected, it was sinful to offer sacrifices in any other place; yet here it is introduced as being morally wrong, and it is introduced, 1Kgs 3:3, as being an exceptionable trait in the character of Solomon. The explanation appears to be this: as the ark and tabernacle were still in being, it was not right to offer sacrifices but where they were; and wherever they were, whether on a high place or a plain, there sacrifices might be lawfully offered, previously to the building of the temple. And the tabernacle was now at Gibeon, 2Chr 1:3. Possibly the high places may be like those among the Hindoos, large raised-up terraces, on which they place their gods when they bathe, anoint, and worship them. Juggernaut and Krishnu have large terraces or high places, on which they are annually exhibited. But there was no idol in the above case.

1KINGS 3: 3 Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

1KINGS 3: 4 The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place. Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

1KINGS 3: 5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I shall give you."

Verse 5

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream - This was the night after he had offered the sacrifices, (see 2Chr 1:7), and probably after he had earnestly prayed for wisdom; see Wis. 7:7: Wherefore I prayed, and understanding was given me: I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. If this were the case, the dream might have been the consequence of his earnest prayer for wisdom: the images of those things which occupy the mind during the day are most likely to recur during the night; and this, indeed, is the origin of the greater part of our dreams. But this appears to have been supernatural.

Gregory Nyssen, speaking of different kinds of dreams, observes that our organs and brain are not unlike a musical instrument; while the strings of such instruments have their proper degree of tension, they give, when touched, a harmonious sound, but as soon as they are relaxed or screwed down, they give no sound at all. During our waking hours, our senses, touched by our reason, produce the most harmonious concert; but as soon as we are asleep, the instrument is no longer capable of emitting any sound, unless it happen that the remembrance of what passed during the day returns and presents itself to the mind while we are asleep, and so forms a dream; just as the strings of an instrument continue to emit feeble sounds for some time after the musician has ceased to strike them. - See Greg. Nyss. *De opificio hominis*, cap. xii., p. 77. *Oper. vol. i., edit. Morell., Par. 1638.*

This may account, in some measure, for common dreams: but even suppose we should not allow that Solomon had been the day before earnestly requesting the gift of wisdom from God, yet we might grant that such a dream as this might be produced by the immediate influence of God upon the soul. And if Solomon received his wisdom by immediate inspiration from heaven, this was the kind of dream that he had; a dream by which that wisdom was actually communicated. But probably we need not carry this matter so much into miracle: God might be the author of his extraordinary wisdom, as he was the author of his extraordinary riches. Some say, "He lay down as ignorant as other men, and yet arose in the morning wiser than all the children of men." I think this is as credible as that he lay down with a scanty revenue, and in the morning, when he arose, found his treasury full. In short, God's especial blessing brought him riches through the medium of his own care and industry; as the inspiration of the Almighty gave him understanding, while he gave his heart to seek and search out by his wisdom, concerning all things under the sun, Ecc 1:13. God gave him the seeds of an extraordinary understanding, and, by much study and research, they grew up under the Divine blessing, and produced a plentiful harvest; but, alas! they did not continue to grow.

1KINGS 3: 6 Solomon said, "You have shown to your servant David my father great loving kindness, according as he walked before you in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with you. You have kept for him this great loving kindness, that you have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

1KINGS 3: 7 Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king instead of David my father. I am but a little child. I don't know how to go out or come in.

Verse 7

I know not how to go out or come in - I am just like an infant learning to walk alone, and can neither go out nor come in without help.

1KINGS 3: 8 Your servant is in the midst of your people which you have chosen, a great people, that can't be numbered nor counted for multitude.

1KINGS 3: 9 Give your servant therefore an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this your great people?"

Verse 9

Give - an understanding heart to judge thy people - He did not ask wisdom in general, but the true science of government. This wisdom he sought, and this wisdom he obtained.

1KINGS 3: 10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

1KINGS 3: 11 God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself long life, neither have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice;

1KINGS 3: 12 behold, I have done according to your word. Behold, I have given you a wise and an understanding heart; so that there has been no one like you before you, neither after you shall any arise like you.

Verse 12

I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart - I have given thee a capacious mind, one capable of knowing much: make a proper use of thy powers, under the direction of my Spirit, and thou shalt excel in wisdom all that have gone before thee; neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. But, query, Was not all this conditional? If he should walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and commandments, 1Kgs 3:14. Was it not to depend upon his proper use of initiatory inspirations? Did he ever receive all this wisdom? Did not his unfaithfulness prevent the fulfillment of the Divine purpose? Instead of being the wisest of men, did he not become more brutish than any man? Did he not even lose the knowledge of his Creator, and worship the abominations of the Moabites, Zidonians, etc., etc.! And was not such idolatry a proof of the grossest stupidity? How few proofs

does his life give that the gracious purpose of God was fulfilled in him! He received much; but he would have received much more, had he been faithful to the grace given. No character in the sacred writings disappoints us more than the character of Solomon.

None like thee before thee - That is, no king, either in Israel or among the nations, as the following verse explains.

1KINGS 3: 13 I have also given you that which you have not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like you, all your days.

1KINGS 3: 14 If you will walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

1KINGS 3: 15 Solomon awoke; and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

1KINGS 3: 16 Then two women who were prostitutes came to the king, and stood before him.

Verse 16

Then came there two women - harlots - The word זונות zonoth, which we here, and in some other places, improperly translate harlots, is by the Chaldee (the best judge in this case) rendered פונדקין pundekayan, tavern-keepers. (See on Jos 2:1 (note)). If these had been harlots, it is not likely they would have dared to appear before Solomon; and if they had been common women, it is not likely they would have had children; nor is it likely that such persons would have been permitted under the reign of David. Though there is no mention of their husbands, it is probable they might have been at this time in other parts, following their necessary occupations; and the settling the present business could not have been delayed till their return; the appeal to justice must be made immediately.

1KINGS 3: 17 The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house. I delivered a child with her in the house.

1KINGS 3: 18 The third day after I delivered, this woman delivered also. We were together. There was no stranger with us in the house, just us two in the house.

1KINGS 3: 19 This woman's child died in the night, because she lay on it.

1KINGS 3: 20 She arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while your handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.

1KINGS 3: 21 When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, it was dead; but when I had looked at it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, whom I bore."

1KINGS 3: 22 The other woman said, "No; but the living is my son, and the dead is your son."

This said, "No; but the dead is your son, and the living is my son." Thus they spoke before the king.

1KINGS 3: 23 Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son who lives, and your son is the dead;' and the other says, 'No; but your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.'"

1KINGS 3: 24 The king said, "Get me a sword." They brought a sword before the king.

1KINGS 3: 25 The king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other."

Verse 25

Divide the living child in two - This was apparently a very strange decision, and such as nothing could vindicate had it been carried into execution; but Solomon saw that the only way to find out the real mother was by the affection and tenderness which she would necessarily show to her offspring. He plainly saw that the real mother would rather relinquish her claim to her child than see it hewn in pieces before her eyes, while it was probable the pretender would see this with indifference. He therefore orders such a mode of trial as would put the maternal affection of the real mother to the utmost proof; the plan was tried, and it succeeded. This was a proof of his sound judgment, penetration, and acquaintance with human nature; but surely it is not produced as a proof of extraordinary and supernatural wisdom. We have several similar decisions even among heathens.

Suetonius, in his life of the Emperor Claudius, cap. xv., whom he celebrates for his wonderful sagacity and penetration on some particular occasions, tells us, that this emperor discovered a woman to be the mother of a certain young man, whom she refused to acknowledge as her son, by commanding her to marry him, the proofs being doubtful on both sides; for, rather than commit this incest, she confessed the truth. His words are: *Feminam, non agnoscentem filium suum, dubia utrinque argumentorum fide, ad confessionem compulit, indicto matrimonio juvenis.*

Ariopharnes, king of Thrace, being appointed to decide between three young men, who each professed to be the son of the deceased king of the Cimmerians, and claimed the crown in consequence, found out the real son by commanding each to shoot an arrow into the body of the dead king: two of them did this without hesitation, the third refused, and was therefore judged by Ariopharnes to be the real son of the deceased. Grotius, on this place, quotes this relation from Diodorus Siculus; I quote this on his authority, but have not been able to find the place in Diodorus. This is a parallel case to that in the text; a covert appeal was made to the principle of affection; and the truth was discovered, as in the case of the mother of the living child.

1KINGS 3: 26 Then the woman whose the living child was spoke to the king, for her heart yearned over her son, and she said, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and in no way kill it!" But the other said, "It shall be neither mine nor yours. Divide it."

1KINGS 3: 27 Then the king answered, "Give her the living child, and in no way kill it. She is its mother."

1KINGS 3: 28 All Israel heard of the judgement which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do justice.

Verse 28

They feared the king - This decision proved that they could not impose upon him; and they were afraid to do those things which might bring them before his judgment-seat.

They saw that the wisdom of God was in him - They perceived that he was taught of God, judged impartially, and could not be deceived. What was done to the other woman we are not told; justice certainly required that she should be punished for her lies and fraud.