

Mammon

By Pastor Greg
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1 Kings 11-1-10

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When God was about to bring the nation of Israel into the Promised Land, He warned ¹² *“Be very careful never to make a treaty with the people who live in the land where you are going. If you do, you will follow their evil ways and be trapped. ¹³ Instead, you must break down their pagan altars, smash their sacred pillars, and cut down their Asherah poles. ¹⁴ You must worship no other gods, for the Lord, whose very name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you. ¹⁵ “You must not make a treaty of any kind with the people living in the land. They lust after their gods, offering sacrifices to them. They will invite you to join them in their sacrificial meals, and you will go with them. ¹⁶ Then you will accept their daughters, who sacrifice to other gods, as wives for your sons. And they will seduce your sons to commit adultery against me by worshiping other gods (Exodus 34:12-16). ¹ But in spite of this command, this warning, Solomon does exactly the opposite. Listen one more time to what happens to Solomon late in his life (**read 1 Kings 11:1-10**).*

Do you see what it says in verse 9? It says that God became angry at Solomon because he allowed these foreign women to influence his relationship with God. And there is a lesson here that all of us must not miss. God was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away. I think He becomes just as angry with us when we do the same.

Solomon, in his younger years, was very devoted to God. The scriptures say he spent a lot of time at the Temple sacrificing and praying to God. But later in life he spent too much time with women who worshiped disgusting gods like Molech, Ashtoreth, and Chemosh. People who worshiped these gods made their children pass through fire, participated in public displays of sex, or sacrificed a human upon a stone altar. That’s why God said “Don’t associate with them at all. And wipe them out when you conquer them. They’re immorality is disgusting.” But Israel didn’t

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

listen. And neither did King Solomon. He builds these places of idol worship within plain sight of the Temple to God. As a matter of fact, those Asherah Poles were still around when Josiah became king 375 years later.

Now I know that you're probably thinking "Hey, this is Old Testament stuff". We're much more civilized now. Today we have laws and regulations that would keep human sacrifice from happening. But even though we may not worship other gods in the same WAY, I think the attitude can still be found today.

Jesus warns us about that attitude when He says, "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*"² (Matthew 6:24) Most Bibles will end this verse with the word *Money*, but money is not the only thing that draws our attention away from God. Jesus, by using the Aramaic word *Mammon*, literally means that you cannot serve God when there is something else you treasure more.

I could preach to you about the dangers of combining your Christian beliefs with the beliefs & practices of other world religions (which is exactly what the Emergent Church is encouraging). But I think most of us get the lesson from Solomon's life. Even the wisest man alive couldn't keep his heart from being swayed. It's true, we eventually end up picking up the traits and habits of those we spend the most time with. But see God was angry that Solomon's heart had been swayed, which leads me to believe that anything you and I may do that moves God from the center of our life will make Him just as angry with us.

A Christian should not worship Christ and Buddha. A Christian should place God first in their lives. These are statements most Christians are eager to accept. But see, these do not get to the heart of the matter. Solomon's problem was not that he married foreign wives. It was that they enticed him to turn his back upon God. God was no longer the sole passion of his life. When he was younger, Solomon approached God desiring a relationship with Him, and God lovingly returns the affection. "I will be your God and upon you I will pour out my love" says God. So when Solomon has an affair with these other religions, when he ran off to worship

²*The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mt 6:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

the moon and stars instead of the One who made the moon & stars, Solomon treated God like garbage. He literally played the harlot. And today, things are no different. I could name way too many things that receive our worship and attention besides God; things that demonstrate the real passion of our hearts.

What I'm about to tell you usually makes most Christians roll their eyes and shake their heads. Most Christians think I'm being unreasonable. But I really think this is the attitude God is looking for in us. A Christian does not have the right attitude about God until they are willing to forfeit anything that takes them away from God. And I mean anything. Money, wealth, power, family, health, music, career, you name it. If these things stand between you and God, then God demands that you let them go.

"Oh, God won't mind", we say. "He is a loving God. He'll forgive me. It's the last game of the World Series! He understands." No, I don't think He does. How could a Christian, who fully understands all that God has done for them, treat Him like rubbish? Would we really forfeit time with the Creator of the Universe for a Baseball game?

Well, I can hear the excuses already. I hear them all the time. "Do you mean I'm not supposed to watch baseball? Are you telling me I can't listen to my music? So, I'm not supposed to play my XBOX anymore?" Hey, if these things have come between you and God then yes, you need to put them in their place. Jesus says that we cannot serve two masters. God is very angry when we allow something to turn our hearts away from Him.

Please don't get me wrong. I'm not getting all legalistic on you. By all means, watch the Phillies win the World Series. I attend Hockey games. I watch movies. I listen to music. I read books. I attend the local health club. But I must be certain that they don't become my *Mammon*. I must be certain that they do not replace my time with God. I must take care lest I find myself spending more time on Facebook than I do reading God's word. Because if I do, it will damage my relationship with God, and I don't want that to happen to me, nor do I want that to happen to you.