

purser days his pomp and ostentation are evident; and now, with a blindness of spiritual vision profoundly sad, he concludes that his superiority over all monarchs is not fully won till he exceeds them in armies, horses, and wives, as well as in wisdom. The adoption of the pagan worship of his princesses was naturally the next step; but it is hardly likely that he neglected the temple of Jehovah on Mount Moriah when he erected temples to false deities on Mount Olivet. Rather does the whole transaction bristle with heedless boastfulness. He who has more silver and gold and splendor, more horses and tributary kings, more wisdom and fame, than any sovereign on earth, why should he not have more wives and gods too? Seeking many things, he missed the "better part."

Verse 4. When Solomon was old. "Toward the close of his life." He died at sixty; so we may fancy this note of age to be about fifty-five or fifty. **His wives turned away his heart after other gods.** This reference to the old age of Solomon has to do with his tolerance of idolatry rather than with his polygamy, which was indulged in on a magnificent scale throughout his royal career. Notice that it was his "heart" that was "turned away"—not his personal habits of worship. It is nowhere said that he "served" other gods, as many of his descendants did. His sin, bad as it was, is never spoken of as being thoroughly vile, like "the sin of Jeroboam." Now, Jeroboam did not turn away from Jehovah; his sin consisted in leading his kingdom into schism; and if Solomon had committed personal idolatry, surely such iniquity should have been ranked even greater than that of Jeroboam. (1) *Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.* **His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God.** This seems more profoundly sad when we remember what he had said to his people at the dedication of the temple: "Let your heart be perfect with the Lord your God." **The heart of David his father** was a turbulent heart. It swelled with wrath at Nabal's crustiness, and led David close to violent bloodshed. It was an easy prey to Bathsheba's beauty, and made David an adulterer and a murderer. It waxed weakly fond of beautiful children, and turned David into a criminally indulgent parent. It puffed up with pride over noble conquests, and tempted David toward the sordid ideals of Alexander and Napoleon. So that, judged by Christian standards, even by high Mosaic standards, the heart of David was wayward, infirm, and on occasion impure. But there was one principle to which David was ever true. Never for an instant did he forget that he stood in this world to champion the cause of Jehovah, to confirm Jehovah's laws, to exalt Jehovah's worship, to increase the territory of Jehovah's cult. To this one great ideal he was ever true. In religious loyalty he never wavered. In the championship of Jehovah he was never infirm. In thoughts of God he was never impure. Sins he committed; but he bitterly repented them, and with tears returned to Jehovah, crying, "Against thee, and thee only have I sinned." In affectional purpose his heart was perfect.

5. Solomon went after. That is, he regarded the idolatries mentioned with approval, and encouraged them. **Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians.** The Zidonians are the Phoenicians, for Zidon was one of the leading cities of Phœnicia, and in Greek and Latin writings Phœnicians often bear this name. An inscription discovered in the ruins of Zidon in 1855 refers to a temple of Ashtoreth which stood there. This goddess was matched with Baal in worship, and was sometimes adored as the planet Venus, sometimes as the moon, sometimes in forms of carved wood; but always she was the embodiment of the productive power in nature, and the rites of her worship were impure. **Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.** "Abomination" here means the hateful, detestable idol. It is probable that Milcom is the same as Molech. If so, he was the fire god, and was worshiped by the sacrifice of children, though that horrid crime is not mentioned as having been wrought in Judah before the days of Ahab.

6. This verse, which is a repetition of the latter part of verse 4, seems to preclude the thought that Solomon ever became an idolater in practice. **He went not fully** in the right way; he tolerated and favored idolatries, a course that was irreconcilable with true fidelity to the Lord; but he never discarded the worship of Jehovah. To the end of his reign he would seem to have offered his solemn sacrifices on the great altar floor a year. When kings served false gods the Bible directly says so, as, for instance, in 1 Kings 16, 31; 22, 53; 2 Kings 16, 3. What Solomon did was to indulge and patronize the idolatries of his wives. It may be worth while to notice in passing that every one of these was a daughter of a king, with royal assumption, accustomed to have her own way; and among seven hundred it would not be strange if he found one or two as managing and masterful as himself. So that Solomon's sin, in the last analysis, was weak consent of the sins of others—a disposition to take the easier course rather than the right course. (2) *Jehovah will be all in all, or nothing, and Solomon's worship of him was worse than thrown away.* (3) *Idolatry in its last analysis is devotion to something else than God.*

7. A high place. Ancient altars were often erected on top of pyramidal piles, each a sort of four-square staircase; and temples nearly always stood on hillsides. Like the modern