

and must mean "toward the close of his life" *i. e.* when he was about 50 or 55. (Hammond). He should then have been in his mental and spiritual prime. The expressions "his heart was not perfect," and "he went not fully" (verse 6) are inconsistent with the idea of absolute heathenism. Yet the facts point to something more serious than weak permission of the foreign worship of his wives. They "turned away *his heart*," his affections were to some extent enlisted in the false worship. The language of the verse indicates, not that Solomon forsook for himself the worship of Jehovah, but that he was less earnest about it, and allowed side by side with it the temples of heathen gods to be erected, and their worship to be something more than tolerated, even perhaps to be abundantly supported from his means. (Lumby). The distinction, so far as *sin* is concerned, between this and actual idolatry, is a very fine one. It is not implied, however, that Solomon ever discarded the worship of Jehovah. To the end of his reign he would seem to have offered his solemn sacrifices on the great altar thrice a year. But his heart was elsewhere and he was trying to serve two masters (Matt. 6: 24; Josh. 24: 15). (Hammond). David sinned grievously but he served God sincerely with all his heart (ch. 8: 61; 9: 4). Doubtless Solomon's large harem was the result of political alliances to a large extent. It was also in conformity with oriental ideas of regal establishments. But the plain-spoken inspired historian tells us that Solomon "clave unto these in love" (verse 2).

5. For Sol'o-mon went after Ash'toreth, the goddess of the Zi-do'-ni-ans, and after Mil'com the abomination of the Am'mon-ites—Ashtoreth is the same as Astarte, Aphrodite or Venus. Her rites were exceedingly impure. She represented the female sex and her symbol was the evening star, or the crescent moon in some places. Why Ashtoreth is here named "goddess" while the other deities are called "abominations" may be due to the greater intercourse between Sidon and the Holy Land than existed with other countries. The Phœnician workmen at the temple had perhaps caused the Israelites to become more accustomed to the name and worship of their deity; or perhaps because human sacrifices were not offered to her as to the others. (Lumby). Sidon was twenty

miles north of Tyre. Mil'com was the same as Mo'lech and Malcham (Zeph. 1: 5) *i. e.* "king," he was the god of fire and was worshipped with human sacrifices. There are numerous allusions in the Old Testament to the worship of this god, the phrase most common being "to make their children to pass through the fire to Molech" (2 Kings 23: 10, 13; 2 Chr. 18: 3; Jer. 7: 31; Lev. 20: 1-5; Jer. 7: 31). The tradition is that the statue of Molech was of brass with an ox's head, and the hands so arranged that the victim slipped from them into a fire which burned underneath. The Am'monites were descendants of Lot and dwelt on the east of the Dead Sea between the Ar'non and the Jab'bok.

6. And Sol'o-mon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father—"Did evil in the sight of the Lord" is the standing expression for "favored idol-worship" (Judges 2: 11; 3: 7, &c. Contrast Num. 32: 11, 12). To recognize idolatry and superstition by gifts and donations, by attendance at its services, or in any other way, is a sin against God (2 Cor. 6: 16, 17; 1 Cor. 10: 20, 21). David's sin was more directly against man, indirectly against God. But the sin of Solomon was against God directly. (Macdonald). The causes which led to Solomon's downfall were doubtless, the long peace, broken neither by war or other calamity, the great wealth, the extensive trade, the abundance by these means, of all objects of luxury possible and the voluptuous court life in consequence. All these conspired to bring about a general moral relaxation in the midst of which the heathen favorites of the harem could carry out their designs without opposition. (Baehr).

7. Then did Sol'o-mon build an high place for Che'mosh, the abomination of Mo'ab, in the hill that is before Je-ru'-sa-lem; and for Mo'lech, the abomination of the children of Am'mon—The tops of hills were originally favorite places for religious worship, hence a temple anywhere came to be called "a high place." Up to Solomon's time the worship of God at "high places" does not seem to have been condemned, because the central place of sacrifice had not yet been set apart (ch. 3: 2; 1 Sam. 9: 12; Gen. 12: 8). But inasmuch as such altars were stepping stones to idolatry, the Mosaic