

## The Man Who Missed Christ



David Wilkerson February 1, 1984

I want to show you the most tragic man in history. He is not Judas; he is not Herod; he is not even a hater of God. He was a son of David, a king in Jerusalem, and in type the saddest, most pathetic man on earth.

Please hear me out when I tell you that an Old Testament king, years before Bethlehem and Calvary, missed Christ. How can a man miss Christ, centuries before He was born?

Christ is revealed all through the Old Testament. In fact, that is the prime reason for its being given — it points us to Christ. It was on the road to Emmaus that Christ revealed to two of His disciples the truth about Himself in the Old Testament: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself..." (Luke 24:27).

From His own lips Christ declared He was to be found from Moses right through the prophets. The children of Israel "did eat the same spiritual food, and they drank the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:3,4). Christ, the Rock, was in the wilderness. He followed them, and they ate and drank His spiritual food.

Solomon also drank Christ's spiritual drink and ate His spiritual food. For a time this king brought his Beloved into his chambers and rejoiced in His love. Solomon had been to the Lord's banqueting house. He sat under His banner of love. He had great wisdom, and in his spirit he touched the Rose of Sharon and saw the Lily of the Valley. He sat down under His shadow with great delight. He felt Christ's hand under his head, and His right hand embraced him. His greatest delight had been the very sound of His voice.

But there came a time the Beloved's voice was heard to say, "Solomon, my beloved...rise up, my love, my friend, my fair one, and come away..." (Song of Solomon 2:10). There is no mistaking the message. I see it so clearly! Solomon was hearing the high calling of God in Christ. A call to satisfy his soul with nothing but that spiritual drink, that spiritual bread. It was a call to go beyond wisdom to rapture, to behold the lover of his soul and be transformed in the inner man.

It was a call to rid his vineyard of every little fox that was spoiling his vines. It was a call to reach out into the deep, to spiritual green pastures of divine revelation and behold a Lord high and lifted up. He was called to a feeding ground among the lilies (Song of Solomon 2:16). Solomon was told, "Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young deer upon the mountains..." (2:17). Come and pant after the Beloved as the deer pants for water on Mt. Bether.

Does Solomon hear God calling him to a life of absolute devotion and separation? Will he rise, shake himself, and forsake all that binds him to earthly things, and escape to the mountain with God? Will he answer the high calling and "come away"? Twice the call came — "Arise and come with me."

Will Solomon turn away from the queen of Sheba and sit at the feet of his Beloved? Will he forsake all the good things God gave him — the applause, the center stage, the pomp, the wealth — and consider it all as vanity and vexation? Will he answer the high call and seek Him whom his soul loved? Will he recognize that even good things

can dim our vision of Him?

Is Solomon's heart truly ravished with his Beloved? Will he stay up through the night yearning after Him? Will he get himself to the mountain to answer the high call?

There is a problem! Solomon is a man full of lust! This man of God had a controversy raging in his soul. He had a thousand little foxes in his vine, eating away all the fruit — seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines: "But King Solomon loved many strange women...of the nations which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them...for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love" (1 Kings 11:1,2).

God will not be mocked. No matter that this man of God was the most gifted on earth — he was trying to have the best of two worlds. He would have his beloved Lord — and his little foxes. But sin always finds us out. "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...And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord..." (1 Kings 11:4,6).

There it is, in all its ugliness. The Beloved said, "Come away." and Solomon "...went not fully after him."

Let me show you what happens to the man who misses the high calling of God in Christ Jesus! These vivid lessons should shake us to the spiritual bone and marrow. God is saying something to us in this tragedy. Watch the steady downward steps of a man who surrenders to the flesh.

#### 1. God Stirred His Adversaries Against Him!

"And the Lord was angry with Solomon — because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which appeared unto him twice...(1 Kings 11:9). He had jeopardized everything he had. God was now his adversary. The kingdom would slowly be rent from him and given to another. God in essence told him, "I will not take it all away, but you will be just a shadow of what you once were. People will not see any difference outwardly. You will go your way with the outward shell intact, but inwardly, you will slowly disintegrate. You will know I am no longer working with you. You are on your own. You have lost the anointing because of sin."

God lifted his hand from Solomon — and from that day on the hedge was down, and God stirred up enemies to harass him. "And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite" (1 Kings 11:14). Again in verse 23, "And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Elladah."

It is tragic to mistake Judgment on sin and chastisement for the work of Satan — if God is behind it. God still loved this man, and He Himself stirred up these enemies. Satan may have been the tool, but God was the moving force behind it all. God hoped to bring Solomon to his senses and restore him to fellowship and communion.

King Hadad woke up one day with a vendetta in his heart against Solomon, perhaps even surprised by his sudden urge to make things difficult for him. His thoughts must have run something like this: "Who does this man think he is — aiming to be such a great man of God, living in splendor, people flocking to hear his wisdom, bringing him their gifts, treating him like a god! Let's go after him, expose him, find his weakness!"

For years Rezon dared not lift a voice against Solomon. But on a certain day his spirit was strangely stirred. He called his counselors and they, too, were stirred against him. "Why, he's no man of God," they said; "he's a politician. He has the ear of the queen of Sheba; world leaders receive him and hear his counsel. Let us stir up trouble and make things hard on him. He is now our main target. Let's try to bring him down!"

The worst blow came from Solomon's own household when Jeroboam, the son of a servant, "lifted up his hand against the king" (1 Kings 11:26). Solomon had grown to love him, making him his trusted associate. He was put in charge over the house of Joseph. But the young man stabbed him in the back, so to speak. He rebelled and turned on his benefactor, Solomon. Now Solomon had enemies within as well as without.

Please understand, it is possible to suffer for righteousness. It is possible to be persecuted for Christ's sake, to preach the gospel so powerfully all hell is engaged to shut it down. But much of what we are seeing today is the work of God — and it is being attributed to Satan.

If God's men won't humble themselves and forsake the flesh and the world, they need adversaries to wake them

up. If God's men will not lay aside politics and get back to preaching Christ, if they will not allow the Holy Spirit to humble and purge them — God has every right to stir up their enemies.

This was God's man we are talking about. The Lord had appeared to him twice. He was mightily anointed. But Solomon had to deal with God — not Satan! It is not nearly as fearful to fall into the hands of the devil as it is to fall into the hands of an angry God. And God was angry with Solomon.

We are so blind. We cannot recognize God at work, rending the kingdom from the disobedient and the proud, using adversaries to bring men of God to their spiritual senses; putting a stop to sensuality and compromise in the ministry; chastising those who have turned a deaf ear to the high calling of God in Christ for repentance and holiness.

You may know of some righteous servant of God under great persecution, and you have the witness that Satan is behind it. This man is not seeking the spotlight. He is shut in with God and his message shows it. He is totally devoted to Christ and he lives a humble, spotless life before the world. You hear his awakened voice calling for repentance. He lovingly presents the demands of the gospel, and he stirs up the enemy's nest. Satan goes after him physically, mentally, and with every device in his arsenal. The press crucifies him; preachers laugh and ridicule. But that man knows he is pure and clear in God's eyes — and you know it. He needs our prayers and support. The Lord will bring him out to higher ground.

But here is another man of God, under severe fire and persecution. The press holds him up to public ridicule. His lavish lifestyle is paraded before the world. It seems like a conspiracy to bring him down and end his ministry. One enemy lays off, and another is raised up. He is accused, maligned, and misquoted. So the man runs about looking for sympathy and love. The applause from friends keeps him temporarily encouraged. Yet deep in his heart there is a suspicion that God is behind it all. Somewhere, this man missed it. He got too busy, too famous, too self-centered to answer the high call of God to go deeper in Christ. And all truly discerning overcomers can sense it. They know God is trying to bring him back to his spiritual roots.

If I am being harassed by ungodly enemies, I had better find out who sent them: God, or Satan? And if there is sin in my life, I know where these enemies come from! I don't need to send out any mail asking for money to help fight the devil. I dare not tell people the devil is mad at me if it's been God who is angry all the while.

2. Another Step Downward — the Loss of the Beloved's Presence.

Listen to this pitiful cry — "I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer" (Song of Solomon 5:6).

You begin to feel sorry for this man, because he still hungers for the intimacy he once knew, but he is not willing to pay the price to be restored. He is on one side still playing with the little foxes, still lusting — but on the other side, he wants to continue enjoying the presence of the Beloved. He comes stumbling out of his royal brothel, drunk on the forbidden wine of lust, and he goes out seeking the Beloved. "Whither has he gone? If you find my beloved, tell him I am heartsick for him..." But the substance is not there. It is now a shadow, a memory — on the other side of the window, beyond the lattice.

The Beloved will not be intimate with an unfaithful lover. No wonder Solomon lost the vision of his Beloved. No wonder the Lord did not answer when he called. No wonder loneliness and despair had set in. He was lost to his lust! Through tears of sorrow and awful foreboding, Solomon was drawn back to his sin, time and again. He was torn between two loves. It was indulge, repent, indulge, cry, indulge, regret. indulge, hunger for God, indulge, pray. But always the flesh prevailed.

I see Christians who have missed the high calling of God in Christ because of lust and sin, and inevitably they are remorseful. The joy of the Lord is gone from them. Where once they spoke boldly, they now ask questions. They talk about their spiritual hunger, their need to know Christ better, but there is more shadow than substance to it. You can see that wistful look which says, "Yes, I really do love Him — need Him — but I just can't break this thing that has a hold on me! They can't look you in the eye.

I can think of nothing worse on earth than to lose the sense of Christ's presence. We look back on this sad picture of Solomon and wonder how such a blessed and gifted man could trade his good name, his place in history, his kingdom, and his place in God — for the right to indulge his uncontrollable passions.

Is this the same man who once stood before Israel and admonished, "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee...who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart...who shuts the heavens when thy people sin against thee...And when a man shall know the plague of his own heart, and shall call on the Lord...he will forgive...If a man sins and God is angry...if he return with all his heart and soul...God will hear and forgive...Then the Lord will never forsake or leave him, but will maintain the cause of his servant." (1 Kings 8).

What a powerful preacher Solomon once was! What marvelous light flooded his soul. But he had missed the high calling. He had chosen not to pursue the heart of his Beloved, in order to chase after pleasure. In his final days, he went about warning the young, "Remember the Lord while you are young, for the day will come when you will find no more pleasure in anything" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

3. Finally — Solomon Was Left With Nothing But Empty Dreams.

Having turned away from a heavenly vision, he became absorbed with an earthly one. Solomon became a builder, spending most of his time with architects and contractors. To the carnal mind, he was a man of great vision and daring — adventuresome spirit doing big things. His projects were mind-boggling. The man who had no time to "come away" with the Beloved, found the time to "build me great works" (Ecclesiastes 2:4).

Solomon was gripped with a passion to build magnificent buildings, pools, vineyards, gardens, and orchards. He built the greatest temple in the world. He spent 13 years building himself a magnificent palace. He designed a most unusual summer house in the forests of Lebanon. He constructed a hall of judgment, fortresses, stone cities, chariot-towns, and built new cities in distant lands. Six miles east of Jerusalem, at Ain Karim, he designed and planted great gardens and orchards and magnificent parks. He built reservoirs, pools, and aqueducts to carry water to Jerusalem and his sprawling nurseries.

The king became a cattleman, breeding great herds of cattle, sheep, oxen, and exotic horses. He had 1400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen. Josephus said his chariot drivers had long, flowing hair powdered with gold dust and wore tunics of Tyrian purple.

Solomon built a navy. He dabbled in gold, ivory, silver, fine cloths, lumber, spices, peacocks, and other exotic animals. He built himself a great throne of ivory and covered it with gold. His drinking cups were gold. There was such affluence no one kept account. He lavished jewelry on guests and wives. He hosted great banquets featuring his own private choirs and orchestras. He delighted his guests with music, wine, and dancing.

The queen of Sheba was left breathless when she beheld Solomon's royal cavalcade in all its magnificent splendor. His golden chariots, his huge contingent of bodyguards, cavalymen and attendants — what a sight as they headed for one of Solomon's "paradises".

But what the queen of Sheba did not know was that Solomon was to become the loneliest, most disillusioned man in the kingdom. He was only going through the motions toward the end. Each new building project, each new acquisition, left him all the more inwardly shattered and disenchanted. His success in the natural realm made him self-reliant, a man of determination. He was so buoyed by his visible success and possessions, he disregarded his spiritual decline. He felt self-confident and superior in himself when he surveyed his empire and sensed no need to examine himself. His influence and holdings emboldened him to chart his own course, listen to no counsel, and follow his dreams.

When visible things are the attraction and center of attention, the heart grows cold. Solomon backslid and became a slave to the visible. For a short while he enjoyed his projects. He could say, "My heart rejoiced in all my labor" (Ecclesiastes 2:10). But before long we hear him confessing, "Then I looked on all the work that my hands had wrought, and all I had accomplished: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun...Therefore I hated life...the work that I did became a grief to me...I was left in despair" (Ecclesiastes 2:11–20).

How very sad! He was admired as a man of vision and drive. But little did the crowds know he was a deeply troubled man. He surveyed all his projects and it made him sick! In essence, he said, "What a waste! What good are all these material things? They have brought me no happiness!"

I have been there, in small measure. I know that sinking feeling, that sense of futility. I have planned and schemed and built — spending weeks on building projects, pouring over plans, telling myself I was doing it all "to the glory of

God." I was building for Jesus — or so I told others. But none of it brought me happiness, but rather depressed me in the end. I used to think, "I'm so sick of buildings — so tired of raising money. I wish someone would come along and take it all over." Then one day I heard the high calling of God to go deeper in Christ. It was only then I realized I was engaged in all that busy activity because I was losing touch with my Beloved.

I had to give it all up. I couldn't spend my time any longer on such empty dreams. My dream ranch had to go. My dream Bible school had to go. My Black Angus herd had to go. I heard God calling me, loud and clear — "David, you've been going the wrong way. Come away with Me. Meet Me on the mountain. Come to the valley of the lilies. Come discover the Rose of Sharon. Come, embrace Me, and I will satisfy you with spiritual life, peace, and joy."

Look at everything Solomon built, and you will discover he tried to recreate materially what he lost spiritually.

- Aqueducts and pools, instead of living water.
- Green pastures and cool waters at Ain Karim, instead of the Beloved's green pastures and cool waters of Psalm 23.
- A gold-plated temple in Jerusalem, instead of a spiritual temple of the Holy Ghost.
- His own cattle on a dozen hills, rather than all His cattle on a thousand hills.
- Choirs of men, rather than choirs of angels.
- A throne here, rather than a throne there.
- The chariots of Solomon, in place of the chariots of the Lord of hosts.
- A palace here, rather than a mansion there.
- Gold-paved streets in Jerusalem, rather than gold-paved streets in the New Jerusalem

Isn't it obvious that Solomon was trying to build with his hands what he had lost in his heart? Do you think that a man of God who is pursuing the Lord Jesus Christ has time to piddle with earthly dreams? The man of God should be seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, spending all his time hearing God's plans, conversing with the Almighty, so he can come down and build a spiritual house!

Why are so many sincere men of God bogged down in so many projects, massive building programs, and time consuming dreams? This is not to suggest that all building projects are vanity. I don't doubt that many of God's servants are truly interested in building only for the glory of the Lord. God has His builders and pioneers — these are the men who build only out of necessity. They deserve encouragement and support.

On the other hand, there is no doubt in my mind that a lot of the religious building and planning today is the result of men of God who have missed the high calling. They have missed the spiritual, so they turn to the material. They build with their hands, because they are stalled in their pursuit of Christ. And the busiest man lays the biggest plans — "The more parade, the less depth."

This applies not only to preachers. The man in the pew is going in the same direction. Why are Christians so enthralled with houses, lands, and prosperity? Why the pursuit of luxury, ease, and pleasure? It is because the high calling of God is being refused. Self is in control. Security and pleasure have replaced the burden of the Lord. Conclusion: Paul Was the Man Who Won Christ!

"Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

Like Solomon, Paul was visited by the Almighty twice — once on the road to Damascus, then at the house of Judas in Damascus when he received the Holy Ghost. Paul could have gone forth on the strength of those two initial visitations and traveled about, giving his supernatural testimony. How thrilling it would have been. But Paul heard God calling him to something higher. He heard the same call Solomon heard — the Beloved saying, "Come away. Come to My garden and learn of Me."

Paul ran after his Beloved to Arabia. He was mad — by all evangelical standards — to give up immediate acceptance and recognition. Souls were dying, he was anointed. Why not get quickly to the whitened harvest fields? Instead, he went into isolation, leaving all religious demands behind him. Forgetting all, he pressed now toward a prize. Christ was all! Arabia was to Paul the green pasture, the valley of lilies, a banquet hall of love, a feast of living bread — where the Rose of Sharon could be seen in full bloom, in all His glory and majesty.

Thank God, there is a stirring among God's people. His high calling is being heard by many hungry servants of the Lord. There is an urgency I find in many hearts — to get shut in with God, to go further, deeper in Christ. Dissatisfaction is bringing many to the end of themselves. I hear it everywhere I go now — "There has to be more! I want to see Jesus! I want to go out to meet Him. I want a fresh revelation of Him. I'm hungry for His fullness. I'm sick of the shallowness, the busyness, the hype, the showmanship. I want to see Jesus!"

Time is running out — the high calling will soon be heard no more. Will you "Come apart...and go out to him?" I do not want to stand before Christ's Judgment Seat and hear Him say to me, "I called, but you refused." To be judged for nonchalance, for lightness, for apathy — what a horror!

Christ must now be Lord of all, or He cannot be Lord at all!

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