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Starting Strong but Ending Wrong The Story of Solomon

I Kings 1-11

Scripture Reading – I Kings 8:54-66 & I Kings 11:1-13

-Russ Bennett-

Intro. – Charles Templeton story (first part – see attached article at end)

- A. Many's the man or woman who had a promising beginning, but squandered it – leaving behind sadness and failure. Biblical examples: Eli, King Saul, Judas, Demas

Two background notes:

- A. Solomon was King David's son by Bathsheba, one of many sons by other wives. David was a great King and loved God, but was apparently not much of a family man and his sons brought him much grief.

- B. Solomon's reign could be divided roughly in half. I Kings 9:10 (20 years)

- 1. The first 20 years were marked by wisdom, Godliness and great achievements.
- 2. But, sometime around mid-life, he went to seed (40 years, 11:42)

I. **Starting Strong:** - David's challenge to Solomon - 2:1-3

- A. God appeared to him two times.

- 1. In Gibeon - 3:5, 9&10 A joyful exchange: "*give thy servant an understanding heart*"

Riches and Honor thrown in.

- 2. After the Temple was completed. 9:2&3 "*I have heard your prayer*" (to consecrate the temple)

- B. Great Wisdom granted and he pleased God

- 1. Wrote Song of Solomon, much of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes 4:32-34

- 2. The Queen of Sheba visited and said: "*the half has not been told me.*" 10:6

- C. A great builder:

- 1. Built the Temple – took 7 years 6:38

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2. And several other important buildings 7:1,2,6,7,8b
3. Other walls at Jerusalem, other cities and a (fleet of ships 9:26)

D. God gave peace over his expanded Kingdom.

1. 4:20&24-26
2. "Solomon" means "peaceful"

BUT – with great blessing comes the opportunity for great mischief!

II. **A Solemn Warning** – I Kings 9:1-9 – Given during God's 2nd appearance

See the "if/then" conditions:

- B. 4&5 Conditions of Blessing – (Solomon had been following this path)
- C. 6&7 Conditions of Judgment – (unfortunately, this is the path he followed a short time later)

III. **An Evil End**: I Kings 11:1-13

- A. Loved many (as in 1,000) foreign women – 11:1-3
- B. (When he was old) his wives turned his heart away from God. He became an open idolater. This angered God. – 11:9&10
- C. The whole nation suffered because of Solomon's lapse of fidelity to God.
 1. The kingdom divided between Rehoboam and Jeroboam
 2. Apostasy of the Northern 10 tribes 12:28 (Carried off to Assyria)
 3. Then the apostasy of the Southern Kingdom (Deported to Babylon)
 4. The seeds of God's judgment of deportation and exile were sown in Solomon's day.

Postscript: What of Solomon's salvation? Did he forever and permanently depart from God? – Ecclesiastes – the memoirs of an old man?

- A. "Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity"
 1. A record of all his accomplishments, exploits and search for meaning in life – in the end, he said all his pursuits were a big "Zero"

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2. God had told him of the division of the Kingdom because of his infidelity to Him – 11:11&12

B. So – Did Solomon die an Apostate?

1. Quotes from John MacArthur in the intro. to Ecclesiastes
2. *Eccl 12:13&14 "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."*

What a sad way to die – he started so strong but ended so wrong. SAVED but with many REGRETS

Applications: Some national and personal warnings!

(find scripture for each)

A. National

1. A nations leadership can lead a whole nation astray
Under David's leadership – the nation worshiped his God
Under Solomon – worship of false gods was allowed to flourish
2. When a nation follows their leadership into apostasy, judgment is sure to follow.
 - a. divided kingdom
 - b. deportation
3. Denominational Apostasy

B. Personal warnings - *Jonathan Edwards said:*

"The way to Heaven is ascending, we must be content to travel uphill, though it be hard and tiresome, and contrary to the natural bias of our flesh."

1. God's plan for marriage is by far the best
One man & one woman – for a lifetime!
 - a. Ladies – you can draw your husband away from God!
 - b. Men – It is your place to be a steadfast rock for your family, leading them consistently in the ways of God!!
Poem – "The Patriarch" (see attached poem at the end)
2. A life lived pursuing interests apart from God even if you are a Christian, can bring only emptiness and regrets.

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3. Beware of Personal Apostasy!

(I have 4 warnings – if the shoe fits – wear it)

a. For the false professor. Demas -The pleasures of this world have ensnared many & thus proved the insincerity of their profession of faith. You are headed to hell! How many people do you know who have their name on a church roll, but haven't been in years?

b. If you are young and are not sold out to God – your life path will likely be only downward from here. You may acquire great possessions, but you will approach death with a sense of futility and disappointment!

c. Just because you love God and serve Him today – Don't think you have it made and coast spiritually.
2Pe 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

d. If you are in the middle of your life and find yourself drifting like Solomon, don't wait to correct your life's path. *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.. 1 Pet. 1:13-15*

Conclusion: Charles Templeton at the end. (see attached article at end)

**Men and women today are still (like Solomon)
Starting strong, but Ending Wrong!**

What about you?

The Patriarch

More noble than the valiant deeds of shining knights of yore,
More powerful than earthly plights that make the rich man poor,
More kingly than a royal throne or a lion with his pride,
Is he whose babes sleep well at night, sure Daddy will provide.

There is a spirit in this land and Jezebel's her name.
She's calling you to leave your home for power, fun, and fame.
She wants your wife, your children too — she'll never compromise,
Until your house is torn in two by listening to her lies.

But though a hundred thousand million men may fall prey to her
lures,
And wives en masse leave home in search of "more fulfilling" chores,
Though preachers praise, and friends embrace, her pagan plan of
death,
Stand strong and quit you like a man with every blessed breath.

Stand strong and rise, O man of God, to meet this noble call,
The battle is not new you see, it's been here since the Fall.

Your wife is your helpmeet, my friend, and not another man's,
So care for her and keep her far from Mistress Jezi's plans.
Protect, provide, and give to her your undivided life,
This is the dear one of your youth, your precious bride, your wife.

And rally to those tiny ones who trust you for their care —
A lifetime spent discipling them's a lifetime pure and rare.
For when they put their hand in yours and know a Daddy's love,
You're showing them a picture of the Father from above.

Look not toward worldly goal or gain, or for your liberty,
Look only into their sweet eyes to find your ministry.
Devote your heart and sacrifice and make your manly mark —
There is none so great as he who finds his call as patriarch.
—*Douglas W. Phillips*

The above poem was selected from [Poems for Patriarchs: The Verse and Prose of Christian Manhood](#).

Charles Templeton: Missing Jesus



Chuck Templeton, Torrey Johnson and Billy Graham in a publicity photo for the European trip taken in the YFC offices in Chicago. Ca. March 1946. (Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College)

Charles Templeton (1915-2001) first professed faith in 1936 and became an evangelist that same year. In 1945 he met Billy Graham and the two became friends, rooming and ministering together during a 1946 [YFC evangelistic tour in Europe](#).

But by 1948 Templeton's life and worldview were beginning to go in a different direction than Graham's. Doubts about the Christian faith were solidifying as he planned to enter Princeton Theological Seminary. Less than a decade later (1957), he would publicly declare that he had become an agnostic.

In his 1996 memoir, *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*, Templeton [recounted](#) a conversation with Graham in Montreat prior to entering seminary:

All our differences came to a head in a discussion which, better than anything I know, "explains" Billy Graham and his phenomenal success as an evangelist.

In the course of our conversation I said, "But, Billy, it's simply not possible any longer to believe, for instance, the biblical account of creation. The world was not created over a period of days a few thousand years ago; it has evolved over millions of years. It's not a matter of speculation; it's a demonstrable fact."

"I don't accept that," Billy said. "And there are reputable scholars who don't."

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"Who are these scholars?' I said. "Men in conservative Christian colleges?"

"Most of them, yes," he said. "But that is not the point. I believe the Genesis account of creation because it's in the Bible. I've discovered something in my ministry: When I take the Bible literally, when I proclaim it as the word of God, my preaching has power. When I stand on the platform and say, 'God says,' or 'The Bible says,' the Holy Spirit uses me. There are results. Wiser men than you or I have been arguing questions like this for centuries. I don't have the time or the intellect to examine all sides of the theological dispute, so I've decided once for all to stop questioning and accept the Bible as God's word."

"But Billy," I protested, "You cannot do that. You don't dare stop thinking about the most important question in life. Do it and you begin to die. It's intellectual suicide."

"I don't know about anybody else," he said, "but I've decided that that's the path for me."

Their trajectories had been chosen.

Fifty years later, Lee Strobel had an opportunity to interview Templeton, who had just a couple of more years to live. He was in his 80s and suffering from Alzheimer's, but still a clear conversation partner. In [*A Case for Faith*](#), Strobel recounts the ending of their wide-ranging conversation.

"And how do you assess this Jesus?" It seemed like the next logical question—but I wasn't ready for the response it would evoke.

Templeton's body language softened. It was as if he suddenly felt relaxed and comfortable in talking about an old and dear friend. His voice, which at times had displayed such a sharp and insistent edge, now took on a melancholy and reflective tone. His guard seemingly down, he spoke in an unhurried pace, almost nostalgically, carefully choosing his words as he talked about Jesus.

"He was," Templeton began, "the greatest human being who has ever lived. He was a moral genius. His ethical sense was unique. He was the intrinsically wisest person that I've ever encountered in my life or in my readings. His commitment was total and led to his own death, much to the detriment of the world. What could one say about him except that this was a form of greatness?"

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I was taken aback. "You sound like you really care about him," I said.

"Well, yes, he is the most important thing in my life," came his reply. "I . . . I . . . I . . .," he stuttered, searching for the right word, 'I know it may sound strange, but I have to say . . . I adore him!' . . .

" . . . Everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus. Yes . . . yes. And tough! Just look at Jesus. He castigated people. He was angry. People don't think of him that way, but they don't read the Bible. He had a righteous anger. He cared for the oppressed and exploited. There's no question that he had the highest moral standard, the least duplicity, the greatest compassion, of any human being in history. There have been many other wonderful people, but Jesus is Jesus....'

"Uh . . . but . . . no,' he said slowly, 'he's the most . . .'" He stopped, then started again. "In my view," he declared, "he is the most important human being who has ever existed."

That's when Templeton uttered the words I never expected to hear from him. "And if I may put it this way," he said as his voice began to crack, 'I . . . miss . . . him!"

With that tears flooded his eyes. He turned his head and looked downward, raising his left hand to shield his face from me. His shoulders bobbed as he wept. . . .

Templeton fought to compose himself. I could tell it wasn't like him to lose control in front of a stranger. He sighed deeply and wiped away a tear. After a few more awkward moments, he waved his hand dismissively. Finally, quietly but adamantly, he insisted: "Enough of that."



Charles Templeton: A man who professed Christ, rejected Christianity, and never found his way back.