A gold crown on a white background

Description automatically generated**Session 3**

***Trustworthy, Lecture 2***

**Topic**

**18-19 March 2024**

**Setting the Stage –** There are three peaks in the range of mountains near Jerusalem known collectively as the Mount of Olives. One is Mount Scopus, and another is the Mount of Olives (this peak has the same name as the entire range of mountains—sort of like “New York, New York”: it is understood that the first is the name of the city and the second the name of the state), which is located directly across from where Solomon’s temple stood. But the third peak is known as the Mount of Corruption because it is where Solomon built high places to worship the pagan gods of his foreign wives.

**Misplaced Affections: A Crack in the Armor –** In 1 Kings chapter 3, beginning with verse 5, the Lord appears to Solomon and asks him to name whatever he wants the Lord to give him. In his response, Solomon describes his father David as a man known for his “uprightness of heart,” but refers to himself humbly as a little child and as a servant who needs wisdom and understanding to be able to discern between good and evil, so that he will be able to govern his people well. God was very pleased with this request and promised to give Solomon wisdom and discernment unequaled by anyone else on earth, both at that time and in the future. However, in verse 3 of that same chapter, we find a statement that reveals a weakness in Solomon that will later prove to be his undoing. 1 Kings 3:3 says, “Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father, ***only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places.”***

**High Places –** “High places” are mentioned throughout the Old Testament, but we today have lost a sense of what all was associated with them. Yet if God mentions them over and over in His Word, it behooves us to understand what was wrong with “high places” so we can avoid temptation and sin in our own lives. Egyptian and Mesopotamian gods of Solomon’s day had very specific areas of power: if you had an issue in your life, then you went to the specific god or goddess who could fix that issue, be it infertility, lack of rain, illness, or whatever. The high places came to represent, not just places of worship, but the idols themselves. The high places and the idols were all about the things that people *revere* and think are *doing something good* in their lives. The danger for them and for all of us now is this: **we will *become* like what we *revere*…and that will lead either to our ruin or our restoration.** So it is crucial where we place our reverence and our affections.

**Another Mountain –** The *lowest* mountain near Jerusalem is Mount Moriah, yet it is the mountain God chose to have His temple built. This is in startling contrast to the people who were always looking for the *highest* places to worship. The fact that God chose Mount Moriah may be an example of His compassion for His people, who were required to come to the temple in Jerusalem three times a year for various sacrifices: once they reached Jerusalem, it was not a steep climb to reach the temple. When Solomon became king, he had a unique opportunity. Once the temple was built, he could have torn down all the remaining high places of worship and led the people to worship only the one, true God at His temple on Mount Moriah. But he didn’t.

**Idolatry –** The problem was that Solomon idolized the affections of his wives and the people more than the affections of God. Remember that idolatry is anything we view as more valuable than God, anything we give more effort to and turn to more than we turn to God. The problem was that the high places were a regular part of the Israelites’ routine. Going there was something they did as a routine pattern because **they wrongly thought they could *force* the outcome they wanted.** For example, if a woman was having fertility problems, she might think, “I’ll just go to the fertility god for help.” Sometimes it is easier to say, “Well, I’ve done what I can do,” instead of trusting God to do what He is going to do, i.e. we want to *take control* of the situation. And the more we try to take control, the less we trust God. And when we remove our trust from Him, we misplace our affection for Him. We elevate our own abilities—our “high places” or solutions of our own making—and we lower our faith in God. But when we come to Him humbly, *kneeling* before Him in prayer, then He *lifts* our eyes to Him. When we *submit* to Him humbly, He *elevates* our hope. And then our trust in Him grows.

**Creating Space for Our Misplaced Affections –** The pattern we saw in Solomon’s life in 1 Kings 3:3 continued throughout his life and had enormous consequences. We see evidences of his misplaced affections in many areas. For example, he spent *seven* years building the temple, but *thirteen* years building his own palace! The length of time he devoted to these two projects was an outward indication of an inward situation. Was it really such a big deal that he spent so much time on his palace? Consider this thought: **what I’m giving *attention* to is what I’m giving *affection* to.** So we need to give attention to what we’re giving attention to! And notice also that Solomon wasn’t just building a palace for *himself* after he completed the temple; he was building multiple palaces for his foreign wives—that he shouldn’t have married in the first place! He was in essence creating space for his misplaced affections.

**A Complete Turnaround –** 1 Kings 10 tells us that God fulfilled His promise to make Solomon the wisest man of his time, indeed of all time. Yet the very next chapter gives us another glimpse into an area of his life where he did not exercise wisdom and which eventually led to his downfall. 1 Kings 11:1 says, “Now Solomon loved *many* foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh.” In fact, he had 700 wives and 300 concubines! And as God had warned, these wives turned his heart away, and this man who had built the magnificent temple for Yahweh now built high places and altars for the various gods that his wives worshiped. How tragic.

**The Significance of the Mount of Olives –** Solomon’s actions at the end of his life profaned a very holy place. Think about how significant the Mount of Olives (sometimes referred to as “Olivet”) is throughout Scripture. David hid there at times, fleeing from Saul. Jesus prayed there often when He was on earth, and He ascended into Heaven from Olivet. Angels told His disciples that He would return to that very place when He comes back to rule and reign, fulfilling the words of Zechariah who wrote, “On that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley…(Zechariah 14:4).” The earthly king Solomon, through polygamy and idolatry, turned this part of the mountain into a “mount of corruption” or a “mount of scandal”. But when Jesus comes, the reigning King of kings and Lord of lords will bring with Him the glory of God to this place, and He will reign forevermore! Jesus once again will reverse the effects of sin and return God’s glory to what was defiled by Solomon’s high places.

**Application to Us –** God has called us to do two things: to love Him and to love other people. But we cannot do that effectively and with as much passion as possible if we are caught up in our own misplaced affections and control issues. We need to replace “I need control” with “I trust Him.”