

Solomon's Kingdom – 1 Kgs 4

List of his high officials. Notice that four of them are called priests; Azariah, Zadok, Abiathar, and Zabud. Two sons of Nathan mentioned – probably the prophet who was faithful in David's days. One of these, Zabud, was also called "the king's friend." This title is mentioned a few other times in scripture, as well as in the Tel-Amarna tablets, indicating that it was probably a close personal advisor to the king. With these five men in key positions, it would appear that Solomon's administration began with good, godly men to help guide him rightly. A couple of his proverbs speak to this model: Pr 11:14, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." Pr 15:22, "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed."

Next we read about the 12 officers over the various districts of the kingdom, nine on the west and three on the east of the Jordan. Each one collected the required provisions or funds to maintain the king's household for one month of the year. There was also one governor who was over the land, perhaps a chief deputy over the others. Why are we given this information? Solomon was a gifted and able administrator, and he delegated authority to governors so that the entire kingdom was well-managed. The provision of food for his household wasn't about some tendency to gluttony or extravagance – he provided food for his large family as well as the many servants and workers under his roof.

After this, we are told about the extent and peace of the kingdom. "Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life." (v. 21) This was a time of peace and prosperity, because their enemies had been subdued by David and God was blessing them with daily provisions. His influence reached from Syria all the way to Egypt, as well as Lebanon and Jordan. Verses 24-25 say that "he had peace on all sides around him. And Judah and Israel lived in safety...every man under his vine and under his fig tree..." That is truly a picture of peace and rest, and it is the blessing of God. "Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord" (Ps 144:15) God gave them peace and security, even to the extent of neighboring nations sending peace tributes into the kingdom.

Skipping to v. 29, "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahal, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3000 proverbs, and his songs were 1005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom."

You recall last week, in response to Solomon's prayer for wisdom, God said that He would grant Solomon "a discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you." Now we see the fulfillment of that word, to the extent that people from around the world came to hear him. We have mentioned here several "wise men" that were notable in his day. Ethan the Ezrahite wrote Ps 89, and he was mentioned in 1 Chr 15:19 along with Heman and Asaph, the singers. Heman, Calcol, and Darda were mentioned in 1 Chr 2:6. These men were poets, musicians who were acclaimed in Israel, but Solomon's skills as a poet and musician exceeded theirs, and demonstrated his wisdom. 3000

proverbs, 1005 songs, dissertations about trees, animals, etc. He was knowledgeable in many disciplines, and might be called the first naturalist.

Chapter 5 introduces us to one of the kings who was under Solomon's influence – Hiram king of Tyre. Hiram had been a friend of David, and continued that good relationship with Solomon. Why is he mentioned? Because of the great help he gave Solomon in building the temple. Verse 3 Solomon said, "You know that David my father could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune. And so I intend to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord said to David my father...Now therefore command that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. And my servants will join your servants, and I will pay you for your servants such wages as you set..."

We see here that Solomon wanted to honor God by building the temple, as God had told David he would. Notice how he gives God glory and credit for the peace the kingdom enjoyed, and calls for Hiram's assistance in the task. Hiram rejoiced at this request (v. 7), and detailed how his servants would bring the cedars of Lebanon by sea, as much as was needed. As v. 12 says, "the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him. And there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty." The rest of this section details the payments Solomon made to support Hiram's workers, and the massive workforce that was organized to carry out the work of building the temple.

What are we to learn from this? I go back to the foundation laid last week, Solomon's prayer for wisdom. He humbled himself before God, sought God's direction, and God responded with great blessings. The result was a kingdom characterized by peace, prosperity, and good order. All of this brought glory to God. Solomon was careful in these days to give proper credit to God, so that all people knew the source of these blessings. We also see that Solomon enlisted many others to help him carry out the tasks God had given him. This is a great example for us to follow. When things are going well in your life, do you tell others that all the glory goes to God for His gracious guidance and provision? When you are facing a challenge, do you seek God's face, asking for His grace and help? In the carrying out of the responsibilities God has given you, do you enlist the help of others?