

“Fly in the Ointment”
1 Kings 4:6
(Preached at Trinity, September 25, 2020)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 4** is a continuation of the display of Solomon's amazing wisdom. In the last chapter we saw it brought to bear in the wise administration of justice. In this chapter we see it in the wise administration of kingdom affairs. It was a kingdom of order and structure. In every way it was a kingdom ruled with wisdom. Solomon's kingdom was characterized by peace, harmony, safety, and joy. It was immense, spreading to the four corners of the earth. It seemed perfect in every way, but there was a fly in the ointment.
2. In our day ointments usually describe a cream or salve used for medicinal purposes. In earlier days, however, ointments were more likely be used for cosmetic or ceremonial purposes. A dead fly in the ointment would ruin its usefulness.
The Book of Ecclesiastes speaks of this:
Ecclesiastes 10:1 NAU - "Dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink, so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom *and* honor."
The expression "fly in the ointment" refers to something that would spoil an otherwise perfect plan.
3. Solomon's reign was a display of excellence. The entirety of Solomon's reign must turn our eyes upon the kingdom of our Lord. While Solomon's kingdom was excellent, it was but a foreshadow of the infinite perfection of Christ's Kingdom.
Tonight, I want to point out that while Solomon's kingdom was full of wisdom and excellence, there was a serious flaw. There was a fly in the ointment. It was not free from the sin that spoils everything good upon this earth.
4. I want to set several things before you as we consider Solomon's kingdom
 - I. We need to see the promises fulfilled in Solomon's kingdom
 - II. We need to see the provision provided in Solomon's kingdom
 - III. We need to see the problem brewing in Solomon's kingdom – the fly in the ointment
- I. We need to see the promises fulfilled in Solomon's kingdom
 - A. All of humanity has brought itself under God's condemnation
 1. There are none who are righteous – all have abandoned God's rule
 2. In an infinite display of grace and mercy God He has determined deliver a multitude from their sin and corruption. God's plan of redemption is beyond human comprehension. Paul wrote:
Romans 11:33 NAU - "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"
 3. God determined to reveal His redemptive purpose by way of a progressive unfolding of Divine covenants.

- B. By God's sovereign mercy, He chose Abraham and made a covenant with him He promised him a people, a land, and peace.
1. A people
Genesis 15:5 NAU - "He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."
Genesis 22:17 NAU - "I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies."
 2. A land
Genesis 15:7 NAU - "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."
Genesis 15:18 NAU - "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates"
 3. Peace
Genesis 15:15 NAU - "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age."
 To David God promised:
2 Samuel 7:10-11 NAU - "I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, ¹¹ even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies."
- C. Now we are seeing God's promises fulfilled in Solomon
 God's promise to David
2 Samuel 7:12-16 NAU - "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."
1. Solomon was a testimony to God's covenant faithfulness
 The vocabulary of 1 Kings 4 refers explicitly to God's promises to Abraham. God is a covenant keeping God.
 2. **Verse 20** affirms God's promise of a people
1 Kings 4:20 NAU - "Judah and Israel *were* as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance"

3. **Verses 21, 24** affirms God's promise of a place
1 Kings 4:21 NAU - "Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River *to* the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt"
1 Kings 4:24 NAU - "For he had dominion over everything west of the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza, over all the kings west of the River; and he had peace on all sides around about him."
4. **Verse 25** affirms God's promise of peace. There was no war during the reign of Solomon.
1 Kings 4:25 NAU - "So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

II. We need to see the provision God provided to Solomon's kingdom

- A. God had given Israel a wise king
 1. Their prosperity and peace were largely due to Solomon's wise management.
1 Kings 4:29-30 NAU - "Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. ³⁰ Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt."
 2. Israel was reaping the benefit of their wise king. They were living in prosperity
1 Kings 4:20 NAU - "Judah and Israel *were* as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance; *they* were eating and drinking and rejoicing."
- B. God had also fulfilled His promise to Solomon of abundance.
 1. Solomon had asked God for wisdom and discernment to rightly lead God's people. God granted his request but also granted prestige, power, and wealth.
1 Kings 3:13 NAU - "I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days."
 Kings were coming to bring tribute to Solomon.
1 Kings 4:21 NAU - "Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River *to* the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; *they* brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life."
 2. **Verse 27** reminds us that there was nothing lacking in Solomon's kingdom
1 Kings 4:29-31 NAU - "Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. ³⁰ Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all men"

- III. We need to see the problem brewing in Solomon's kingdom – the fly in the ointment
- A. Sometimes things may seem well on the surface even while there is a storm brewing on the horizon.
1. We can see this with the fall of many of the great kingdoms of the past. The Roman Empire had risen to greatness. The Pax Romana was enjoyed by all. But the fruit of their wickedness would eventually consume them.
 2. This should be a warning to our own great nation. On the surface we have prospered like no other nation. But we have abandoned God. Is His wrath now being brought to bear. The seeds of our demise have been sown.
 3. On the surface Israel had entered into a time of peace and prosperity. All the nations surrounding them bowed beneath the power and might of Solomon.
But there was a fly in the ointment. The seeds of destruction were already present. This is meant to direct our attention to the perfection Christ's kingdom.
What were some of the warning signs in Solomon's reign? What was the fly in the ointment.
- B. We must not dismiss the statement of **Verse 6** – there was forced labor
1 Kings 4:6 NAU - "Adoniram the son of Abda was over the men subject to forced labor."
1. The scope of the forced labor is given in **Chapter 5**
1 Kings 5:13 NAU - "Now King Solomon levied forced laborers from all Israel; and the forced laborers numbered 30,000 men."
 2. All blame cannot rest upon Solomon. David had already appointed this office.
2 Samuel 20:24 NAU - "and Adoram was over the forced labor, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder;"
 - a. Apparently, Solomon greatly increased the forced labor. He probably deemed it necessary to accomplish all of his building projects. At first, the forced labor was only comprised of foreigners. In time, however he must have included Israelites.
 - b. Samuel had warned about this when Israel demanded a king
1 Samuel 8:16-18 NAU - "He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use *them* for his work. ¹⁷ "He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants. ¹⁸ "Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."
 3. This would lead to the downfall of Israel after Solomon's death
1 Kings 12:18-19 NAU - "Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day."

- B. We also cannot dismiss Solomon's expensive royal appetites which required abundant resources.
1. His 12 deputies were in essence his taxation and revenue department. Initially, it was not a serious problem in Israel. They enjoyed prosperity and ate and drank in joy.
 2. Eventually, however, like so often with taxation, it became a heavy burden upon the people and great resentment and unrest grew. After Solomon had died and his son Rehoboam was seated on the throne the resentment had reached the tipping point.
1 Kings 12:4 NAU - "Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you."
 3. Samuel had also warned about this. (1 Samuel 8)
1 Samuel 8:17 NAU - "He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants."
- C. It also appears that Solomon was putting too much emphasis on the size of his military. Although he never had to put it to use, was this not another fly in the ointment of Solomon's reign.
1. God's law prohibited dependence upon the size of the military, of multiplying horses and chariots.
Deuteronomy 17:15-16 NAU - "you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, *one* from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. ¹⁶
"Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.'"
 2. Samuel warned of this: **1 Samuel 8:11 NAU** - "He said, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place *them* for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots."
Up to this point, only Absalom and Adonijah acquired chariots.

Conclusion:

1. As we read of Solomon we are supposed to see the relationship between Solomon's kingdom and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Solomon's kingdom was a kingdom of greatness, of prosperity, of peace—but it was not flawless.
2. We must not fail to see the contrast between all earthly kingdoms and the perfect kingdom and flawless reign of Christ.

In the weaknesses of Solomon, we find the perfection of Christ.

Matthew 12:42 NAU - "*The Queen of the South* will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here."

3. We are reminded that God's covenant promises will never fail. All of God's covenant promises have been fulfilled in Christ.
- a. Solomon's kingdom was an excellent administration.
The kingdom of Christ is infinitely better organized. The Holy Spirit brings order and perfection to life. He has produced forgiveness, love and mercy. He produces patience, gentleness and humility.
 - b. Solomon's kingdom was vast. The kingdom of Christ far exceeds Solomon's kingdom in scope and size. People are coming from every tribe and nation.
Psalm 22:27-28 NAU - "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations will worship before You. ²⁸ For the kingdom is the LORD'S And He rules over the nations."
Revelation 7:9-10 NAU - "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands; ¹⁰ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."
(1) We read in Revelation the inhabitants of Kingdom of Christ are beyond number.
Revelation 5:10-12 NAU - "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."
The word for "myriads" refers to a number that is beyond counting
(2) In the parables Jesus referred to the overwhelming growth of His Kingdom.
Matthew 13:31-32 NAU - "He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; ³² and this is smaller than all *other* seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree"
Matthew 13:33 NAU - "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."
4. Solomon's kingdom was the continuing fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. God promised David that his kingdom would never end. Solomon's kingdom did end, but the covenant promises of God are unshakable. Jesus is seated upon the throne of David. His Kingdom encompasses all of the kingdoms of this world.
Revelation 11:15 NAU - "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."
Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father.
5. While there was a fly in the ointment in the reign of Solomon and while sin has corrupted all of the affairs of men, God's promises cannot fail. Jesus Christ is Lord of lords, and King of kings. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.