

## Solomon's Administration, Prosperity and Wisdom

### 1 Kings 4

1 Kings 4:1-6 - *"So King Solomon was king over all Israel. And these were his officials: Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest; Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, over the army; Zadok and Abiathar, the priests; Azariah the son of Nathan, over the officers; Zabud the son of Nathan, a priest and the king's friend; Ahishar, over the household; and Adoniram the son of Abda, over the labor force."*

1 Kings 4:7-19 – *"And Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each one made provision for one month of the year."* Verses 8-19 record a list of the 12 governors and their territories.

1 Kings 4:20-34 - *"The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the [Euphrates] River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.*

*Now Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors [about 5.5 tons] of fine flour, sixty kors [about 11 tons] of meal, ten fatted oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl. For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River from Tiphseh even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and he had peace on every side all around him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.*

*Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. And these governors, each man in his month, provided food for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table. There was no lack in their supply. They also brought barley and straw to the proper place, for the horses and steeds, each man according to his charge.*

*And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon."*

## Background Notes

1 King 3 describes how God gave Solomon the opportunity to ask for anything his heart desired! Solomon didn't ask for wealth or long life, as we might have done. He asked for wisdom and understanding, to be a good and godly ruler for God's people.

God was pleased with Solomon's choice, and granted his request. He gave Solomon wisdom and understanding - and God gave him wealth and honor as well! God said, *"I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover I will give you what you have not asked for - both wealth and honor - so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings"* (1 Kings 3:12-13).

The second half of 1 Kings 3 provides a wonderful example of Solomon's wisdom. In determining the true mother of a baby over whom two women were arguing, Solomon easily solved a problem that would have taken us days of record searching and interviews!

Chapter 4 describes Solomon's wisdom in government administration. "Delegation of authority to the right people" is always a mark of wisdom. The first 6 verses list Solomon's high officials, or cabinet. Benaiah was the Secretary of the Army, Zadok and Abiathar were priests, and Azariah in the line of Zadok became the High Priest. And Solomon's Secretary of Labor was a man named Adoniram.

In verses 7-19, Solomon wisely divided his kingdom into twelve territories, and put a governor in charge of each territory. These territories did not necessarily follow the same boundaries as Israel's tribal areas. They were determined with a view towards providing food for the king and his royal court. Each of the territories provided for one month of the year. Notice that two of the governors were sons-in-law to the king (v11&15).

Solomon's kingdom stretched all the way from Egypt to the Euphrates River (v21&24). All smaller kingdoms within that region were subject to Solomon, and all of them paid tribute to Solomon. During Solomon's lifetime all Israel *"lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and their own fig tree."*

The daily food supplied to Solomon's royal court was enough to feed several thousand people! The governors of the twelve territories *"provided food for King Solomon and for all who came to his table. There was no lack in their supply. They also brought barley and straw to the proper place for the horses..."* (v27-28).

In verse 46, some Bible translations say that Solomon had **forty thousand** stalls for chariot horses, and twelve thousand horsemen. However, in a parallel passage, 2 Chronicles 9:25 says that Solomon had **four thousand** stalls for horses and chariots and twelve thousand horsemen. In 1 Kings 4:26, most likely the number "forty" is a copying error. Remember - for many hundreds of years before the printing press, the ancient Bible documents were hand-copied by scribes. As a result, errors were accidentally made as scribes produced copies. These errors are generally easy to detect, and - most importantly - **they do not affect any doctrine of Scripture!**

Solomon spoke 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs on many different subjects (v32-33). Three thousand proverbs! The book of Proverbs contains fewer than one thousand of these proverbs. We'll have to wait till we get to Heaven to hear the other proverbs. And 1005 songs - that's a lot of lyrics! And from all nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world who had heard of his wisdom.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The kingdom of Solomon pictures the kingdom of Christ.

We've mentioned before that both King David and King Solomon are "types," or pictures, of the greatest King yet to come - the greatest Son of David and Solomon, the Lord Jesus Christ. In particular, Solomon and his widespread kingdom picture Jesus Christ and His future millennial kingdom on this earth. His global kingdom will be a kingdom of peace, and harmony, and prosperity.

Notice how the picture of peace and prosperity is emphasized in verse 20: "*Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing...*" And in verses 24-25: "*For he had dominion over all the region... and he had peace on every side all around him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.*"

Just as Solomon's kingdom was well organized, with designated responsibilities, so the kingdom of our Lord will be organized. Every believer will have a designated responsibility, and we will reign with Christ! (See Revelation 20.)

Just as Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms in the Middle East region (v21), so our Lord will rule over the whole earth in His future kingdom. In Psalm 2, a Messianic Psalm, the Father addresses the Son about this future kingdom: "*Ask of me and I will give you the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession*"(v8). In all these ways, the kingdom of Solomon pictures the kingdom of Christ.

### 2. The wisdom of Solomon pictures the wisdom of Christ.

Solomon's kingdom was peaceful and prosperous, and there was a moral glory associated with it because of Solomon's wisdom. Solomon was not only a walking encyclopedia in many areas of knowledge (v33), but Solomon was also wise. Wisdom involves more than knowledge – it involves moral discernment.

Because of his God-given wisdom, Solomon was not only well organized and efficient in his delegation of authority, but he also applied moral discernment to all aspects of his kingdom: "*And God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon's wisdom was greater than the*

*wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than anyone else... and his fame spread to all the surrounding nations” (v29-31).*

Solomon’s wisdom brought a moral glory to his kingdom. It was not just a wealthy kingdom, and it was not just a powerful kingdom. It was also a glorious kingdom -because of Solomon’s God-given wisdom.

Verse 31 says that his wisdom exceeded that of Ethan, and Heman, and others. Heman and Ethan wrote Psalms 88 and 89. These psalms contain a lot of wisdom in the moral area, but Solomon’s wisdom exceeded the wisdom of these men.

Read the Book of Proverbs to appreciate Solomon’s God-given wisdom and moral discernment. Thus there was a moral glory to the kingdom of Solomon. What a picture we have here of the surpassing wisdom in our Lord Jesus Christ!

1 Corinthians 1:30 says that Jesus Christ is the “*wisdom of God,*” and Colossians 2:3 states that “*in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*” What a day it will be, when the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is fully seen and appreciated in His coming kingdom! The wisdom of Solomon pictures the wisdom of Christ.

## **Practical Application**

### **Examine your biblical role models in the light of all Scripture.**

In His Word, God has provided a lot of godly role models for us to follow - both men and women. We can follow the godly examples of faithful people such as Daniel, or Ruth, or Joseph. But no human role model is perfect - including the men and women of the Bible. **Only Jesus Christ is the perfect role model.**

Thus far in 1 Kings, Solomon was a good role model. Unfortunately, before long we’ll read of Solomon’s downfall. Even in chapter 4 he was not a perfect role model. In Deuteronomy 17, God’s Law said that the kings of Israel were not to acquire great numbers of horses - yet verse 26 records Solomon’s flagrant disobedience in this area.

So be careful! While we can look at the practical examples from the lives of godly biblical characters, Hebrews 12:1-2 reminds us that we are to “fix our eyes on Jesus” as we run the race that has been marked out for us. Examine your biblical role models in the light of *all* Scripture!