

1 KINGS 4

Introduction

The book of kings is often an action packed and thrilling piece of redemptive history, but not so much in chapter 4. In chapter 4 we have the story of how Solomon administered his kingdom. But once again before we look at Solomon's administration, lets remind ourselves just where in redemptive history this chapter fits.

The redemptive story so far tells us that Adam and Eve have been deceived by the serpent, they have sinned and been banished from the Garden. God has promised them a saviour who will rescue them and their descendant's from their sins. The flood has decimated the world, and Abraham has fathered a people as numerous as the sand on the beach, or the stars in the sky.

This great race of people are the Israelites. The Israelites are now living in the promised land and are ruled by Solomon, the son of great king David.

1 Kings 1 - 3

As we turn our attention to 1 Kings 4, we remember that in 1 Kings 1 Solomon is revealed to us as the Lamb of God, a type of Christ who loving and merciful, who forgives his enemies their sins.

In 1 Kings 2 after Solomon gains the throne his brother Adonijah, along with Abiathar and Joab again attempt to take the throne from Solomon. Solomon is now the Lion of Judah, a type if Christ who takes vengeance on his enemies.

Then in 1 Kings 3 we saw that God gifted Solomon with Wisdom so that the people would not be afraid of a king, who was neither hot nor cold, merciful, or vengeful, but that the people would trust their king who as a type of Christ would make righteous judgments.

As we open 1 Kings 4 we are told that *King Solomon was king over all Israel.*

Solomon's Great Officials

Solomon ruled over the entire nation, not just the two tribes as did his successors.

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And Solomon was not an idle king. Solomon had a job, and his job was to rule wisely over the kingdom. And Solomon took the job of ruling the people seriously. And Solomon did his job well for he had the advantage of the gift that God had given him, *great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore.*

We see Solomon's wisdom in the choice of high officials for his court. Several of them are the same men who served during his father David's reign, *Zadok and Abiathar were priests under David*, but after Abiathar's disgrace Zadok now took precedence, *Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder* (or keeper of the great seal) *under David*, *Benaiah son of Jehoiada was high in the army under David*, *and he now commanded it.*

Shisha was David's scribe and now his sons *Elihoreph and Ahijah were the secretaries.* Solomon although a very wise man did not consider himself wiser than his father in these appointments.

Many sons when they come to power over their fathers estates consider it their duty to demolish what their fathers have built and make their own mark. But it is wise, when it can be properly done, to respect the memory of our fathers, employing those whom they employed and trusting those in whom they trusted.

Of the remainder who held great office, *Azariah* his prime minister was the son of Zadok the priest and, *Azariah*, and *Zabud*, were the sons of Nathan the prophet. In choosing them he showed what great esteem he held their fathers in.

As well as these high officials *Solomon had twelve officials over all Israel*, to manage his household.

Solomon's Administrators

These men were tasked with providing the necessary goods and services from throughout the kingdom to keep Solomon's household functioning.

Although we are told in proverbs 31:14, that good housekeeping is the function of the wise woman, great men should also learn the value of being good housekeepers.

And so Solomon in his great wisdom sought to be both generous and prudent. He tasked twelve men to search the kingdom for the best deals on food and services. This relieved the king and the court of the daily routines,

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that were necessary and important, so that they could concentrate on the business of ruling.

This is an approach we recognize from the New Testament where the Apostles appointed deacons to look after the physical needs of the people, so that they could concentrate on preaching and prayer, the real business of the kingdom.

Note that in Solomon's wisdom as well as provisioning the royal courts the kingdom's land and industry is evenly used. No part of the kingdom gains and no part of the kingdom loses. There is no competition for royal business, business is shared evenly, and so opportunities for greed and corruption are reduced. Jealousies are not created between competing territories and so industry and endeavour is encouraged throughout the entire nation.

As well as that the fair division of work between so many officials keeps them from being overwhelmed and prevents power being collected in the hands of any one man, any one family, or any one business.

We see that two of the officials married Solomon's daughters, *11 Ben-abinadab, (he had Taphath, Solomon's daughter, as his wife), and 15 Ahimaaz, (he had taken Basemath, Solomon's daughter as his wife)*; this shows us that marriage to a merchant was not looked down upon, and neither should it be.

The information in these sacred texts, far from being just a list of names, is evidence of Solomon's great wisdom.

Wisdom is not as we so often believe confined to the areas of moral and judicial judgement. Wisdom is also required in the running of an efficient and orderly life. Chaos and waste ruin and destroy the living of societies in the same way that it destroys families. Solomon in a shadow of Christ, uses his wisdom to provide for both his own family and for the people of Israel in general.

We should recognize in the kingdom of Israel under Solomon as a glorious type of Christ's final kingdom.

Solomon's Magnificence

Never did the crown of Israel shine so brightly than when Solomon was on the throne, not in his father's days and not in his successors' days.

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The accounts given in this passage partly fulfil the prophecies of psalm 72, the final psalm written by king David. And although Solomon's reign is pointed to throughout the psalm, the prophecies are always really about Jesus Christ and his final kingdom. The full accomplishments of the prophecy in psalm 72 will only be seen in Christ's kingdom, but in Solomon's reign we see Christ's kingdom in part.

The subjects of Solomon's kingdom are many and full of joy. *Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank and were happy.* The land was good and the people were as the sand of the sea, the fulfilment of the promise of Genesis 22:17. This abundance of people, was the nation's strength, for the great populace brought honour to the king, wealth to the nation, and it helped guard the nation from the threat of invasion from foreign countries.

The prophecy in Genesis 15:18 is also fulfilled, in that the territories of Israel's kingdom would be large and his tributaries many, *Solomon was sovereign over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, even to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.*

All the princes from the Euphrates north east to the border of Egypt, paid him homage and added to Solomon's wealth through tribute. David had brought these countries under Israel's subjection by his victory over them in war, and Solomon kept them as vassals through careful use of his wisdom. Solomon instructed the conquered countries in knowledge and because wisdom is better than gold, he maintained peace all around his kingdom.

None of the nations sought to shake off Solomon's easy yoke, they all thought themselves better off depending on him rather than themselves. And in this we see the shadow and type of the Messiah's kingdom, for in Isaiah 49:6, 7 we read that Jesus is promised the worship of princes, and that the heathen will be his inheritance.

During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees. The people of Israel were not afraid that Solomon would turn on them, they were not jealous of the king's wealth, nor his power, nor the wealth and power of the court officials. The people trusted their leaders to do what was best for them. The people were happy and they knew it, they were safe and they knew it,

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they were not disaffected, they did not fear enemies, neither, foreign nor domestic.

The people dwelt every man under his own fig tree for Solomon was not the kind of king who took what he desired from the people. What people earned, they could keep and call their own. Solomon protected every mans property and possessions.

Those who had fig trees or vines could eat of their own produce and if they so choose, they could live on their estates because living in the countryside was just as safe as living behind the city walls.

Solomon did not only keep a good table himself *Solomon's provisions for one day was thirty cors of choice flour, and sixty cors of meal*, (a core is about 6 bushels, or 35 litres) *ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture fed cattle, one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebuck, and fatted fowl.* Solomon also made it possible for everyone in the kingdom to live well, according to their rank.

In Ecclesiastes 2:24; 9:7 Solomon writes that there is nothing better than for a man to eat the labour of his own hands with a merry heart. Solomon taught the people that their abundance came from God and they should enjoy it and not imprudently hoard the gifts that God had bestowed.

This pleasant picture of Israelite life under Solomon extended throughout the entire country from Dan to Beer-sheba, no part of the country was in need. And this delightful way of living continued for a long time, all the days of Solomon, without any interruption. Wherever you travelled in Israel you could see the evidence of the kingdoms joy, wealth, peace, and satisfaction.

In this we see Solomon's kingdom as the type of Messianic kingdom, the peace, joy, and security for the Israelites is a shadow of the spiritual peace, joy, and holy security all the faithful subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ will one day enjoy.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink but what is infinitely better righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Now the size of Solomon's court can scarcely be imagined. The number of people needed for the day to day operation is mind boggling. Imagine the people needed to manage *forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen* and supply *barley and straw for the horses*

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and swift steeds, even if the same people who served his stable served his house.

And Solomon did not provide just dainties of food. Solomon provide bread and the meat of cows, sheep and birds. It has been calculated that there was provided daily enough bread and meat to serve between 3000 and 4800 men. This was a substantial amount of food to feed the court and all those who came to hear his wisdom.

And can we see here a shadow of Jesus when he fed the 5000 who came to hear his wisdom. Jesus fed more people than Solomon with nothing but a few fish and some loaves of bread. And Christ continues to feed his people with food that does not perish but leads to eternal life, and so we see in Christ as we should, one greater than Solomon.

Solomon *had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates; and he had peace on all sides*. And so just as Psalm 72:8 – 11 predicted, the king ruled from sea to sea.

The officers that Solomon had put in charge performed magnificently and the kingdom functioned like a well oiled machine. The *officials supplied provisions for King Solomon's table, each one in his month; they let nothing be lacking*.

An unbiased reader can clearly catch the tone of this chapter. The people were happy and joyful. They were at peace, they had plenty to eat and plenty to drink, they were secure and content.

This picture should bring us joy in our salvation for if this is how God looks after a stiff necked people who only nominally served him with the sacrifices of sheep and goats, how will he treat those who serve him from the heart and this is what we should see in this chapter, a shadow of good things to come.

But Solomon's wisdom was even more famous than his fabulous court and in the last part of this chapter we have recorded for us just how wise Solomon was.

Solomon's Fame

Solomon was famous throughout the world because he had wisdom and understanding far greater than anyone ever had before him. He had vast

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knowledge, a quickness of mind, a strong memory, and a clearness of judgment such as no man before him had ever had.

Solomon was a clear and concise communicator, he was happy to instruct others on the intricacies of his wisdom, he did not hold his wisdom to himself, as so many do, for they hold knowledge as personal power over others, and that is why people came from near and far to hear him speak.

Solomon's greatness is illustrated by comparison. Chaldea and Egypt were nations famed for their knowledge, libraries and institutes of learning, but we are told that *Solomon's wisdom surpassed all the wisdom of the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt.* The great scholars of these nations came nowhere near the wisdom of Solomon.

Even within the nation of Israel where men were wiser than most, simply because they were favoured by the gifts of the one true God who was the father of their nation, Solomon wiser.

Heman was Solomon's seer in the word of God (1 Chronicles 25:5) but Solomon *was wiser than Heman and anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, Calcol, and Darda children of Mahol;* Solomon excelled everyone, he confounded them, his counsel was much more valuable than theirs, and so *his fame spread through all the surrounding nations.*

And Solomon did not hide his light, he was a great moralist, *he composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five.* Solomon was a natural philosopher, a man of great insight into the mysteries of nature, *He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that grows in the wall; he would speak of animals, and birds, and reptiles, and fish.*

And so *People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.* People who were inquisitive for knowledge came from all parts of the world to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Kings sent their ambassadors, Jerusalem was the conference centre of the world, philosophers came, lovers of wisdom came, teachers and students all came to learn at the feet of the wisest man the world had ever known.

His wisdom brought Solomon great fame. Solomon was talked about in all the nations. His great wealth and the glory of his kingdom only made his wisdom and the mystique that must have surrounded him seem only more

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illustrious. It was not by accident that God gave Solomon wealth as well as wisdom. If Solomon had been a pauper, who would ever have heard of him.

That is why God set Solomon's wisdom in the centre of a glorious kingdom, as one would set a priceless diamond in a solid gold setting.

There are people today who scoff at the abilities and knowledge of our ancestors, yet no one before or since Solomon has ever been as wise, yet the fact that Solomon is praised for his wisdom, puts an honour on Solomon that he does not deserve.

For we must always bear in mind that it was *God* who *gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore*, it is the Lord who gives wisdom, it is the Lord who gives us the powers to reason, (Job 38:36).

The fact that we grow in wisdom and understanding is only because of the providence of God. It is God who improves all our abilities it was God who gifted Solomon with the outstanding wisdom that brought glory to the kingdom, glory to himself, but most of all, Solomon's wisdom brought glory to the one true God.

For Solomon in his wisdom is a type of Christ, for only in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

One Greater than Solomon

The writer of this chapter cannot find enough words to acclaim just how wonderful and wise Solomon is. The term wisdom is used six times, but the term wisdom is not used to bring glory to Solomon, it is used to bring glory to the source of Solomon's wisdom, the one true God.

For it is God who gives wisdom and we need to understand this if we are not to fall into the sin of pride.

Yet even understanding that God is the source of all wisdom we can still acknowledge the superiority of Solomon's wisdom to ours. Solomon's wisdom was superior to all the centres' of wisdom, Egypt and Mesopotamia,

And Solomon was wiser than all the celebrities of wisdom of his day, and any other day, to state the case fully. Solomon was wiser than any so called expert you could ever name. This is how great Solomon's wisdom was.

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But our Lord Jesus is one greater than Solomon ([Mt. 12:42](#)), even though Jesus took upon himself the form of a servant; Jesus' wisdom, even when he was on earth, infinitely transcended Solomon's wisdom, even when Solomon's wisdom was at its highest peak.

Solomon did not know all things. But Jesus Christ our saviour knows all things, and so is wiser beyond all comparison with Solomon.

God's wisdom is in part available to us. And although Solomon received his wisdom straight from God. The wisdom, we need for living a life pleasing to God, comes primarily from reading, hearing, and obeying his Word.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" ([Ps. 111:10](#); [Prov. 9:10](#); [cf. Prov. 1:7](#)), because only if we fear dishonouring God or displeasing him, and only if we fear his fatherly discipline, only then we will have the motivation that makes us want to follow his ways and live according to his wise commands.

Conclusion

Wayne Grudem in his Systematic Theology writes that the person who is wise according to God's standards will continually walk in dependence on the Lord and with a desire to exalt him.

Yet we must also remember that God's wisdom is not totally available to us, we can never fully share God's wisdom ([Rom. 11:33](#)). In practical terms, this means that there will frequently be times during our lives when we will not be able to understand what God is doing in our lives.

When this happens we must simply continue to trust him and carry on being obedient to his wise commands, "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator" ([1 Peter 4:19](#); [cf. Deut. 29:29](#); [Prov. 3:5-6](#)).

The bottom line is that God is infinitely wise and we are not. But it pleases God immensely when we continue on, persevering in love, joy, faith, and trust in his wisdom even when we do not understand what he is doing.

In 1 Kings 4 we have the account of Solomon's wisdom, his wealth and his prosperity, the fruit of the promises that God had made to him. And we see that Solomon is again portrayed to us as a type of Christ, but this time, a type of Christ's infinite wisdom.

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And so if you are here this afternoon and do not yet understand just how rich and loving and kind and merciful is the only wise God our father, then consider the picture that 1 kings 4 gives us of the kingdom of God and ask yourself if the sinful life you live is anything like as good.

If you are still a slave to sin read again this picture of Gods glorious kingdom and ask yourself, what possible reason is there not to discard the fleeting pleasures of this world so that I can live forever, in peace and joy.

Everyone of us needs to bear in mind this picture for it is the hope of things to come. We must give up the things of this earth that we cannot keep, if we are to gain a citizenship in the kingdom of heaven that we cannot lose.

End