

Wisdom Reigns

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Date: 25 August 2019

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- [0 : 00] Great, if you've got your Bible, please do turn back to that section in 1 Kings 3 where we read about King Solomon.
- And Solomon, he's an interesting figure. He's, when we read about King Solomon, he's sort of like a blueprint of what was to come in the Lord Jesus.
- So in Solomon's failures, we see where the real one is going to come better, the real king. And in Solomon's great magnificent acts, we see them magnified even more in the Lord Jesus.
- That's helpful for us to remember as we look at Solomon here. But before we dive in, let's get our heads into thinking 1 Kings.
- 1 Kings, it's one book, it's about the rise and then the fall of the monarchy of ancient Israel.
- [0 : 59] It starts here with the golden age of King David's, inter-King Solomon, but then his decline and the splitting of northern and southern kingdoms, the conquering of the north by the Assyrians, the south by the Babylonians.
- Kings, it's not just a history book. Rather, it's a sermon from history and not just for the Jews, it's for all of God's people.
- If I was to sum up the whole message, the melodic line that runs through the book, it would be this.
- If we as God's people are to experience God's blessing, we need to follow a king who will perfectly follow God's word.
- Let me read that again. It's the big thing in the book. If we as God's people are to experience God's blessing, as goes the king, we need to follow a king who will perfectly follow God's word.
- [2 : 05] As goes the king, so goes the people. Of course, this is who the Lord Jesus Christ is. He is our king. As we go through this section, if you were to Karen reading, we'll see a difference it makes living under his kingship.
- So, you pray and then we'll start digging into the passage together. Let me say a short prayer. Let's help us this morning we ask, incline our hearts to your word and not to anything else this world has to offer us.
- Open our eyes to see wonderful things in your word this morning. Unite our hearts and reverent fear of you and satisfy our hearts in your steadfast love.
- We ask and pray. Amen. So, as you see it starts Solomon, he heads up to the high place in Gibbon and graciously at this high place, God meets him there.
- There's a film you might have heard of. I wouldn't recommend it. A film called Bruce Almighty and here's the premise. A man named Bruce after his life takes a bad turn.
- [3 : 21] He blames God for treating him poorly. So God, well, he gives him his powers and responsibility to see if he can do a better job. Now imagine if you had God's powers.

What would you do? That's sort of what Solomon has here. He's got a blank slate, a blank check. Ask what I shall give you, God says to him.

So what would you say? No one had to know what you asked for. It could just be your secret with God. But what would it be?

What would you ask for? Have a look from verse seven and see what Solomon asks for. Let me read it again for us.

And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father. Although I am but a little child, I do not know how to go out or come in.

[4 : 23] And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant, therefore, an understanding mind to govern your people that I may discern between good and evil.

For who is able to govern this, your great people? See, as we read that petition, I think Solomon gets something that all of God's promises are tied together in God's king.

Here is God's king on the throne. And some in verse eight, he's referencing that great promise to Abraham. He's seeing before his very eyes that promise in Genesis 13 being fulfilled before his eyes.

This is the promise, I will make your offspring, God said to Abraham, as dust of the earth. So that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.

Solomon's beginning to see this, the sheer number, too many to number, this promise being fulfilled. But here's the question.

[5 : 36] Why is this here? It's a helpful question to ask when reading the Bible. Why is the writer chosen to include this story?

Well, there's a lot we can learn about prayer, something about pursuing wisdom. But I don't think that's the intention of the author.

So what the author wants us to see is that we need a king like Solomon, a king who when given a blank check from God is completely selfless, a king who wants God's wisdom so he can rule and lead his people well, a king who prays for his people and puts their needs before his own.

And as Solomon going to be this great king, this king who through the promises of God fully finally come to pass, starts off well, doesn't it?

Or perhaps not. Maybe you noticed that line at the beginning of the chapter in verse one.

[6 : 50] Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Why is the author mentioning this? Well, just the start of chapter two, Solomon's made a promise that he will trust God, he will follow God's word, but he's not.

He's trusting himself. He's putting his people in danger of not knowing the blessing of God. And in the eyes of the world, he is this new king.

It makes sense, doesn't it? He makes an alliance with the world's superpower. He seems sensible, seems wise, but he isn't trusting in God and his word.

Already we see seeds of decline in Solomon. But don't miss verse three.

Solomon really loves God. His love for the Lord, it's entirely genuine, it's entirely sincere, there's love like ours, it's fragile, it's fitful.

[8 : 05] See we need a king who will always follow God's word. A king who is always faithful, a king whose love is always selfless, a king whose wisdom isn't matched by anyone else.

We need a king greater than Solomon. And that's exactly what we see in Jesus. Actually that's what Jesus says about himself.

In Matthew chapter 12, he's talking to some religious leaders and he talks about when the Queen of Sheba or the Queen of the South, the only football team mentioned in the Bible, when they come and meet King Solomon.

And Jesus says in Matthew 12, the Queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. For she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and behold something greater than Solomon is here.

Jesus is speaking of himself, he's saying that he is the king Israel needs. He's saying he is the king that the world needs. He is the king who is at the right hand selflessly praying for who?

[9 : 14] For you, for me. He is the one of whom Paul wrote in Colossians in Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Jesus is the truly wise king because all wisdom is found in him. Jesus is the truly wise king who reigns over all and for some of us we might rejoice at that.

We read the paper, we turn on the news and we go, I'm glad the Lord's on his throne because I don't understand what's going on.

For others here or friends or family, perhaps they might rile against it. I don't need a king. I don't need someone to rule over me. But everyone doing their own thing, being their own king, that's a horror movie, isn't it?

See all of a sudden a king. I don't mean politically, but I mean I guess spiritually who leads and guides our lives.

[10 : 33] The question for many of us is what is the king like? And that's what we're going to see in this passage.

What our king is like? Jesus, he's not some oppressive tyrant. He's not somebody who we think is incompetent perhaps.

He's not like a speed camera waiting to catch you out or like a harsh head teacher you only hear from when you get told off. Jesus is the wise king, the selfless king under whose rule we will flourish.

He's a selfless king who left eternal glory and came as one of his people. He's the king who knows exactly what we're going through and has been there too.

In his opening 15 verses, chapter 3, 1-15, we see the wisdom of Solomon and the rest of our section from here until the end of chapter 4, it's all about wisdom for the sake of others.

[11 : 41] Now what I want to do is go through the rest of the chapter into chapter 4 and see what it looks like to live under a king who is wise.

And as we go through, there's many here, many here are guests who are struggling, struggling in many different ways. And as we go through the text, I hope that might regain perspective for some of us.

Regain perspective, remind us all of who our king is and what living under him looks like. So let me read on in chapter 3, let me read until verse 16 to the end of the chapter and then we'll see what life under Jesus looks like.

We'll see what life under Jesus looks like now and then in the new creation. So what is wisdom under Jesus looks like? Wisdom we see, verses 16 to 28, brings justice.

Verse 16, then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. The one woman said, oh my Lord, this woman and I live in the same house and I gave birth to child while she was in the house.

[12 : 54] Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth and we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house, only we two who were in the house and this woman's son died in the night because she lay on him.

And she rose at midnight and took my son from beside me while your servant slept and laid him at her breast and laid her dead son at my breast. When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold he was dead, but I looked at him closely in the morning, behold he was not the child that I had born.

But the other woman said, no, the living child is mine and the dead child is yours. The first said, no, the dead child is yours and the living child is mine. Thus they spoke before the king.

Then the king said, one says this is my son that is alive and your son is dead. And the other says, no, but your son is dead and my son is living one.

And the king said, bring me a sword. So a sword was brought before the king. And the king said, divide the living child into you and give half to one and half to the other.

[13 : 57] Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son. Oh my lord, give her the living child and by no means put him to death.

But the other said, he shall be neither mine nor yours, divide him. Then the king answered and said, give the living child to the first woman and by no means put him to death.

She is the mother. And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered and they stood in awe of the king because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

It's a tragic story, isn't it? Here are two prostitutes. They've come from a guest of brothel. Both have babies and during the night one has been crushed or smothered by their mother.

And one swaps a dead baby for a living one. Or at least that's the claim. What does Solomon do?

[14 : 59] Well wisdom knows human nature. He gets his sword, he gives the call to cut the living baby into, knowing that the mother of the child was alive would rather see the child live and live with someone else than see their child die.

But look at the response in verse 28. And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered and they stood in awe of the king because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

A wise king cares for his people and will see a just society coming about. And here we see even to prostitutes people I guess would have been the lowest of the low in society.

See what we see is that even the outcast can approach the king. You know what a king, isn't he?

But let's think how do we see that today? Well, under the rule of Jesus we see that we can all come to him and justice will always be found.

[16 : 15] And what does that look like? Well how is it possible for the guilty to come before the king being totally known, totally loved?

Well it's because of the cross. We know that because on the cross Jesus died in our place bearing the punishment for our sin that we can always approach his throne of grace and he will always do us right.

All the injustices that we ourselves face now will one day be made right. He may leave the wrongly imprisoned in their cell but one day all things will be made right.

Who justice shall come to pass? Because wisdom brings justice. We move on Tixie to the next bit. Keep going.

Keep going. Keep going. One more. Brilliant. Let's look at how wisdom brings order. Have a look at verses 1 to 19 of chapter 4. Don't worry, we're not going to read it.

- [17 : 24] But have a look at it. It is a cracker of a list. Let's look at this list of names and what we know about scripture. How is this big list helpful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training in righteousness to help us to be equipped for every good work?

What good is it for us knowing that the sons of Shisha were his secretaries? Well because we've seen these verses that Solomon's got a well structured, well ordered government.

See wisdom is not just about doing the morally right thing like in the last section, but wisdom helps set up good structure to enable people to live and to flourish.

I wonder if you've ever seen kids play football before. Well what happens? It's like bees on a hive, isn't it? They all swarm to the ball. There's no structures, no good game going on.

Need formation. Roles to have a good game of football. Think of working in a job. Imagine a place with no structure.

- [18 : 29] No one knows who's doing what. People ensure what they're meant to be doing. Huge loads being borne by some while others cruise by. Perhaps you know what that feels like.

Because there's not a wise leader there. See Solomon's wisdom brings order to the country. And how do we see that today? Well as passage we don't go king government, we go king, the king's church.

We see this order in the church. People made up of different gifts to benefit the people of God. Appointed people in roles to lead, to govern, to serve. What about in the new creation?

Well there we'll see a perfect society. Great diversity. Great unity. All to the glory of God. Wisdom brings justice, wisdom brings order.

We see from verses 20 to 28 wisdom brings peace and happiness. Have a look at verse 20. Judah and Israel were as many as the sands by the sea.

- [19 : 36] They ate and drank and were happy. Doesn't that sound great? And notice here the language again of the current to Abraham.

As many as the sands by the sea. Have a look at verse 24. Describes this huge area of land and the end of the verse.

Peace on all sides. We're seeing here under Solomon, God's people in God's place with God's king under his rule and reign.

But getting to hear the buds of the promise to Abraham coming true. What about now?

Well being under Jesus' rule, it also brings joy. We have the protection of a great shepherd. Yes, when we become a Christian in many ways life becomes harder, but in that you can know true joy.

- [20 : 43] And what about on that last day to come, how we long for the great king, the king who has defeated Satan's sin and death.

One day he'll bring us into the promise and the fullness of the new creation where there will be eternal joy, eternal peace on all sides. Where we shall know and be with the fountain of joy in life, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wisdom brings justice, it brings order, brings peace and happiness and we see here wisdom about all things for all people in verse 29 to 33.

Have a look at this where we see every part of the body stimulated to enjoy all of life as you see wisdom about all things for all people. Let me read it for us.

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure and the breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore. So Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt that he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezra Heights and Timan, Calcol and Dada, the sons of Mahal and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.

[22 : 06] He also spoke 3,000 proverbs and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees and a 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.

The thing here, Solomon's wisdom, it wasn't just for himself, it was for all people to enjoy. This wisdom shared meant the people knew the choices to make.

He learned to enjoy the beauty of God. I wonder if you know the saying that a degree is about knowing not much about a lot, whereas a PhD is about knowing a lot about not much.

Well Solomon, he books that trend, he seemed to have a PhD about everything. He knew everything about anything. Look at what his wisdom did.

[23 : 11] He didn't become some sort of guru who lived in a mountain alone. Instead his wisdom led him to enjoy nature, beauty, art.

He wrote 3,000 proverbs, proverbs that as the minister Sinclair Ferguson says, ignite the imagination to capture our affections.

He wrote 1,005 songs and I bet you they were cracking songs as well. Why? Because he knew what made us tick.

He spoke of the greatest in creation down to the smallest. It was all of interest to him. The animals that roamed the earth, he knew them, he loved them.

Why? Because he saw the signature of the master artist and creator in all of creation and it satisfied him.

[24 : 13] It means that perhaps when you go home you might sing to him how great thou art. And don't miss out the second verse. When through the woods and forest glades I wander and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees, when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur and see the brook and feel the gentle breeze, then sings my soul, my savior God to thee.

What else does it mean? It means that we value education. It means that we can explore God's creation without having to have a practical application because we're learning to think God's thoughts after him.

It means that we value the arts, the humanities, sciences and sports, gardening, music, ice cream, great British break, bake off or at least the baking anyway.

See wisdom, it's so practical. See wisdom brings justice, order, peace, happiness, wisdom about all things. It's for all people. And finally have a look at verse 34 where wisdom draws the nations in.

Let me read it for us. And people of all the nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

[25 : 34] See Solomon's wisdom had an impact right across the world. It was so unique. Life under him was so good that the nations came.

They noticed God's wisdom spoken through and lived out in and under God's king. It has a global impact that draws people in.

How to see this today? Well, of course it's the church. People from all cultures, classes coming together, all ages.

And we long for that day finally when people from all nations will be gathered together. The church from across the ages saying praise to the wise king as you spend the rest of eternity living in peace in his kingdom.

So what do you think then about living under this king? What do you think about living in his kingdom? Is it restrictive? Well, no, it's the only way I can be free.

[26 : 49] Free from condemnation, free to fail and try again, free from performance and comparison, free to come before the throne of Jesus and find mercy and justice just like those two prostitutes did before Solomon because it is the wisdom of God on the cross that has enabled us to be forgiven and of life to the full.

Is life in this kingdom boring? Well, no, it means that in all areas of life you can enjoy it. You can look at God's creation from the greatest to the smallest and recognize that it's the wisdom of Christ reflected in his beauty, in art and nature.

This kingdom, is it closed off? Well, no, he's made an ordered community of people from all nations. He's made his church.

It's the wisdom of Christ that brings people together, no matter on the background. I think we look at this king, we see this kingdom and go, what a king.

What wisdom reigns on the throne that does all this? What a kingdom that we live in now and long for finally in new creation. What wisdom reigns on the throne in the Lord Jesus Christ?

[28 : 25] Let me pray.

Lord Jesus, we confess that we are foolish people in need of your wisdom. Thank you that in you are all the wisdom and knowledge of God for you are wisdom itself and you reign on your throne.

So guide us, we ask, by your spirit through your word to learn more of what it looks like, to live under you, to know the freedom of the gospel.

Open our eyes to see the beauty of your creation. Open our arms to see the welcome that the gospel brings.

Lord Jesus causes to delight this day, to delight more in you, our king and your kingdom that you have established.

[29 : 32] And we long for the day with knowledge of the glory of the Lord covers the earth like the waters cover the sea. But thank you that we have a flavor of that now in your church.

That's in your name we pray, Lord Jesus. Amen.