

1 KINGS 3 – 4; WISDOM AND BLIND SPOTS

We are now in the third week of our study in 1 Kings. I hope you are beginning to see how biblical narrative works. I pray you are beginning to see the “scenes” within the story and how they build upon each other in order to get across a deeper point to the story. God wants to speak to us through His Word, and one of the best ways to do that is through stories.

Today we will have to be on our toes, or we will miss what He has to say to us. As we go through chapters 3 and 4, try to see what is happening. Don't get so caught up in the smaller story arc and miss the bigger picture. Think and work through the text. God is speaking to all of us today.

Solomon's throne is now secure, and he will be visited by God, in order to see what he, (Solomon) desires, in order to make him a better king. Many of us will be familiar with this story. So, let's be like Solomon and seek the wisdom of God.

Opening scene

1Kings 3:1 *·Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into ·the city of David until he had finished ·building his own house ·and the house of the LORD ·and the wall around Jerusalem. ² ·The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the LORD.*

- This is the opening scene. It is setting up a bigger picture.

- We see that Solomon made a marriage alliance with the king of Egypt, concerning his daughter. Mark that.
- We also see that Solomon is sacrificing at the “high places.”
- Define high places – why is he sacrificing there and not at the tabernacle? We will see the phrase, “high places” again. There is both a good and bad context to this. (verse 2)

1Kings 3:3 Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. ⁴ And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” ⁶ And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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?”

Scene continues

- We see Solomon doing and saying all the right things. He is humble and gives God all the glory for what has happened thus far. He is sacrificing large amounts of animals and is praying for the right things.

Scene continuing.

1Kings 3:10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹ And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹² behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. ¹³ I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. ¹⁴ And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

1Kings 3:15 And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

Scene fades

- Solomon asked for wisdom and discernment. He didn't ask for wealth, a long life, or for his enemies to be taken away from him.
- There is wisdom in this prayer. He isn't attempting to escape the trials of life, rather, he is asking for the wisdom to be able to deal with life. This should be our prayer also.
- So much of our prayers have to do with being removed or to evade trouble. That is understandable. But we are here for a reason. And we should all realize that life happens. I think we understand that. However, one way we, as the imagers and people of God are set apart from the world is seen by others in how we deal with the daily trials and tribulations of life. Jesus said that we would have tribulation in this world, but we are to be of good cheer because He has overcome the world. And this, He has done. But we are faced with situations and hard decisions every day. We cannot run from them. **It is actually the running from trouble that often gets us into trouble.** This is what leads to "escapism", and many times that is done with alcohol, drugs, media or any multitude of other things.
- We need to be like Solomon and ask for the wisdom and discernment to deal with trouble.
- Because of what Solomon asked for, God then granted him riches and long life. Why wouldn't He? God needs discerning people to be around for a while, and He needs them to be in the right places, in order that they can wield influence on others. Let us pray as Solomon did.

New scene opens - Solomon now has to use that for which he prayed.

1Kings 3:16 Then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷ The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. ¹⁸ 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 were in the house. ¹⁹ And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. ²⁰ And she arose 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. ²¹ When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead. But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child that I had borne." ²² 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.

1Kings 3:23 Then the king said, "The 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 the living one.'" ²⁴ And the king said, "Bring me a sword." So a sword was brought before the king. ²⁵ And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." ²⁶ 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." ²⁷ Then the king answered and said, "Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother." 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.

- We shouldn't be surprised when God answers our prayers. Solomon asked for wisdom and discernment, and now he has to use and operate in the very gift for which he asked. He should have known, especially in his position, as king, that he would now be thrust into a position have to make a decision such as this one.
- He is being used by God. And we will be also, if we are willing to be used by God. But we have to be willing to get off the bench and onto the playing field.
- I think some people don't ask for things such as this because they don't want to be bothered with the work. But that is our purpose here on earth. We are to be in a position to help others. That is a large part of disciple-making. And that takes time, hard work, and yes, even heartbreak.
- Now we see Solomon operating in the gift for which he asked.
- The truth of the matter is, that in his position, he would have had to deal with this matter anyway. The difference is that now he has the tools to deal with the situation properly. As Jesus said, we will all have tribulation in life. But through Him, we can be equipped to deal with life. Without him, at best we are defaulting to the wisdom of the world – doing what everyone else does. But that isn't necessarily the best way to handle situations or go through life.

New scene

1Kings 4:1 King Solomon was king over all Israel, ² and these were his high officials: Azariah the son of Zadok was ¹the priest; ³ Elihoreph and Ahijah the sons of Shisha were secretaries; ⁴ Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; ⁴ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of the army; ⁵ Zadok and Abiathar were priests; ⁵ Azariah

the son of Nathan was over the officers; Zabud the son of Nathan was priest and king's friend;⁶ Ahishar was in charge of the palace; and Adoniram the son of Abda was in charge of the forced labor.

1Kings 4:7 Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household. Each man had to make provision for one month in the year.⁸ These were their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim;⁹ Ben-deker, in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, and Elonbeth-hanan;¹⁰ Ben-hesed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh and all the land of Hopher);¹¹ Ben-abinadab, in all Naphath-dor (he had Taphath the daughter of Solomon as his wife);¹² Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth-shean that is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, and from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, as far as the other side of Jokmeam;¹³ Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead (he had the villages of Jair the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead, and he had the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars);¹⁴ Ahinadab the son of Iddo, in Mahanaim;¹⁵ Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he had taken Basemath the daughter of Solomon as his wife);¹⁶ Baana the son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth;¹⁷ Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar;¹⁸ Shimei the son of Ela, in Benjamin;¹⁹ Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan. And there was one governor who was over the land.

1Kings 4:20 Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy.²¹ 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.

1Kings 4:22 Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of fine flour and sixty cors of meal, ²³ ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, a hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl. ²⁴ For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates. And he had peace on all sides around him. ²⁵ And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon. ²⁶ Solomon also had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. ²⁷ And those officers supplied provisions for King Solomon, and for all who came to King Solomon's table, each one in his month. They let nothing be lacking. ²⁸ Barley also and straw for the horses and swift steeds they brought to the place where it was required, each according to his duty.

- Most of this chapter lists all Solomon accumulated during this time of his reign. He has done well for himself.
- Verse 20: He has obtained and ruled in peace over the borders that God promised He would give to Israel. Let that sink in for a little bit. That can alter how we look at eschatology.

Remember what God told Solomon: 1 Kings 3:14 And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

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²⁴ For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates. And he had peace on all sides around him. ²⁵ And Judah and Israel lived in

safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon

- Blessings and cursing, according to obedience to the Law of God is something you see constantly in the OT – especially when dealing with leaders. But we also see the same thing being said to Israel, as a nation.

1Kings 4:29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, ³⁰ so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. ³² He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. ³³ 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. ³⁴ 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.

I now want to get back to what I said at the beginning of the message.

When going through the narrative, when working through our “Netflix scenes,” we look for the “problem in the story, our rising action, the turn, and the falling action which then leads to solving the problem in the story. Think about where you would place all these things. Most people will see that from the beginning of chapter three, through Solomon’s prayer as the set-up. The problem would then be the two women fighting over the baby. The turn would be when

Solomon applies wisdom, which then led to the solution of who the real mother of the child was. Problem solved. We now know how to determine who the real mother of a child is, if we are ever confronted with a situation such as this. Now it is all wrapped up in a bow. We can now go home knowing we have properly discerned the message of the chapter, right?

Not so fast. What I just recited would a correct way to deal with that part of the story, but that is not the overall purpose of the passage. The truth is that all this, both chapters, are set-up for a much larger issue that will hound Solomon until his death. And that lesson, is what we need to take home from this.

You may recall that last week I told you that the kings of Israel were to make their own copies of the Law and that upon being approved by the priests, they were then to constantly study that copy and to both live and govern accordingly. Let's go back to the beginning of chapter three.

¶Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into ¶the city of David until he had finished ¶building his own house ¶and the house of the LORD ¶and the wall around Jerusalem.

Now look at verses 26:

¶Solomon also had 40,000^s stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen.

If we aren't careful, we can overlook what is really being shown us. Solomon made a marriage allowance with the king of Egypt. And he had also accumulated a ton of horses. No problem, right? I mean, this is just what kings do. We shouldn't expect anything different, should we? Well, let's see.

Deut. 17:14 “When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ ¹⁵ you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. ¹⁶ *Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’* ¹⁷ *And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.*

Deut. 17:18 “And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. ¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

Houston, we have a problem. Solomon has broken two major laws concerning what the king should not do. The first verses of chapter three were a set-up. They were placed there for a reason. They are

there to let us know that Solomon is going down a bad road. He has made an alliance with the king of Egypt. He has married a foreign woman and that alliance is equivalent of looking to Egypt for help. This happened all the time within the European monarchies. Egypt was now an ally of Israel. Though it looks like what any king would do, it actually amounts to Solomon depending on another king, rather than God for protection. Israel was never to look to Egypt. Plus, Solomon has also acquired a multitude of horses. That is a big no no. But why? What is wrong with a king having lots of horses? Shouldn't a king do such as this? Isn't that prudent? Shouldn't he want those horses for his army?

To us, this is the normal way of doing business. But fundamentally, it shows a lack of faith in God. This is so critical to our theology. **God wanted to govern Israel in a way different from the way any other kingdom was governed. The king and the people were to look to God and God alone for provision and protection! By making an alliance with Egypt and accumulating horses, Solomon had defaulted to the ways of the world and was not acting in faith.**

This is the real lesson of these chapters.

But what do we do with the verses saying how great Solomon was? Didn't have wisdom from God? Wasn't he a great king?

Yes, Solomon had wisdom, but like us, he didn't always use it. He had blind spots. There were areas of his life where his faith was not used to make his decisions. Think about that for a bit.

You see, when reading the bible, we tend to have "white hat syndrome." That is, like the old westerns, we see the good guy, with the white hat and the bad guy with the black hat. We see everything in black and white. But people aren't like that. All of us, even the best of us, are a mixture of those things, at best. We read of the heroes in the

Bible and think of them with halos over their heads. But they all have issues. They all have blind spots. And Solomon's decisions, as king, have repercussions for an entire nation.

Solomon had blind spots – areas of his life where his faith didn't determine how he acted or what decisions he made. I'm sure he thought, with his wisdom and wealth, that his spiritual life was running perfectly. But sadly, that wasn't the case. We have to be honest and listen to the Spirit. He is telling us, in that still small voice, that there are areas of our lives in which He is not the controlling agent. We are good in some areas, but not so good in others.

- The letters to the seven churches.
- The application today is not how to discern who the true mother of a child is. The application is that we all have blind spots and we can't rely on what seems to be our success in order to determine how our spiritual walk is going.
- The only way to do life properly is to walk in the Spirit and take everything to God's Word and then to prayer. Don't be like Solomon. Look for the blind spots and allow God to move in those areas of your life, just as much as He has reign in the rest of it.