

September 10 – 1 Kings 1-4

The Wealth and Wisdom of Solomon

Large Group Teaching Review

First Kings picks up where 2 Samuel left off: at the conclusion of King David's reign. First Kings 1-4 recounts Solomon's rise to the throne and early accomplishments. In chapter 1, Solomon is anointed king, despite the threat of Adonijah, in fulfillment of God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13. In chapter 2, after a final charge from David, Solomon's reign is fully established. In chapter 3, Solomon asks the Lord for wisdom, which God grants him, along with riches and honor. Chapter 4 describes a season of blessing, prosperity, and peace among God's people under Solomon's reign.

Gospel Glimpses

GOD'S PEOPLE NEED A KING. All throughout 1-2 Kings, God's people share in blessing when a good king follows the Lord and share in judgment when an evil king rejects the Lord. As goes the leader, so goes the entire nation. This is one of the most basic implications of how 1-2 Kings is structured, as a succession of kings in which the fate of the people is bound up with the integrity of their leader. In 1 Kings 1-2, God is faithful to provide his people with a king, the promised offspring of David. Tragically, both this king and most of those who follow him will ultimately let the people down by disobeying the Lord. But in the larger story of the whole Bible, of which 1-2 Kings is just one chapter, God provides the perfect King, the promised descendant of David whose obedience brings salvation and blessing to the whole world. As we read through story after story of failed kings in 1-2 Kings, we see the depth of our need for this King, and we long for his arrival.

GOD'S EAGERNESS TO BLESS HIS PEOPLE. First and Second Kings have much to say about divine judgment, as does much of the rest of the Old Testament. Sometimes the God of the Old Testament is caricatured as a knee-jerk, tempestuous person who is always smiting people. In reality, the deepest heart of God, from Genesis to Revelation, is love. In this portion of Scripture, especially 1 Kings 3-4, we see God's responsiveness to the prayers of his people and his eagerness to bless them as they seek his face and walk in his ways. Christ's lament in Matthew 23:37 reflects this same disposition in God's heart toward blessing his people: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing." In the work of Christ, which is the clearest revelation of the heart of God for his people, we find a God who not only is eager to bless his people but who spares no expense to bless them, even at the cost of his Son's very life.

Whole-Bible Connections

DAVIDIC COVENANT. In 2 Samuel 7:12–16, God had promised David that one of his offspring would rule on his throne, that he would build a house for God, and that God would establish his kingdom forever. First Kings 1–2 establishes God’s fulfillment of this promise with the accession of Solomon, who will eventually build the temple (1 Kings 5–8). Nonetheless, Solomon’s disobedience leads to the Lord’s discipline and the division of the nation (see 1 Kings 11:9–13). Ultimately, 1–2 Kings leaves the reader with an expectation of a future Davidic King who will usher in an everlasting kingdom and rule over God’s people in righteousness. In the New Testament, the apostles proclaim Jesus Christ as this promised Davidic King, and his resurrection and ascension to heaven function as his royal enthronement (e.g., Acts 2:29–36, 13:32–37). Today Jesus is reigning from his heavenly throne and advancing his kingdom, and one day he will return to consummate his everlasting kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth.

Small Groups

Opening Announcements

- 1) Take attendance
- 2) Get-to-know-you question: If you could instantly become an expert in any skill, what would it be?
- 3) Sunday School starts this coming Sunday (Sept 14)

Prayer

In this passage we learn that wisdom comes from God. Like Solomon, God also invites us to pray for wisdom, and God promises to give it! Read James 1:5. Go around and share one area where each of you needs God’s wisdom in your life (leaders start). Then leaders take turns praying these things for each student by name.

Study Questions

Solomon’s Acquisition of the Throne (1 Kings 1–2)

Where do you see God’s activity and faithfulness in these chapters? (Consider, e.g., 1 Kings 1:29–30 or 2:45–46.)

First Kings 1:5 records that Adonijah “exalted himself,” aspiring to be king. Solomon, by contrast, is relatively inactive—his selection as king comes about largely through the efforts of Nathan and Bathsheba (1:11–27). What can we learn about God’s sovereignty in this

passage (see, e.g., 2:15)? Are there any ways in which the events of 1 Kings 1–2 might serve as an illustration of Jesus' words in Luke 14:11?

In David's final charge to Solomon, he exhorts his son both to a righteous character (2:1–4) and to the execution of justice (2:5–9). What do you think Christians today should learn from this charge? In what ways (if any) do you think this charge was unique to Solomon as king over God's people?

Solomon's Wisdom and Blessing (1 Kings 3–4)

According to 3:7–9, why does Solomon ask for wisdom? What do you think is going on in Solomon's heart as he makes this request?

It pleases the Lord that Solomon asks for wisdom (3:10). What does God commend Solomon for not asking for (e.g., in 3:11, 13)? Why do you think wisdom is superior to these things, in God's sight?

In 1 Kings 3:16–28, Solomon's wisdom is demonstrated through the narrative of two prostitutes who come to him with a dispute. Why do you think the author included this story? What is the purpose of Solomon's wisdom, as it functions here (see, e.g., 3:28)?

All of chapter 3 reflects a very high estimation of the value of wisdom. In what ways is wisdom as portrayed in this chapter different from mere intelligence? How is wisdom as portrayed here dependent upon humility and faith? You may want to consider Proverbs 1:7 and James 1:5–8 as you reflect upon this question.

Chapter 4 describes a sort of “golden age” among God’s people in which, under Solomon’s rule, “Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy” (4:20). This initial season of prosperity stands out in contrast with the rest of the book as a reminder that God is eager to bless his people when they walk in his ways (as he promises in, e.g., 2:1–4, 3:13–14). What strikes you as most impressive in the account of Solomon’s officials, possessions, and wisdom in 1 Kings 4? What does this chapter reveal about God’s character?

First Kings 4:34 records that “the people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.” God has always been concerned with advancing his purposes among all the nations of the earth (see Gen. 12:3). How does the fame of Solomon’s wisdom depict the missional nature of the Israelite monarchy? How do you think the world might be different today if Israel’s kings had been consistently obedient?

Application

- 1) What is a promise God has made to you in His word that is hard for you to believe? How does this passage help you to see you can trust God’s promises?

- 2) God has richly blessed us through Jesus Christ. How might your week look different with the reminder that you are blessed in Him?