

## 1 Kings 3-4

Good evening and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to 1 Kings 3?

Last week we saw the end of the reign of King David, as he has now handed over the keys of the kingdom of Israel over to his son Solomon. David has now died, and Solomon rules from his throne.

The combined 80 years that David and his son Solomon, reigned over Israel were considered the Golden Age of Hebrew History. Until Jesus comes back, these were the finest days in the nations history.

At this time in history, Homer was writing poetry in Greece as the dawning of Greek civilization had just begun, and Egypt as a world power is in a state of decline.

Which means that during the reign of Solomon, Israel was the most powerful nation on earth – the world's lone superpower. Solomon essentially ruled over a global empire. He built alliances, and entered into trade agreements with foreign kings that brought unprecedented prosperity to the nation.

As Israel's leader he built a navy and a merchant marine, while also opening up Israel to world markets, all of which spread his fame all around the world.

We know that David won battles, and established a dynasty – but God used Solomon to take Israel to the next level. Solomon expanded the kingdom, and God used him to make Israel great!

Tonight and in the next few chapters to come, we're going to look at some of the incredible achievements of King Solomon.

But we'll also see the warning signs of compromise in Solomons heart, that will ultimately bring him great heartache.

The title of tonights message is STARTING STRONG  
Let's pray

1 Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married Pharaoh's daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall all around Jerusalem. Ancient kings believed the best way to insure peace was to make your enemies your in-laws. It was common for treaties to be sealed with a marriage.

This is the reason Solomon ended up with 700 wives and 300 concubines. His harem was full of political princesses – daughters of neighboring rulers. But of course this practice was not in accordance with God's will.

Pagan princesses brought with them the worship of pagan gods and idols. This was why Deuteronomy 17 is perfectly clear and prohibited the king of Israel from accumulating wives... And as we'll see later this became Solomon's downfall.

2 Meanwhile the people sacrificed at the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days. 3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.”. The law specifies that God’s people were to worship Him only in the place He assigned. The only place to offer a legitimate sacrifice was on the altar at the Tabernacle.

The high places described here were altars that hosted unsanctioned sacrifices-often they were former pagan sites. Apparently, Solomon went to these high places to offer sacrifices to God. Later in his life they become the site for Solomon’s idolatry. This was why the high places were prohibited. They were too easily perverted.

What does this have to do with us? Some people say, “I can worship the Lord anywhere I want. I don’t need to be in church on Sunday or Wednesday. Hey I can go to a lake and worship the Lord. After all, didn’t Jesus preach by the lake and didn’t Jesus preach from a boat? I can do church on the water rather than in the building.”

Hebrews 10:24 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Those who refuse to assemble together subject themselves to all sorts of needless pain and problems. In God’s infinite wisdom, the

Lord set up His church as a body because we stir up love, good works, and encourage and exhort one another.

4 Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ” This was a big event. 2 Chronicles 1 tells us Solomon invited everyone in Israel to Gibeon. And Solomon offers 1,000 burnt offerings-this incredible amount of sacrifice demonstrated both Solomon’s great wealth and his heart to use his wealth to glorify God.

As we move to this next section of verses, **SHOW PIC** you’ve all likely seen the plot line of a person coming upon the magic lamp, where a genie pops up and grants the wishes of those who found him. **CLOSE PIC**

And I'm sure you've played the game-if you could wish for anything, what would it be? The obvious answer is unlimited wishes right?

All joking aside, this is the situation Solomon is about to find himself in...

5-9

5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask! What shall I give you?”

6 And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a

son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7 Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am 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 numerous to be numbered or counted. 9 Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" It's been said the beginning of true wisdom is to recognize the need for wisdom

God asks Solomon what he wants, and Solomon was wise enough to know it didn't matter the size of his bank account - or length of his days - or his popularity – or victories over his enemies. Solomon recognized the gravity, the weightiness of ruling God's people. So Solomon asks God for wisdom so that he might rule God's people properly.

And God was pleased with Solomon's request...

10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. Why was the Lord pleased? Because Solomon, the most powerful man in the world, makes a selfless request. Solomon's desire is not to be served, but to serve.

Jesus is always pleased when our desire is to be like Him.

Matthew 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

The natural reaction to reading this promise of God to Solomon is to wish we had such a promise. We do have them.

Matthew 7:7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

And

John 15:7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

And

1 John 5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Well then, why don't we each have a vacation home in hawaii? Why hasn't God given us the physical healing we oh so desire? Because so often our prayers are not in alignment with His will.

11-13

11 Then God said to him: “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. 13 And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. God not only granted Solomon wisdom - He threw in the riches, and honor, and longevity – all the “other stuff” Solomon could've asked for, but didn't. 1 Kings 3 proves what

Jesus spoke in **Matthew 6:33**, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

14-15

14 So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

15 Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

In the last half of chapter 3 Solomon gets an opportunity to demonstrate the wisdom he had acquired from the Lord. He’s asked to judge a difficult case...

16 Now two women who were harlots came to the king, and stood before him. Neither of these women have a good reputation for morals or honesty. Prostitutes aren’t known for being the most trustworthy bunch. And we’re about to learn these 2 were both roommates.

17 And one woman said, “O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. 18 Then it happened, the third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we were together; no one was with us in the house, except the two of us in the house. 19 And this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him. This was tragic, yet this is where a sad story becomes sinister...

20-22

20 So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. 21 And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne.”

22 Then the other woman said, “No! But the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son.”

And the first woman said, “No! But the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son.”

Thus they spoke before the king. Remember, there are no dental records – no fingerprints – no DNA - no baby photos. The two women live by themselves. This is a case of one person’s word against another. What’s Solomon to do?

23-26

23 And the king said, “The one says, ‘This is my son, who lives, and your son is the dead one’; and the other says, ‘No! But your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.’” 24 Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought a sword before the king. 25 And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other.”

26 Then the woman whose son was living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, “O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!”

But the other said, “Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him.” The mother of the child that lives has her motherly instinct kicked in... The true mom would be willing to drop her claim in order save her son’s life. But the mom who accidentally killed her



child says she's fine with the plan. She'd rather neither of them have a son!

27 So the king answered and said, "Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she is his mother."

Solomon had the wisdom to know that a mother's love will always put her child's welfare ahead of her own desires...

28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice. If you've been alive for any period of time, you've encountered one impossible decision after another. Not all situations are black and white are they? How many times do we find ourselves in difficult circumstances where the answer isn't always clear?

We need discernment.

This is what makes the truth of James 1:5 such good news **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**

God makes a promise... Ask for wisdom and God will give it to us!

Chapter 4 the first 19 verses detail the members of Solomon's administration...

1 So King Solomon was king over all Israel. 2 And these were his officials: Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest; " the High Priest spoke for God.

3 Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; secretaries of state

**Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder;** or State Historian – he managed the king's legacy.

4 **Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, over the army;** the highest ranking military official... He replaces General Joab.

**Zadok and Abiathar, the priests;** 5 **Azariah the son of Nathan, over the officers;** Azariah was equivalent to the White House Chief of Staff.

**Zabud the son of Nathan, a priest and the king's friend;** the prophet Nathan was a wise confidant of David. Solomon became friends with his son, Zabud

6 **Ahishar, over the household;** Abiathar ran the king's family affairs

**and Adoniram the son of Abda, over the labor force.** He was in charge of the labor and guilds of craftsmen that Solomon used in his building projects.

Verses 7-19 explains the list of governors and their jurisdictions. These guys collected taxes for Solomon and the central government. Each man was responsible for a month's support. It's interesting the 12 divisions were not along tribal boundaries. For some reason Solomon divided the kingdom along non-traditional lines.

The king was reshuffling the deck a little bit, perhaps break up a few unhealthy cliques and form new friendships and alliances. And this isn't a bad idea.

Oftentimes this is needed in the church. We tend to gravitate toward the people we know and like – and at times we need to be forced to reach out to new folks and create new bonds.

7-20

7 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. 8 These are their names: Ben-Hur,[fn] in the mountains of Ephraim; 9 Ben-Deker,[fn] in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh, and Elon Beth Hanan; 10 Ben-Hesed,[fn] in Arubboth; to him belonged Sochoh and all the land of Hephher; 11 Ben-Abinadab,[fn] in all the regions of Dor; he had Taphath the daughter of Solomon as wife; 12 Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth Shean, which is beside Zaretan below Jezreel, from Beth Shean to Abel Meholah, as far as the other side of Jokneam; 13 Ben-Geber,[fn] in Ramoth Gilead; to him belonged the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, in Gilead; to him also belonged the region of Argob in Bashan—sixty large cities with walls and bronze gate-bars; 14 Ahinadab the son of Iddo, in Mahanaim; 15 Ahimaaz, in Naphtali; he also took Basemath the daughter of Solomon as wife; 16 Baanah the son of Hushai, in Asher and Aloth; 17 Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar; 18 Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin; 19 Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, in the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan. He was the only governor who was in the land.

20 Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. This was a golden age for Hebrew prosperity – a time of plenty - in both the north, Israel – and the southern kingdom-which you'll recall is Judah

21 So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River<sup>[fn]</sup> 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 the river here that's mentioned isn't the Jordan river, it's all the way to the Euphrates.

22 Now Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour, sixty kors of meal, a "kor" consisted of about 55 gallons. Imagine, every morning the bread man pulled up to Solomon's royal kitchen with 30 55-gallon drums full of flour – and another 60 55-gallon drums packed with meal – or crushed grain. Evidently, the king and his court liked to eat.

In addition to the bread, each day they ordered

23 ten fattened oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl. Solomon was a meat and bread man. Steak, and ribs, and lamb chops, and barbecued venison, and turkey, and pheasant, and duck.

Just how big was Solomon's household? Well we don't know for sure but many theologians speculate that Solomon used this food on more than just his household given the vast quantities.

And the scriptures don't imply that Solomon had a gluttony problem. Rather this is likely pointing to the fact of the great prosperity that Israel enjoyed at this time. Gone are the days of scarcity and poverty.

24-25

24 For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River<sup>[fn]</sup> 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. 25 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. Dan was the northern boundary of Israel. Beersheba was the southern border. "From Dan as far as Beersheba" is like saying "from north to south" – all the land enjoyed peace.

And notice the expression "each man under his vine and his fig tree". This was a picture of peace and prosperity. The phrase is used multiple times in the OT. In fact, later on in Israel's difficult days this phrase was used prophetically of the end of the age when the Prince of Peace would return to the earth, and establish His kingdom. Messiah will usher in a global peace. **Micah 4:4 But**

**everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree,**

**And no one shall make them afraid;**

**For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.**

26 Solomon had forty<sup>[fn]</sup> thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. **SHOW PIC** When we go to Israel we always visit Solomon's stables in Megiddo. But he kept his horses in several locations scattered all around his kingdom. **CLOSE PIC**

Verse 26 is an important verse, because we see another flaw in Solomon that will spell his future difficulties. Clearly Solomon didn't take God's word as seriously as he should. In **Deuteronomy 17:16**, "But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'

So notice 3 ingredients for solomons future downfall.

Multiple pagan wives

Worshipped at places other than God allowed

Gathered horses unto himself.

27-29

27 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. 28 They also brought barley and straw to the proper place, for the horses and steeds, each man according to his charge.

29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Solomon wasn't only incredibly wise, but he was compassionate and kind. Here's a man with a rare combination – "a quick mind and a big heart." Here's what made Solomon so special. He had an open mind and large heart. Solomon ruled with his head and his heart,

30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 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. Ethan wrote Psalm 89. Heman sang Psalm 88. The other men we know nothing about, other than they must've been the wisest guys of their day.

32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. The book of Proverbs contains roughly 750 proverbs, which means we only have 25% of his repertoire. And of his 1005 songs, we only have 3 – Psalms 72, 127, the Song of Solomon.

33 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. Solomon was a student of science - a botanist and a zoologist. His wisdom and knowledge was expansive.

34 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. The king of Israel became a tourist attraction. Wise men from all over the world would journey to Jerusalem to match wits with the wisest king who had ever lived.

And in this we see the fulfillment of what God promised in Deuteronomy 28:1 Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.

AND

Deuteronomy 28:10 Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you.

Solomon began his reign by walking in God's command, filled with wisdom and largeness of heart! May we cry out for wisdom and largeness of heart ourselves tonight!

We must never forget Satan convinced  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the angels to rebel

Satan convinced Judas to rebel

We need wisdom!!