

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 2B

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

Life as a king is extremely difficult. Life as a king without God is impossible. Life as a king governing God's people is worst than impossible! At the back of your mind would always be that one day when you have to stand before Him and give an account of how His people have been looked after. Bringing in economic prosperity and building military might or a nation would be more than enough to earn well-deserved praise from any historian. But Israel was no mere nation. Israel was God's nation bearing His Name.

The successor of King David, undeniably the best King of Israel, had very large shoes to fill. It was no easy task for Solomon to walk in the shadows of his father. He needed God's help. In this chapter, the LORD appeared to Solomon and gave him a spiritual "blank cheque." He could ask for whatever his heart desired.

Wisdom is one of the priceless gifts granted to man by the LORD. It is His holy and perfect Word. Without it, the sinner gropes in darkness. Here the LORD promised Solomon wisdom

to rule the country of God's people, according to his request. He made the right request and would have an amazing continuation to a stellar ministry left behind by his father.

This third chapter shows Solomon's humility and God's gifts of wisdom and wealth to him.

OUTLINE

1. The Political and Religious Situation (vv. 1-4);
2. God Appears to Solomon (vv. 5-15);
3. The Wisdom of Solomon (vv. 16-28)

COMMENTARY

**The Political and Religious
Situation—3:1-4**

Solomon entered into a political alliance with Egypt by marrying the daughter of Pharaoh. This was the meaning of the word "affinity" which literally means "to contract affinity by marriage." Such methods of making alliances were very common. At that time, Solomon had not completed the building of his own palace and the erection of the Temple. Egypt was an idolatrous country. This provides us with an approximate time frame.

It was probable that Pharaoh's daughter had renounced her idolatry, there being no mention of any Egyptian idolatry in Israel during Solomon's days. If there were, he would have built a temple in Jerusalem to placate Pharaoh's daughter for her

to worship. In 1 Kings 11:1—*But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites*; she was not included among the foreign wives who led Solomon into idolatry during his later years. It was also not possible at this early period of Solomon's reign for him to admit Egyptian idolatry into Jerusalem.

On the religious scene, the people made their sacrifice in "high places." This term was used to refer to pagan altars which were built on high ground and hills probably during the days of the Judges. The usage here was not to be compared with the days of the Judges or Kings. (The Canaanites, before the conquest of the country by Israel, had many such high places.) The reason for the worship in high places was given to us. These Israelites made do with their own places of worshipping the LORD since there was no designated place for worship at that time. According to God's law, a place would be chosen by Him where His people should be worshipping and offering their sacrifices to Him (Deuteronomy 12:5). But the Temple had not been built and so the Israelites used these high places to worship and make their sacrifice to the LORD.

In the meantime, God met with them wherever and whenever they turned their hearts to Him. This was so until the "house of the LORD" was built. The practice of worshipping at high places was therefore tolerated. Solomon himself went to the great high

place in Gibeon where the tabernacle was pitched together with the brazen altar (1 Chronicles 1:1-13). There Solomon offered sacrifices of a thousand offerings. However, it was this temporarily tolerated practice, not to mention his desire for foreign wives, of worshipping at the high places that took root and brought down Solomon's reign!

God Appears to Solomon— 3:5-15

God met Solomon in a dream. In the Old Testament, quite frequently, God spoke to His people in a dream during the night. God appeared to him with a forthright invitation: "Ask what I shall give thee" (3:5). Solomon answered God in the dream. He began by acknowledging God's kindness towards his father David and of how He had shown His mercy according to his walk before Him in truth and righteousness. He acknowledged that it was God who had made him king. Solomon humbly considered himself "a little child" who did not even now "how to go out and come in" (3:7). We can understand that this is a figure of speech to express his youth and lack of experience and knowledge. Solomon went on to describe that he was among God's chosen people who could not be numbered. Having said these, he made his request. He asked for "an understanding heart" so that he could judge the people, that he might be able to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, true and false (3:9).

The phrase, "an understanding heart" is literally "a hearing heart".

“Heart” is also close to “mind”. In other words, Solomon asked for a hearing mind or heart to hear God’s words and to do His will. In asking for discernment, he had asked for the highest gift indeed. He asked for sensitivity and intelligence in his relationships and dealings in the affairs of the people. God was pleased with his request and granted him what he had asked for. In addition, God blessed him with riches and honour to the extent that there would be no king who could be greater than he. God also promised him that if he would keep His commandments and walked in His ways, he would be blessed with long life.

Solomon woke from his dream. But it was more than a mere dream. It was a revelation from God given to him. It was similar to the dream that God gave to Pharaoh and showed him what God was about to do (Genesis 41:1-7). Solomon then offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings. They were thanksgiving offerings to the LORD for the favour that He had just shown to him. These were followed with a thanksgiving feast for all his servants. Feasting, in this religious context, is an expression of gratitude and joy and a testimony of the goodness of God.

The Wisdom of Solomon— 3:16-28

A testimony of God having imparted wisdom to Solomon, as promised, is described in this passage. Two prostitutes gave birth to children three days apart. One rolled over her child at night and killed the baby. Then at midnight, the mother of the

dead child switched hers for her companion’s living child. In the morning, the victimised mother realised what had happened and an argument ensued between them over the ownership of the living child. Each of them claimed that the living child was hers.

Finally they took the matter to Solomon. The plaintiff accused the defendant of criminally switching her dead baby for the plaintiff’s live child. The defendant countered the plaintiff’s testimony. Solomon then commanded that the baby be cut into two, with each half to be given to the two women. This was a drastic and shocking solution. But Solomon had been endowed with godly wisdom and perception of a mother’s instincts and love for her child. The plaintiff who was the mother of the living child quickly responded: “O my lord, give her the living child and no wise slay it.” But the defendant said: “Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.” Solomon straightaway commanded that the child be given to the plaintiff. All Israel heard of this case and they were all convinced that the wisdom of God was upon Solomon to carry out judgement.

PRACTICAL VALUE

God gave a forthright invitation to Solomon: “Ask what I shall give thee.” How many of us need to be reminded that every faithful believer has that same privilege. The Lord Jesus said (Luke 11:9): *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it*

shall be opened unto you. Yet again in the upper room, He said to His disciples (John 15:7): *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”*

God knew Solomon well enough to know what he would have asked him. Yet God posed the question to him and wanted him to ask. God gives us a *carte blanche* provided our wills run parallel to His. The promise has a condition, “if you abide in Me.” David wrote (Psalm 37:4): *“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart”*

From the woman who was cheated of her living child, we learn that genuine love means willing to make sacrifices in the best interest of the beloved. We should not let our love for someone stifle or hinder that person’s life and spiritual growth by holding that person close to us, and worst for our selfish gain. Sometimes, by holding someone, we profess to love, close to us could stifle his spiritual growth or hinder his life. It would be worse if it is done for selfish gain. We must never do so. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 1 Kings 3:1-28;

TUESDAY: 1 Kings 3:1-28;

WEDNESDAY 1 Kings 3:1-28;

THURSDAY: 1 Kings 3:1-28;

FRIDAY: 1 Kings 3:1-28; Luke 11:9-13; Psalm 37:4; Matthew 6:33.

Discussion Questions

1. Did Solomon do right by marrying Pharaoh’s daughter for political reasons?

2. Did God bless David because of his obedience? If so does it not mean that God’s blessing is conditional? Explain the implication.

3. Solomon’s request was pleasing to God (3:10), but was it the highest gift he could have asked for?

4. Did God answer Solomon's prayer (3:9)?

7. If God were to say what you would like Him to give to you, what would be your request?

5. How did the sins of the mother of the dead child illustrate the saying that one unconfessed sin leads to another?

6. What good things can you say about Solomon in chapters 2 and 3?