

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 3A

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 4 & 5

INTRODUCTION

Immediately after the death of his father King David, Solomon began to consolidate the kingdom. Solomon dealt with Joab and Shimei as instructed by his father David. Adonijah was executed for his own folly of trying once again to usurp the throne. Abiathar, the priest, who was prepared to anoint Adonijah as king, was banished by Solomon. The kingdom was established after Solomon had decisively dealt with these rebellious elements.

Solomon's first important work was to build the Temple. The LORD had not allowed David to build it. This task was given to Solomon. But before Solomon began building the Temple, he organized the machinery of the government, which was a wise thing to do. After building the Temple, Solomon built his own palace. Chapter 4 shows his organization of his government. Chapter 5 describes the preparation Solomon took before the Temple was built.

The building of the Temple in Jerusalem marked a high-point in the

history of the nation of Israel and the development of Israel's religion. Their homes were permanent now that Israel had been established into an organised whole by King David. The Tabernacle was their temporary place of worship. By then, after more than 400 years, it was torn and tattered. David noticed it and offered to build God a more permanent home. But he was disqualified. David had shed too much blood in his lifetime. His son Solomon was the chosen one to build God His Temple. The place and money and substance had already been prepared by David before his death.

It was God's inspiration and providential control that brought them success thus far. In God's providence, it was time to give more permanence to their worship centre as David had desired. God showed His continued guidance and encouragement to Solomon. In the midst of the fame and wealth which he had been blessed with, Solomon was not distracted from the supreme task of building "the house of the LORD."

OUTLINE

1. Solomon sets up his Government (4:1-19);
2. God fulfilling his promises (4:20-28);
3. Solomon's fame & wisdom (4:29-34);
4. Solomon requests material to build God's house (5:1-9)

5. Hiram supplied material most willingly (5:10-18)

COMMENTARY

Solomon Sets Up His Government – 4:1-19

Solomon once more showed his God-given wisdom. He began his rule by organizing his Cabinet ministers like the modern day government. Being king he was the Chief Executive Officer. He named his cabinet ministers in his administration. Top on the list was Azariah, the son (a descendant or grandson) of Zadok, the priest. Solomon put the religious office of the high priest first because he was the one who mediated between the LORD and the people. He was the spiritual leader who represents God in Israel. The scribes were the Lawyers of State. They wrote and copied the Laws of God and ensured that the Word of God was preserved from one generation to the next by their copying. They were next in importance. Then the recorder or “remembrancer” (literally meaning) would remind the king of matters and events affecting the nation but more importantly, kept a record of the history of Israel.

Benaiah had been loyal to the king as his military officer and now promoted to commander-in-chief, taking over the position formally held by Joab. He was the chief of general staff. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests. One wonders why Abiathar was mentioned again since he had been exiled in his hometown of Anathoth for his part in Adonijah’s

rebellion. Some commentators suggested that he might have been pardoned and restored. A simpler explanation by others remarked that his name was put down because he had been a high priest, even though it was only for a period of time under Solomon. We do not know for sure. Both Azariah and Zabud were sons of Nathan. Azariah was put in charge of the district governors and Zabud was a priest and adviser to the king. Thus Solomon covered all the important and necessary fields of administering the nation, namely, politics, religion, military, economy and the secretariat. These men appointed by Solomon must have been trustworthy, reliable and possess special abilities.

Solomon divided the nation into twelve manageable districts. He then appointed a district officer or “governor” to manage the region. Part of their responsibility and duty was to ensure daily provisions for the king and his household. The daily provisions for the king and his household were phenomenal (4:22-23). There were twelve administrators and one of these twelve administrators was to oversee this task each month. The names of the five were not given. These five were introduced as “the son of Hur” (4:8). The Hebrew word for “son” is “ben.” So he would be called “Ben-Hur.” The other four introduced in the same manner were: Ben-Dekar, Ben-Hesed, Ben-Abinadab, and Ben-Geber. The rest were: Baana, son of Ahilud; Abinadab, son of Iddo; Ahimaaz in Naphtali, Baana, son of Hushai, Jehoshaphat, son of Paruah;

and Shimei, the son of Elah and Geber, the son of Uri. Two of these twelve officers were David's sons-in-law" (4:11, 15).

God Fulfilling

His Promises— 4:20-28

The phrase, "Judah and Israel" is a reference to the whole nation in the reign of Solomon. The fact is that from the onset the tribe of Judah will be distinct from the rest of Israel. This prepares the reader for the rift that will soon split the united nation of Israel into two parts. The whole nation lived in peace and prosperity. There was no poverty where a man had to beg for food. Very man lived under his own vine and fig tree. No one had to lease his land to another.

The population of the nation grew and became as numerous as the sand on the seashore and they were "eating and drinking, and making merry" (4:20). The last phrase is an expression describing the peace and prosperity of the nation in which the people were happy and had plenty. They had no worries except to enjoy life. King David had left behind a wonderful kingdom for Solomon to build upon or at least to maintain.

But sadly, in the midst of all these material opulence, grandeur and greatness, there was a strand of folly in Solomon. He had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen (4:26)! The divine writer drops this one little fact of his dark side. He had amassed horses to himself which was forbidden by God

(Deuteronomy 17:15-16): "*Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, ye shall henceforth return no more that way.*" Solomon was breaking the law of God even in the early period of his reign. He was storing up trouble for himself in the future. The law further forbade the king of Israel to go back to Egypt to procure more horses. Solomon infringed this second prohibition later in his life (10:28, 29), and eventually fell into apostasy.

The political boundaries of the nation stretched from "the river", a reference to the great river Euphrates to the land of the Philistines in the south-west and stretching even to the border of Egypt (4:21, 24-26). The inhabitants brought their tributes to the king. God was fulfilling His promise to Abraham at the time when Lot his nephew was separated from him (Genesis 13:15-16): *For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.*

Solomon became very rich and powerful from the world's standpoint.

Solomon's

Fame & Wisdom –4:29-34

God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding. Solomon's fame and wisdom spread far and wide to all the nations around, from the East to all of Egypt. His wisdom exceeded that of all the men of the neighbouring nations. Ethan, the Ezrahite and Heman were on the musical staff under David, but they were wise men too. Solomon penned three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs. He had a keen interest in things around him. Apart from his interest in poetry and music, he accumulated his knowledge on botany, biology, ornithology (study of birds), and ichthyology (study of fishes). Wise men from all the nations came to hear him.

This wisdom of the world made Solomon a most sought after king. He was a super genius in every field of science known to mankind at that time. They would travel from distant lands just to hear him. Solomon became a very famous and well known king with many accolades of praises from kings and queens. Treasures and wealth and power abounded more and more with every year as king. These human accolades would become his down fall. The blessing of wisdom from the LORD that he asked God for would become his curse! The problem was not God's blessing but the abuse of God's blessing. This is so true today too in the lives of many professing Christians. They may start humbly as students asking God for wisdom and blessing in their studies and ministries. Soon success follows with

scholarships and nice paying jobs. Their careers take off in leaps and bounds and promotions and awards from the world pour in. These people will then skip church on Sunday for a game of golf for example, as these are events where new friends can be found. They will soon cease to serve God as time is in short supply and serve their new God called mammon. Their witness for Christ would be non-existent as their new life-style involves eating, drinking, smoking and gambling and much merry making! These are the modern day Solomons in our midst.

Solomon Requests Material to Build God's House– 5:1-9

King Hiram of Tyre, who was an ally and friend of David, sent his ministers to congratulate Solomon for his ascension to the throne of his father David. Tyre was a city in the north-eastern coastal stretch of Palestine which was then known as Phoenicia (today Lebanon). They were a seafaring people and noted timber craftsman as well. The forest of Lebanon boasted of the cedar trees. The cedar is a very desirable material for fine woodwork. It is a hardwood that are resistant to rot and insects. Its narrow grain is suitable for carving and its fragrance is pleasant.

King Hiram in sending his officials to extend his congratulations to Solomon, and possibly to express his condolences for the recent death of his father, showed that he wanted to maintain the good relations that he had with David. Solomon cordially received Hiram's emissaries. Knowing

the reputation of the craftsmanship of the Sidonians, and the fine cedar wood which the country produced, Solomon took the opportunity to express his intention to build the Temple which his father David was not allowed to build. God had given peace to the nation and freed Israel from all her adversaries. Solomon felt that it was the opportune to “build an house unto the name of the LORD my God.” God had laid this task upon him to do. Solomon requested Hiram for the supply of cedar wood and craftsmen who would work together with the Israelites in building the temple.

Hiram Supplied Material Most Willingly – 5:10-18

Hiram welcomed the proposals and responded by suggesting that his own men would cut the wood and transport the wood down the coast to Israel whereby Solomon’s men should then take over the task. In regard to payment for the wood and the cost of labour, Hiram asked for the supplies of food for his household. Solomon complied with the request and supplied Hiram foodstuffs yearly. It was a win-win arrangement and they signed a treaty. The divine writer once again commented that the LORD gave Solomon wisdom as He promised in this transaction. The material was not for free. It was paid for in kind.

The next section (5:13-18) describes what actually took place despite the arrangement Solomon and Hiram had concluded. Solomon conscripted 30,000 Israelites for this work. He sent 10,000 to Lebanon to work for a month with Hiram’s men.

After one month, these 10,000 workers would be replaced by another 10,000, and so on by rotation. One Adoniram was put in charge of this large work force. Furthermore, Solomon had 70,000 carriers, 80,000 stone cutters, and 3,300 foremen (5:15, 16). Solomon even personally involved himself in the work (5:17). The great number of workmen and the description of the materials—wood to be transported for the coast to Jerusalem involving the carriers, stone cutters, great stones, costly stones, -- is a testimony to the vastness and complicated nature of the work! The wonderful news was that the Sidonians and the Israelites worked together in unity and harmony to build the “house unto the name of the LORD God.” The terminology, “build an house unto the name of the LORD God” (5:3, 5 twice) is significant. Pagans build their temples to house an idol or an image. But the house of the LORD (YAHWEH) God is not for the adoration of an idol or an image. It is for His NAME. It is to be a place towards which the people could turn and look from anywhere when they needed help and be reminded of the glory, power, and salvation of His NAME.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Solomon’s organization of his administration to govern the nation of Israel is a valuable lesson on administration and management. He placed trustworthy and capable people in positions of leadership and great responsibilities. He did not choose them on the basis of friendship. He

divided the affairs of the nation into the most important areas of ministry and each managed by an appropriate and suitable person. The nation cannot be run by the king alone; he needs many capable, honest, and passionate men. Similarly, the work of God in a church cannot be done by just the pastor or a handful of leaders. The work of the church as given to us in Ephesians 3 and 1 Corinthians 12 is the responsibility of every member of the Body of Christ, with the leaders taking the lead and shouldering the greater responsibility.

There is a note of warning to every leader of the church, especially the pastor. When God prospers His work, he must take heed not to succumb to the temptation of boasting of his own efforts and the sacrifices that he could have made in the process. He must realise that he would be nothing without God!

God also knows our needs and if we have been walking in His ways and doing His work, He will provide the means. It was God's unseen providence that caused Hiram to communicate with Solomon. And Solomon on his part was sensitive and discerning to see the opportunity available to him. When God commands God will provide.

It is significant that the Temple was built with as little noise as possible. No heavy metal tools were used. The spiritual lesson is significant. The work of God should be done with the least fanfare and sensationalism. It is God who works and brings about salvation. Did not the Lord Jesus Christ incarnate

come humbly and without fanfare? The spread and advancement of the kingdom of God grew silently like a seed underground. Work unobtrusively but surely in witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ, remembering salvation is of the Lord.

The church building is not "the house of God" in the biblical sense although in modern day language, it might refer to the physical premises. Some Christians believe that the church building is where God is. This is true only when it is used for worship on the Lord's Day. God dwells in the body of every born-again Christian. The most important thing to be considered of a church, which is the body of believers, is whether the members are obeying God, keeping His commandments, walking in His ways and loving Him!

If our attitude, in giving to the Lord, whether in kind or service, is one which is careless and casual and costs us nothing, we ought to intuitively review our offering. May God help us to be what He wants us to be. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 1 Kings 4:1-34; 1 Corinthians 12:12-25.

TUESDAY: 1 Kings 4:1-34.

Wednesday: 1 Kings 4:1-34;

THURSDAY 1 Kings 5:1-18; Ephesians 5:15-17; James 3:17.

FRIDAY 1 Kings 5:1-18.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree that the biblical requirement for an elder today is more stringent than that for a king in OT times? Why is that so?

2. The Singapore government emphasises a lot on educating her people. This is the right way to go for a government. But can education bring about a godly personality? Explain your answer.

3. The temple was “the house of LORD”. Today we refer to a church building as “the house of God, and we speak of coming into God’s house to worship Him. Is it helpful or a hindrance to use such language?

4. Is it wrong to be rich? What is the biblical way to manage one’s wealth so as to be found pleasing in God’s sight?

5. Did Solomon act according to his God-given wisdom by drawing up a treaty with King Hiram to build the temple? What were the terms of the treaty? Should Christians use non Christians to build God’s church?
