



Sunday School Lesson for October 29, 2006
Released on October 25, 2006

“God Granted Wisdom to Solomon”

Printed Text: 1 Kings 3:3-14

Background Scripture: 1 Kings 3:3-14

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:97-104

1 Kings 3:3-14

3 And Sol’o-mon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of Da’vid his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.

4 And the king went to Gibe-on to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did SoI’o-mon offer upon that altar.

5 In Gib’e-on the LORD appeared to Sol’o-mon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

6 And Sol’o-mon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant Da’vid my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of Da’vid my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in.

8 And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solo-mon had asked this thing.

11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

12 Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father Da'vid did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

Introduction

Gibeon was an elevated community allocated to the tribe of Benjamin after Israel's conquest of Canaan under Joshua (Josh. 21:17). Zadok the priest was appointed to serve at the tabernacle at Gibeon (I Chron. 16:39-40; 21:29). It was to this place that Solomon came to sacrifice to God, and here he was contacted in a dream.

The lesson text makes it clear that God understood Solomon's feeling of inadequacy in taking over the throne of his father, David. Up to this point it might be assumed that Solomon was quite an ordinary person. The wisdom for which he was to become renowned had not yet been granted to him. The riches, honor, and long life he was to enjoy were not yet promised, either.

Lest we consider ourselves to be in a different category from Solomon, we might look at James 1:5—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." The important thing is that we ask in faith, avoid wavering, and remain humble (vs. 6-9).

Lesson Background

The third king of Israel was David's son Solomon. Solomon reigned as king in Jerusalem from about 970 to 930 BC. His mother was Bathsheba, David's partner in adultery. Bathsheba's first child, the product of their sin, died in his first week. David and Bathsheba's second child was Solomon.

Solomon was the first king of Israel to inherit the throne from his father. After David's death, Solomon acted quickly to remove any threats to this throne by executing Adonijah, his scheming half-brother (1 Kings 2:24) and Joab, a traitorous army general (2:33, 34). He also exiled the high priest, Abiathar, and replaced him with the loyal Zadok (2:35).

During the reign of Solomon the kingdom of Israel expanded its boundaries to its greatest extent, from the Euphrates River to the border of Egypt (1 Kings 4:21). The kings in some of these territories paid annual tribute to Solomon, providing him with vast wealth.

The riches of Solomon have been the subject of theories and speculation. The Bible itself has a great deal of information on this subject. His yearly tribute income was 666 talents of gold (1 Kings 10:14). The modern equivalent of this amount is difficult to estimate, but this may have been eight to ten tons of gold every year and this was only part of his income. His hoard was so plentiful that Solomon made hundreds of ceremonial shields out of gold to adorn his palace (1 Kings 10:17).

Solomon is also famous for his building projects. His greatest accomplishment in this area was the construction of a house for the Lord, the Jerusalem temple. The primary purpose of the temple was to provide suitable and permanent housing for the holy ark of the covenant (see I Chronicles 28:2).

The detailed description of this structure is found in 1 Kings 5–7 and 2 Chronicles 2–4. The construction took seven years and required more than 150,000 laborers (1 Kings 5:15). When finished, this edifice was undoubtedly one of the most splendid buildings of the ancient world.

The Bible also tells us “King Solomon loved many strange women” (1 Kings 11:1). It is recorded that he had 700 official wives and 300 concubines (secondary wives). Unfortunately, we are also told that these wives led him away from the Lord in his old age (1 Kings 11:3, 4). Some scholars do believe, however, that the elderly Solomon sorted through all these things and returned to God before his death. This seems to be the lesson of the book of Ecclesiastes – a book thought to have been written by Solomon near the end of his life. He finishes this book by admonishing his readers that our primary duties are to love God and to keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Today’s lesson presents a young Solomon who finds himself in a powerful position that exceeds his capabilities. When the weight of his responsibilities is combined with his inadequacy, he does not despair. He trusts God.

Today’s Aim

Fact: to examine the circumstances under which Solomon was granted this great gift of wisdom.

Principle: to show that God is the Author of wisdom, which is available to those who ask for it.

Application: to demonstrate that when we ask for wisdom in our everyday situations, God will give it to us.

Sacrifices

1. How did Solomon show his love for the Lord? (vs. 3)

Verse 3 begins with, “And Solomon loved the Lord”...then it goes on to provide the attributes that describe his love: walking in the statutes of his father David, meaning Solomon conducted himself according to the instructions/practices of David, his father. Solomon also offered up sacrifices and burnt incense.

So many times we hear the phrase, "if you love me, then show me"...which let's us know that LOVE is an action word that expresses adornment, a passionate affection, devotion, appreciation, etc...Do you LOVE the Lord? Are you like Solomon's father David, who was a man after God's heart? Love requires us to demonstrate action and not just lip service. It must come from the heart, which is what God looks upon when judging man. Although, if we keep reading 1 Kings we will find that Solomon did run into some issues down the road.

2. Why did Solomon go to Gibeon to offer sacrifices? (vs. 4)

Gibeon, was an elevated community allocated to the tribe of Benjamin after Israel's conquest of Canaan under Joshua (Josh. 21:17). It is located 6-7 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Gibeon is also the place where Solomon made his sacrificial offerings to the Lord. It was known as the semi-permanent site of "the tabernacle of the Lord", the great high place. If you read 1 Chronicles 16:39-40, you will find that Zadok, the priest and his brethren the priests, also went to this "high place" to offer burnt offerings on a regular basis, morning and evening and to do all that was written in the Law of the Lord which He (the Lord) had commanded Israel. So, we can see that Gibeon was considered to be an important place. In the times before Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem, the Israelites pitched the tabernacle of God in various locations. While the ark of the covenant had been taken to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6), the tabernacle – the tent and the altar – was in Gibeon (II Chron. 1:3-5). As mentioned in vs. 4, Solomon offered up a massive burnt offering involving a thousand animals which he placed upon the altar.

Servant

3. How did God communicate with Solomon in Gibeon? (vs. 5)

To offer up a thousand animals must have taken quite some time because Solomon ended up falling asleep at Gibeon and staying overnight. It was at this time God visited Solomon in a dream. This type of communication from God is not rare, for there are others in the Bible who are said to have received dreams from God such as Joseph (Matt 1:20), along with others but not all of these were believers (i.e. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Pilate's wife, etc.) Nevertheless, dreams have long been recognized as a powerful way by which God has spoken to humans on rare occasions.

4a. What offer did the Lord make to Solomon in Gibeon? (vs. 5)

This dream Solomon was having was no doubt unique. It was a two-way conversation going on between the Lord and Solomon. If you notice in verse 5, it says the Lord appeared...God said. This is an awesome demonstration of the Father and Son at work in unity. The Lord appeared but it was God doing the speaking and He asked Solomon - What it was He should give unto him? Now, God no doubt was moved by Solomon's generous offering at Gibeon and therefore, offered Solomon a generous offer as well. For God to have made such an offer, shows that He was well pleased with Solomon's devotion toward Him. He made him an offer which had no limits or guidelines. Already, the wisdom of Solomon was being tested. Will he choose wisely or selfishly? If this request were made to you by God, would you answer hastily and ask for the things of this world or, would you give it some thought and consider those things that touch the heart of God?

4b. How did Solomon respond to God's offer (vs. 6)?

Solomon, did not answer God right away by asking for material things of this world but instead he evaluated his needs by talking them through with God. Solomon starts off by eluding to the marvelous relationship his father, David, had with the Lord. This no doubt gave Solomon a period of reflection and how he saw God as a Promise Keeper to his father David by allowing him (Solomon) to succeed as king. He also acknowledges God as a God of great mercy and kindness. These terms imply covenant faithfulness. Solomon viewed his succession to David as evidence of the Lord's faithfulness to His promises to David.

5. What deficiency did Solomon feel he had in his new role as king of Israel? (vs. 7)

In verse 7 Solomon goes on to recognize his position as king, and that he knows nothing (for I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in). Here, Solomon has humbled himself (referring to himself as servant) and sees himself as inadequate for the task he has been given. He readily admitted he lacked the qualifications and experience to be king especially when it came to measuring up to his father David. The terminology of going out and coming in refers to administrative activities. Solomon faced many challenges as he began his reign, and he was acutely aware of his lack of governmental experience and administrative skill necessary for leading such a great number of people. It is interesting to note that Solomon referred to the Israelites as God's people. They had been chosen by the Lord to be a special people, a holy nation. Solomon realized his dependence on the Lord to keep His people safe (well over 4,000,000) and give them the leadership they needed.

6. What request did Solomon make of the Lord? (vs. 9)

After referring to himself as servant for the third time, Solomon asked God to give him an "understanding heart" to judge His people. The term "heart" as it was used here refers to the mind, the seat of mental activity. Solomon wanted the ability to judge, or govern, Israel wisely. He needed the ability to discern the difference between right and wrong. The Lord knew well what was in the mind of Solomon, for He was and continues to be omniscient (all-knowing). The Creator certainly knows His creatures thoroughly, but God wanted Solomon to voice his request. We can apply this same principle to prayer in our lives today. God knows all about our needs and desires before we voice them, but He wants us to put them into words and direct them upward to Him in faith. Solomon was able to set aside personal, selfish desires and pinpoint what he will need to serve God effectively, which was already a display of wisdom at his young age. He has already learned the lesson he later teaches to others: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10).

Success

7. What were some things God said Solomon might have requested? (vs. 11)

God said Solomon could have asked for himself longer life, riches or victory over his enemies. God's comment revealed His evaluation of what a man at that time and place in history would consider most important as some of the people do today. Clearly God was pleased that Solomon chose to request the gift of understanding human nature and the ability to discern good from evil.

Solomon's request for wisdom also demonstrated a humility that all leaders should have before God. The request also showed that Solomon had the people's needs in mind above his own. Each of these is a superior quality in a leader, especially one on David's throne.

8. How great was the wisdom God gave Solomon? (vs. 12)

Solomon's wisdom was going to have some related yet distinctive qualities. God promised to make Solomon a unique individual in history: the wisest man who ever lived. When we see that Solomon is granted a wise...heart, we should realize that wisdom goes beyond the ability to discern good from evil. The wise person recognizes the difference and chooses to do the good. The one who understands but chooses evil is a fool (Prov. 14:16). Solomon's gift is more than just the ability to know righteousness. He is enabled to choose righteousness. Solomon's heart is also to be one of understanding. This has the sense of clear perception of a situation and insight into its implications. This means that Solomon will be able to discern. It has the implication of one who listens judiciously, evaluating all factors carefully.

9. What additional bonuses did God give Solomon? (vs. 13)

Not only did God answer Solomon's request, he added to it. He gave him those things which he did not ask for, such as riches and honor. Here, Solomon received a double blessing: God makes a promise to Solomon that he will (1) be a person of vast wealth and (2) he will be very highly respected. As we continue to read through the book of Kings, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon, we can see the unlimited wisdom God bestowed upon Solomon which causes Solomon's reputation to spread far and wide.

10. What condition was placed on the promise of long life? (vs. 14)

God also promised Solomon long life but this promise came with a condition. It required that Solomon walk in God's ways, keeping His statutes and commandments as David had done. This promise is contingent upon Solomon's obedience to God's laws, an obedience that God had seen in Solomon's father, David. God had not seen in David a perfect record of obedience, of course. But God had indeed seen a general life pattern of obedience, described as to walk in my ways. Unfortunately, Solomon will not match his father David. Because of his disobedience, Solomon died before reaching 70 years of age.

Let us to keep in mind that we are not perfect but we should strive daily, to pattern ourselves after Christ. We must recognize that we fall short daily, knowing and unknowingly and must offer up a prayer of repentance, changing our ways to be that

which is pleasing in the sight of God. We must run this race by faith and not sight, enduring until the end.

11. What did Solomon do after he awoke from his dream? (vs. 15-28)

After Solomon awoke from his dream, he went 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. Soon after that, he made his famous decision as to which of two women was the real mother of a baby, thus demonstrating his godly wisdom.

CONCLUSION

In modern society we find people seeking wisdom from curious sources. The media bombards us with the opinions of celebrities, as if being famous automatically brings wisdom. Why do we think the ability to hit home runs or make music videos gives a person understanding and discernment? Conversely, people who live wisely, fearing God and striving to keep His commandments, are rarely seen as those who should be honored and followed.

So how do we seek and find wisdom? An obvious treasure, yet one we often ignore, is to study God's Word. We are promised that Scripture is able to make us "wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15). The people of God should be people of His Word. We should also seek to be taught by those whose lives display God's wisdom.

God's blessings come when we honor Him first! (See Matthew 6:33)

PRAYER

O Lord, we can never be wise without Your presence. Give us hearts that seek wisdom, even when the wise choices are the hard choices. Give us peace in knowing that Your ways transcend the ways of the world, the paths of foolishness. Aid us in leaning not to our own understanding but in all ways acknowledging you that you may direct our path. In the name of Your Son, Jesus, we pray, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Recognition and development of true wisdom is tied directly to our relationship with God.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEKS LESSON

Study **1 Kings 18:20-24, 30-35, 38, 39** "**Elijah Triumphs with God**"

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