

1 Kings 4

Introduction

1. It appears the author's main purpose in chapter 4 is to record different ways in which Solomon's wisdom was displayed
2. We've already seen one instance where Solomon used his God-given (literally) wisdom to solve a civil issue between two women
3. In chapter 4 we see his wisdom reflected in three other ways:
 - a. We see it in how he setup his administration
 - b. We see it in how he maintained peace and prosperity for Israel
 - c. We see it in its breadth

A. Solomon's wisdom displayed in his administration (4:1-19)

1. The first thing we see in our passage today is Solomon's wisdom in setting up his administration:
 - a. This includes his cabinet and the governors that ruled the different regions of Israel
 - b. Because this passage follows directly on the heels of chapter 3 when Solomon was made king, we might assume this is one of the first things he did
 - c. However, Solomon was only 20 years old when he became king and the list of governors includes two of his sons-in-law so this list was likely from later in his reign, probably 15 to 20 years
2. The first group of men are his chief officials (READ 4:1-6):
 - a. These men were the heads of the different executive departments within Solomon's government—they included priests, secretaries, recorders, commander of the army, deputies, his personal advisor, head of the king's household, and head of forced labor
 - b. They were similar to the U.S. President's Cabinet:
 - 1) Q: does anyone know how many officials and departments there are? A: Vice President plus 15 department heads
 - 2) Q: Can anyone name them? A: Department of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, HUD, Interior, Justice, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury, and Veterans Affairs
 - 3) Q: Does anyone know how many people are employed in these departments? A: 3.2 million
 - 4) Q: Does anyone want to guess what the total budget is for these departments? A: Over \$2 trillion
 - 5) There's a point to this little game; in a moment we're going to see what Solomon did to support his various departments; it will explain the sheer amount of what he collected
 - c. One of the things that stands out about this list is that it appears Solomon selected these men first and foremost from among those who were most loyal to him:
 - 1) Three of the men listed in 1:8 that sided with Solomon when Adonijah tried to steal the kingdom from Solomon were given high-ranking roles: Zadok, Benaiah, and Nathan
 - 2) In addition, some of their sons were also given high-ranking positions: Zakok's son Azariah and two of Nathan's sons, Azariah and Zabud

- 3) Note: the priest Abiathar mentioned in v. 4 must be a different Abiathar than the one that sided with Adonijah because Solomon confined him to his home in Anathoth and removed him from the priesthood which fulfilled the word of the LORD to cut off all of Levi's descendants (2:26-27)
3. The second group of is a list of governors who served throughout Israel (4:7-19):
 - a. I won't read all 13 verses because it's mainly the list of the governors' names and the regions for which they were responsible, but verse 7 provides us with some important information (READ 4:7)
 - b. Solomon's kingdom was so vast that he divided it up into 12 districts or regions governed by 12 men:
 - 1) His kingdom stretched all the way from the border of Egypt in the southern to the Euphrates riven in the north, and extended inland from the Mediterranean Sea almost 100 miles toward the Eastern desert—a total of over 13,000 sq. miles—and this was just the land within Israel's borders
 - 2) According to v. 24, his influence and power allowed him to have dominion over even the nations and kings that bordered Israel
 - 3) What's interesting is only a few of the regions line up with the boundaries of the 12 tribes of Israel; the rest do not so the regions weren't based on that
 - c. One of the main responsibilities of the governors and their regions was to provide for Solomon and his household:
 - 1) Seeing as there are 12 months in the year, this appears to be the reason for the 12 regions
 - 2) Each of the 12 governors and regions was responsible for one month of the year
 - 3) As we'll see later, the amount of food and other goods they provided every month was massive, and this is because the reference to Solomon's household likely refers to the palace complex and the people employed there
 - 4) Many scholars estimate this number to be between 14,000 and 32,000 people!

<p>B. Solomon's wisdom displayed in maintaining peace for Israel (4:20-28)</p>

1. When we think of Solomon's legacy we think of his wisdom
2. But that's only part of it; the land that God has shown to Abraham, and promised to Israel through Moses, was then conquered by Joshua, and ultimately secured in peace by David
3. It was now Solomon's job to maintain it through the wisdom that God had given him and he did that for 40 years
4. It was the most incredible time of peace, prosperity, and power for Israel in their history—there was never anything like it before this and has never been anything like it since then (READ 4:20-21):
 - a. Israel was **“as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance”**
 - b. They were **“eating and drinking and rejoicing”**
 - c. Solomon not only ruled over Israel, but over kingdoms beyond Israel's borders who served him and brought him tribute
5. We get a picture of what kind of resources it took to maintain such a vast kingdom in the next few verses (READ 4:22-28)

6. All of this allowed Israel to “**live in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree**” throughout all of Israel all the days of Solomon (25)
7. And, while we know that ultimately God is behind all of this, the author credits Solomon:
 - a) “**Solomon ruled over...**” (21)
 - b) “**they brought tribute and served Solomon...**” (21b)
 - c) “**Solomon’s provision for one day...**” (22)
 - d) “**For he had dominion over everything west of the River...**” (24)
 - e) “**and he had peace on all sides around him**” (24)
8. It’s almost impossible NOT to see the covenant imagery here:
 - a) In an earthly sense, nearly all of the things God had promised through His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel and David had come to fruition...at least in a temporary sense
 - b) Israel’s pattern through the Exodus, the Conquest, and the book of Judges made it pretty clear that things wouldn’t last because of their tendency toward idolatry and disobedience
 - c) However, there are two types (e.g. examples or foreshadowing) we see here:
 - 1) The first is the peace and prosperity under Solomon’s reign serves as a foreshadowing of not just the peace and prosperity to come in the 1000 year reign of Jesus Christ, but the eternal peace and prosperity we’ll experience for all eternity
 - 2) The second is that Solomon serves as a type of Christ, the eternal King who will rule and reign with perfect wisdom for not just 1000 years, but eternally

C. Solomon’s wisdom displayed in its breadth (READ 4:29-34)

1. The author reminds us here that the source of Solomon’s wisdom was God Himself—this harkens back to 2:9-12 (READ)
2. There are three words and phrases the NASB uses to describe Solomon’s wisdom (4:29):
 - a. The first word used is just that: “**wisdom**”:
 - 1) In describing the difference between knowledge and wisdom, I once heard it said that knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit, but wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad
 - 2) Wisdom is more than just knowledge; it involves insight, perception and even skill in putting knowledge to good use
 - 3) In fact, in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated as wisdom here is used to describe skill in making garments, doing metal work (Exodus 28:3; 31:3-6), leading people (Deuteronomy 34:9), even being prudent or shrewd (2 Samuel 20:22)
 - 4) The most important thing about wisdom, however, is that all genuine wisdom comes from God and begins with reverence for the LORD (Proverbs 9:10): “**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**”
 - 5) We mentioned this when we began our theology series but there was a time when theology was called the “Queen of all sciences” because it was believed (and rightly so) that one could not properly understand ANY of the other sciences without first having an understanding of God, the One who created everything the sciences try to explain
 - b. The second phrase used to describe Solomon’s wisdom is “**very great discernment**”:
 - 1) Essentially, this refers to understanding and insight, which is how some of the other English translations render it (ESV: “**understanding beyond measure**”; NIV: “**very great insight**”)

- 2) It's one thing to gather facts, figures, and information and commit them to memory, but it's an entirely different thing to understand them

****Benjamin Franklin Documentary:** was there anything this dude couldn't do? He was a prolific writer, entrepreneur, successful business owner, inventor, statesman, politician, philosopher...you name it. He seemed to be able to look at any issue or problem with a keen insight and understanding and imagine how to address it. For instance, during his day, many scientists speculated that lightning was electrical, but hadn't been able to prove it. Franklin perceived a way to test it, designed his kite experiment, and proved it. He was then even perceptive enough to realize how this new knowledge could protect the 1000s of wooden homes and buildings that were destroyed by lightning strikes every year and invented the lightning rod.

- c. The third and final phrase used to describe Solomon's wisdom is "**breadth of mind like the sand that is on the seashore**":
 - 1) The word for mind here can also mean heart (as KJV renders it), but mind is more likely which is why most English translations render it this way
 - 2) What's being described here is the vastness or breadth of Solomon's wisdom and knowledge:
 - a) It surpassed that of all the greatest minds in Babylon (the east) and Egypt, which were considered the seats of academics, knowledge and wisdom in the ANE
 - b) He was wiser than "**all men**"...the author even lists a few for comparison: Ethan, Heman, Calcol and Dara were all brothers and apparently skilled singers and song writers (Heman wrote Psalm 88 and Ethan wrote Psalm 89)
 - c) His wisdom extended to poetry and songs with over 3000 proverbs (900 of which are included in the book of Proverbs) and 1005 songs (2 of which we find in Psalms; PSA 72 & 127); Song of Solomon is also often attributed to him
 - d) His wisdom even extended to dendrology (the study of trees), ornithology (the study of birds) and zoology
3. The last thing we learn here about Solomon's wisdom is that he was apparently a well sought after lecturer:
 - a. v. 33 says that Solomon "**spoke**" of these things
 - b. And, men from all peoples and kings from all the earth would come to hear him speak
 - c. This implies he would teach or lecture on everything from philosophy (provers), music (songs), trees and plants, and birds and animals

Two Takeaways

1. One thing we can take away from this passage is that genuine wisdom is all encompassing—it doesn't just stop at the spiritual:
 - a. We often think of wisdom in two categories: there's spiritual wisdom and then there's non-spiritual wisdom (e.g. secular, everything else)
 - b. However, the Bible doesn't portray wisdom that way
 - c. Genuine wisdom is all encompassing and begins with "**the fear of the Lord**", and that's what we see in Solomon at this point in his life (and I stress that last part)
 - d. His wisdom spanned from the spiritual as we see in the book of Proverbs, to judging civil matters, administration, managing resources, governing, building wealth, maintaining

- peace, writing poetry and songs, lecturing on a host of sciences, and as we see later in the book even architecture and interior design
- e. I mentioned earlier that there was a time when understanding who God is was considered essential to understanding all other sciences
 - f. This is one of the reasons why most modern sciences were either founded by or heavily influenced by Christians and those who adhered to Judeo-Christian beliefs
 - g. It's one of the reasons why the United States was and still is (barely) one of the greatest countries ever established—there is no denying the Christian influence in our founding
2. The second takeaway is an indirect one: knowledge without the fear of the LORD is nothing but vanity:
- a. This means there's ultimately no value in it
 - b. As we'll see near the end of our series, Solomon's life ends on a tragic note; he ends up forsaking God for idols
 - c. Essentially, all of Solomon's "wisdom" (if you will) became worthless to him when he turned his back on the LORD
 - d. Some of you may remember the series I did on Ecclesiastes when we were back at Polaris Grace
 - e. It is my conviction that the book was written not by Solomon, but an unnamed author who wrote the book as a warning to his son NOT to turn out like Solomon (explain perspective on book)
 - f. Listen to his assessment of Solomon's life and the warning to his son (READ Ecclesiastes 12:9-14)