

1 KINGS 4:1-28

A. Introduction

1. In our elders' meetings, we're going to be tracing the story of King Solomon, from his coronation to his burial, as recorded in 1 Kings 1-11.

As well as seeing how he points us to the 'one greater than Solomon', we're going to focus in on what we can learn as elders from his life and particularly his downfall, as we seek to lead those whom God has made us overseers over.

2. In the second half of 1 Kings 3, we saw that Solomon's wise rule led the kingdom to be a place of mercy and justice.

Not only that, as we will see here in 1 Kings 4:1-28, it was also a place of order, provision, peace and diversity.

3. 1 Kings 4:1-28 again is all about Solomon's wise rule.

In particular, it's structure draws our attention to how Solomon ruled (v1-19, 26-28), what it was like for the people to be ruled by Solomon (v20, 25), and where Solomon ruled (v21-24).

The picture we are given of Solomon's kingdom here in 1 Kings 4, in a small way points us to what Christ's kingdom is like, and what we should desire this local church under our leadership to reflect.

Four things we should desire for this local church:

B. To be a place of order

1. At the beginning (v1-19) and end of this passage (v26-28) we have a description of how Solomon ruled.

"So King Solomon ruled over all Israel." (1 Kings 4:1)

In particular, we see that Solomon put structures in place to ensure that the affairs of the kingdom ran in an orderly manner.

He had his chief officials, which included priests, secretaries, a recorder, a commander-in-chief, a personal advisor, someone who was in charge of the palace, and another in charge of forced labour.

He also had twelve district governors, who supplied provisions for the king and the royal household and also for the king's horses.

Exercising wisdom is not just about making accurate moral judgments, like we saw in 1 Kings 3, but also in maintaining order and efficiency.

2. The order of Solomon's kingdom foreshadows the order of Christ's kingdom which is to be reflected in local churches.

The very fact that local churches are to have overseers to lead them, tells us that they are to be places of order not chaos.

Local churches need organising and structures to be put in place for them to function well and to ensure they run efficiently for the good of those who are part of them.

This means that our elders' meetings where we discuss administrative matters is just as important as those where we discuss membership matters.

Considering programmes, and policies and procedures, finance and fabric, is a way we reflect the wise rule of King Jesus as elders, and lead the church to reflect the orderliness of Christ's kingdom.

C. To be a place of provision

1. In verse 20 we are told what it like for the people whom Solomon ruled over.

What was it like to be under his wise rule?

It was to enjoy plenty.

“The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy.” (1 Kings 4:20)

One of the results of Solomon putting into place these organisational structures, was that the people flourished and were provided for.

The people ate, drank and were happy because their needs were met.

2. In Christ’s kingdom all our needs will be provided for and met – both physical and spiritual.

This should be reflected in the church.

How?

By seeking to ensure that the physical needs of members are met.

“There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.” (Acts 4:34-35)

By seeking to ensure that the spiritual needs of members are met too, with the right preaching of the Word and administering of the sacraments.

Another way is by having feasts to point people to the generosity and abundance of the heavenly banquet.

D. To be a place of peace

1. In verse 25 we are told something else about what it was like for the people whom Solomon ruled over.

It was to enjoy peace.

“During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig-tree.” (1 Kings 4:25)

2. Jesus has fought and won the decisive victory over all His enemies by His death and resurrection and brings peace to all in His kingdom.

Whilst we don’t live yet in a world of peace, the local church should be a place of peace.

Where its members can enjoy peace with God because they know their sins have been forgiven.

They can enjoy peace within, as they receive from God the peace that passes all understanding.

They can enjoy peace with each other.

As elders, we are to encourage the members to enjoy this peace, by trusting in Jesus who gives peace with God, peace within, and peace with each other (although sometimes we will need to plead with them to agree with each other in the Lord).

E. To be a place of diversity

1. Finally in verses 21 to 24, we are told about where Solomon ruled.

“And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon’s subjects all his life.” (1 Kings 4:21)

“For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the River, from Tiphseh to Gaza, and had peace on all sides.” (1 Kings 4:24)

Solomon’s kingdom was equal to or greater than all the territory that David conquered – and it included Gentiles.

This is reflected in the Gentile animals served at Solomon’s table.

“as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks and choice fowl.” (1 Kings 4:23)

He ruled over a diverse kingdom of people.

2. Solomon’s kingdom points us to the worldwide kingdom of Christ, and the diversity of this should be welcomed in the local church.

The local church should welcome diversity of age, class, nationality, background, interest, language, and so on.

Whilst the diversity possible will be determined by its location, the willingness to welcome those who are different, should be present, and it is our responsibility as elders to model this.

3. Who is sufficient to lead a local church to reflect the order, provision, peace and diversity of Christ’s kingdom?

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” (James 1:5)

How we desperately need God to give us the wisdom we need to oversee this local church.