

1 KINGS 4:29-5:18

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. 1 Kings 3 and 4 is all about the wisdom that God gave to Solomon and how he used it to rule over the people of Israel.

Solomon's wise rule led the kingdom to be a place of mercy and justice, order, provision, peace and diversity.

In some small way, this gives us a picture of what Christ's kingdom is like, and should be reflected in the life of local churches.

3. With the final verses of 1 Kings 4 and 1 Kings 5, a transition takes place from the main focus being on Solomon's wisdom, to it being on the building of the temple which dominates 1 Kings 6 to 8.

Solomon's wisdom is still central to the passage, as made clear by the numerous references to it (4:29, 30, 31, 34; 5:7, 12).

But what is emphasised here is not how Solomon used his wisdom to rule over the people of Israel, but to build the temple.

B. The wisdom God gave

1. In 1 Kings 4:29-34 we have a description of Solomon's wisdom.

Solomon had all the wisdom he needed to lead *"a great people, too numerous to count or number."*

"God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore." (1 Kings 4:29)

Solomon's wisdom surpassed all the other wise men of his day.

"Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all of the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite – wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to the surrounding nations." (1 Kings 4:30-31)

Solomon's wisdom was expressed in all the proverbs and songs he spoke.

"He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five." (1 Kings 4:32)

Solomon's wisdom was encyclopaedic – he was interested in everything God had made.

"He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish." (1 Kings 4:33)

Solomon's wisdom caught the attention of the nations, so much so, that people from all over the world came to visit him and learn from him, including the king of Tyre.

"Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who heard of his wisdom." (1 Kings 4:34)

2. Solomon's wisdom was impressive, but it was wisdom that had been given to him by God.

"God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore." (1 Kings 4:29)

"When Hiram heard Solomon's message, he was greatly pleased and said, "Praise be to the LORD today, for he has given David a wise son to rule over this great nation." (1 Kings 5:7)

"The LORD gave Solomon wisdom, just as he had promised him." (1 Kings 5:12)

It therefore no surprise, that when God took on flesh, in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus, the wisdom that He demonstrated was greater than that of Solomon.

Jesus Christ is both the embodiment and the expression of all the wisdom that is in God.

C. The wisdom Solomon used

1. This wisdom Solomon was given by God, that he used to rule over the people of Israel, he also used to build the temple.

In 1 Kings 5 we read about the preparations that are made in order for the temple to be built.

2. First, Solomon used his wisdom to secure the materials needed for building the temple, by entering into an agreement with Hiram, king of Tyre – he was one of the kings of the world who had sent representatives to Solomon (4:34).

"Solomon sent back this message to Hiram: "You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God until the LORD put his enemies under his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster. I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God, as the LORD told my father David, when he said, 'Your son whom I will put on the throne in your place will build the temple for my Name.' So give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set. You know that we have no-one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians." (1 Kings 5:2-6)

Solomon saw that it was the right time to build the temple – God had given him rest.

Solomon recognised what he needed to build the temple – wood.

Solomon identified the best way to meet the needs he has if he going to build the temple – cedars of Lebanon cut by the Sidonians.

"When Hiram heard Solomon's message, he was greatly pleased and said, "Praise be to the LORD today, for he has given David a wise son to rule over this great nation." So Hiram sent word to Solomon: "I have received the message you sent me and will do all you want in providing the cedar and pine logs. My men will haul them down from Lebanon to the sea, and I will float them in rafts by sea to the place you specify. There I will separate them and you can take them away. And you are to grant my wish by providing food for my royal household." In this way Hiram kept Solomon supplied with all the cedar and pine logs he wanted, and Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for his household, in addition to twenty thousand baths of pressed olive oil. Solomon continued to do this for Hiram year after year." (1 Kings 5:7-11)

In Solomon's request, Hiram acknowledged the wisdom that God had given to Solomon.

"The LORD gave Solomon wisdom, just as he had promised him. There were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty." (1 Kings 5:12)

3. Second, Solomon used his wisdom to secure the workforce needed for building the temple.

"King Solomon conscripted labourers from all Israel – thirty thousand men. He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of ten thousand a month, so that they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labour. Solomon had seventy thousand carriers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hills, as well as thirty-three hundred foremen who supervised the project and directed the workmen. At the king's command they removed

from the quarry large blocks of quality stone to provide a foundation of dressed stone for the temple. The craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram and the men of Gebal cut and prepared the timber and stone for the building of the temple." (1 Kings 5:13-18)

Solomon used his wisdom to assemble, organise, delegate, and direct a huge workforce in preparing the stone and wood required for building the temple.

Solomon's wisdom throughout 1 Kings 5 is demonstrated by his skill in getting things done.

4. As Solomon used his wisdom to build the temple, so Jesus Christ is doing the same.

The temple Jesus is building is not made up of stone and wood but human hearts.

As men and women, come to Him, the living Stone, they, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.

In His infinite wisdom, the Lord Jesus, has determined that the way this happens is through the local church as it preaches the gospel and discipled believers.

And He puts leaders in charge of local churches to ensure this happens.

This passage reminds us that in Jesus we have available to us all the wisdom we need to lead this local church.

This passage also reminds us that we have the responsibility to use the wisdom He gives to get things done – i.e. to ensure that as a church we preach the gospel and disciple believers.