



FEED MY SHEEP

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Be Careful What You Pray For

A few readers took exception to a few of our statements last month in regard to Solomon's marriage partners. I will not take the space here to clarify, but if you had any concerns in that regard, be sure to read the cover letter with this mailing. We will address the issue therein.

Solomon was not breaking God's law by marrying a foreign wife from Egypt. Nor was he breaking any divine law when he worshiped at the high place in Gibeon. Someone might think that Solomon was worshiping at a *pagan* altar at Gibeon, but that is easily disproved by examining 2 Chronicles 1. This is a parallel passage to our primary text (1 Kings 1). Notice verse 3:

2 Chronicles 1:3 So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD [YHWH] had made in the wilderness.

4 But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjathjearim to *the place which David had prepared for it*: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem.

5 Moreover the brasen altar, that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD: and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it.

6 And Solomon went up thither to the brasen altar before the LORD, which *was at the tabernacle of the congregation*, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it.

So we see that even though the people worshiped in formerly pagan high places, and Solomon himself worshiped in a high place in Gibeon, that it was not wrong. God had not yet established *the* place for permanent national worship. In the future, it would be wrong to worship elsewhere, but not yet.

We also notice in verse 6 that Solomon offered a sacrifice of 1,000 animals. One thousand—we have noted on many occasions—symbolizes the glory of God and the age of Tabernacles—the New Age (pun intended)—which I believe is now upon us. And even though Solomon worshiped at the high place at Gibeon; obviously God has accepted the worship because He now blesses Solomon by offering to grant him his request.

1 Kings 3:6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David 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 David my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in.

We recognize that when Solomon refers to himself as a little child, he is using hyperbole in his sincere attempt to humble himself before the great God of Israel. I have shown elsewhere how Solomon was probably between 20 and 26 years old when he ascended the throne.

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 [hearing] 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 Solomon 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.

God is telling King Solomon here that he is the wisest man who has ever lived, or who ever will live! I take that as an absolute statement. The only exception is the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus did not merely *possess* more wisdom than Solomon. Jesus *is* wisdom! The Scripture says...

1 Corinthians 1:24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Excepting the Lord Himself then, Solomon

was the wisest man who will ever live. Just think of all the brilliant intellects throughout history: Job, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Cicero, Augustine, Kepler and Copernicus, Leonardo DaVinci and Sir Isaac Newton, Luther and Calvin, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, Niccolo Machiavelli and Nikola Tesla, Viktor Schauburger and John Keely, Von Neumann and Albert Einstein.

And then there is Michael Faraday and James Maxwell (who is famous for inventing coffee...[*chuckle*]). Of course, I am referring to the Maxwell who discovered laws of electromagnetism. Then there was Max Planck who saw things pretty *constant* [pun intended]...and Stephen Hawking, the *stellar* intellect in modern astrophysics.

When we begin to list some of the wisest men who have ever lived, and we realize that the smartest one of them all lived 3,000 years ago and that he was part of our Israelite family history, can you imagine what it would have been like to converse with Solomon for a day or two? To pick his brain?

No wonder the kings of his era came from all over the earth to meet with him. No wonder the Queen of Sheba came seeking his friendship. Solomon would have blown the top off the IQ scale. He would have made the members of Mensa look like third-graders.

God gave Solomon all that and more for several reasons. First, because he asked humbly. Secondly, because he asked it not for himself, but so that he could be a better ruler of God's people. He requested a gift that would promote the betterment of the kingdom of God on earth. And we remember what Jesus said a millennium after Solomon in

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

A third reason is—and this one is not listed

per se, but is obvious when we consider the types and shadows aspects—God blest Solomon with all these things because of what Solomon foreshadowed. Namely, that since Solomon is the *literal* son of David and Solomon’s kingdom was the height of the glory of Israel; that Solomon is a type of Christ, who is the *ultimate* Son of David, and since Christ was God incarnate, then He alone would exceed Solomon in wisdom.

Furthermore, the majesty and glory of Solomon’s kingdom was the epitome of monarchies in its time, thus it fittingly represented the glorious kingdom age, the new age, the tabernacles age to come, with its universal peace, prosperity and happiness under King Jesus. As we continue, we see a further divine gift to Solomon.

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.

We notice that the riches and the honor are not absolute and not for all time. It simply says Solomon will be the richest king and the king with highest honor *in his own lifetime*. Then God gives him one more promise, but this one is not simply qualified in place and time, but it is qualified as conditional upon Solomon’s behavior.

1 Kings 3:14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

We have already seen in verse 3 that so far, Solomon is off to a good start. But alas, he did not receive this promise. Rather, he forsook the ways of Yahweh towards his later years. He died younger than his father, David, probably in his mid-60s.

15 And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, and

offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

One commentary stated that Solomon fell short in his prayer because he did not ask for an obedient heart. That is a perceptive insight. If we look again at verse 9 we find that Solomon asks for

9 ... an understanding [hearing] heart

Technically, the Hebrew word for understanding means a “hearing” heart and in Hebrew that usually implies an *obedient* heart. However, Solomon had given as his reason for desiring to hear and understand, not for his personal obedience, but so that he could judge the people correctly and have discernment to judge aright in the cases which would be brought to him.

So we have to conclude that if he did desire an obedient heart, that God refused to honor that request. Otherwise, Solomon did omit that request in his prayer. What about ourselves? How often have we asked God for an obedient heart, for the grace to be obedient? And then we wonder why we fail so often and fall so woefully short sometimes!

Returning to that commentator..., after stating that Solomon had failed to ask for an obedient heart, he went on to say:

“...certain things cannot be given if we do not want them.”

Then he offered an illustration. As a little exercise, I ask my readers to determine if there is a hole in the commentator’s logic here. He wrote: “You can’t, for example, give your child a college education if he does not *desire* it. You can pay his expenses, perhaps even make him go to class, but you cannot make him learn if he does not *desire* to do so.” (Emphasis mine-JWB)

Well, when I read it, I thought: “Aha! Man’s free will reigns supreme again.” The flaw

in his logic, as I see it, is that his illustration is perfectly valid for the level of a human parent and child. But he clearly insinuates that the same thing applies to God's level when He deals with His children. I would simply ask the commentator: "Do you mean that the almighty, all-powerful God is powerless when it comes to men's hearts? That God is impotent to change our heart's *desire* from bad to goodor vice versa?"

I think not. He is *not* powerless. In fact, I think He is in the business of doing just that all the time and *in everybody*. One of the top ten "wise guys" of all time, the patriarch Job, is here speaking of the sovereignty of God.

Job 23:13 But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

That means that God has His singular purpose in mind and no one can turn Him from performing His plan. Job continues:

14 For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.

In other words, God has written the script for Job's life and Job plays the part that God has appointed for him. *And so do we*. And now listen to this:

16 For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me:

God changes Job's heart as He wishes, and when He chooses, God troubles Job. He sends some bad things Job's way. Notice that Job isn't blaming the devil here, is he? And remember the Pharaoh of the exodus? Who was it that was playing pharaoh's heart like a slinky toy? First this way, then that way? First, it's in His left hand; then it's in His right hand? First, God hardened pharaoh's heart, then he softened it; then He hardened it again. Or was that pharaoh's free will in charge there? You see, it is true that you can-

not make your child learn from a college education if he or she does not desire to learn. I may be pushing the limits of God's omnipotence here, but I have this sneaking suspicion that God changes the desires of men's hearts according to His purposes. (A bit of sarcasm, there, of course.)

Well, thus far in our study of the life and character of Solomon as king, we saw how Solomon had a divine visitation in which our heavenly Father told Solomon to ask for whatever he desired. In response, the young king made a humble request for understanding so that he might have proper discernment in judging the people of God.

In most monarchies throughout the centuries, there has been no separation of powers. The legislative, executive and judicial functions were all part of the *king's* power and responsibility. We could say a lot more on that, but suffice it to say that therefore King Solomon was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and he was also the only judge on the Supreme Court.

When certain cases were so difficult that they could not be adjudicated by the king's appointed officials—the lower courts, as it were—then those cases were sent upstairs for the king to decide personally.

And so in the story of King Solomon's reign, it is wholly appropriate that immediately after we read of God making Solomon the wisest man who has ever lived that the sacred scribe would give us an example of Solomon's wisdom. Next month, therefore, we will take up the story of the two women arguing over which of them was the mother of a certain infant.

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