

2. Wisdom from above

December 13, 2007

I don't know about you, but from time to time I have some silly fantasies, I think what if God shows up and asks me what I want with no strings attached – What would I ask? According to the Bible, this happened to one young man, king Solomon. A son of king David who now is sitting on the throne of Israel.

How did Solomon get to have such a great opportunity to get a blank check from God? How did he respond? Did he get everything he asked for? Anyone who has heard Bible stories, knows about what he asked and what he got.

Before we get there, we need to take a good look at the man Solomon in comparison with his daddy David.

A. NOT LIKE FATHER, NOT LIKE SON

Solomon was a scholar, not a soldier like his daddy, a man more interested in erecting buildings than fighting battles. David enjoyed the simple life of a shepherd, but Solomon chose to live in luxury.

David was a shepherd who loved and served God's flock, while Solomon became a celebrity who used the people to help support his luxurious lifestyle. When David died, the people mourned, but after Solomon died, the people begged his successor king Rehoboam to lighten the heavy yoke his father had put on their necks.

David was a warrior who put his trust in God, but Solomon was a politician who put his trust in authority, treaties and achievement.

David was recognized as the ideal leader, and his record became the standard by which every succeeding king of Judah was measured. However, nobody pointed to Solomon as a good example of a godly ruler.

David was known by God as 'a man after God's own heart', but Solomon did not have any affectionate name from God, because he not only wasted the gifts from God, but also he walked away from Him in his later years. Solomon was the wisest fool who ever lived in human history.

B. THE FIRST SIN AGAINST GOD'S LAW AS A KING

1 Kings 3:1 Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married Pharaoh's daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall all around Jerusalem.

Marriage to fellow royalty was a common political strategy in the ancient world, and continues to the modern age. It was not only because royalty wanted to marry other royalty, but also because conflict between nations were avoided for the sake of family ties. By the way, this was not Solomon's first marriage.

The Israelites were not supposed to intermarry with other heathen nations around them to separate themselves for the Lord. But Solomon deliberately disobeyed Him.

Leviticus 20:24 I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples.

1 Kings 3:2-4 *Meanwhile the people sacrificed at the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the Lord until those days. 3 And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places. 4 Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.*

When Israel entered the land, they were instructed to destroy these “high places” and the idols that were worshiped there. However, until the temple was built and centralized worship was established in the land, the people of Israel worshiped the Lord in the “high places.” In time, the phrase “high place” began to be used to mean “a place of worship” and the Jews worshiped Jehovah at these temporary shrines.

C. GOD IN SOLOMON’S DREAM

1 Kings 3:5-15 *At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask! What shall I give you?” 6 And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7 Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. 9 Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” 10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 Then God said to him: “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. 13 And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. 14 So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.” 15 Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came 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.*

Solomon certainly made a good beginning by loving the Lord his God. But a good beginning doesn’t guarantee a good ending. Saul, the first king of Israel, started out with humility and victory, but he ended up being rejected by the Lord and committing suicide on the battlefield.

David had both Nathan and Gad as his counselors, but there seems to have been no prophet in Solomon’s circle of advisers. Twice the Lord spoke to the king through dreams.

Can God still appear in men’s dreams? Yes, He can do whatever He chooses to do. After all, He is God. Since our enemy satan is a fabricating liar and imitator to confuse people including godly ones, we must compare whatever we get from dreams or words from other people to the Word of God.

1 John 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

If the Lord shows in your dream and offers you the same thing, how would you answer Him? I can come up with a lot of silly stuff. But I know that I would say, "make me to be just like Jesus so that I may please my Father in heaven with everything I do, think and say. I don't think we can ask anything better than asking God for His perfect will to be done in our lives.

Solomon was not born with a great deal of wisdom from the beginning. But by his request, the Lord gave him wisdom and much more. Again, God is not looking for someone with all the abilities, but someone whose heart is loyal to Him and is willing to be used by Him.

2 Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.

The word that is translated "understanding" is the Hebrew word for "listening." Solomon was asking for a heart of wisdom – a heart that listens to people and hears from God.

The natural reaction to reading this promise of God to Solomon is to wish we had such promises. We do have them and much more.

Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

John 15:7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

1 John 5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Solomon had to make his own conscious decision to follow God. He couldn't ride on his dad king David's coattail to the Lord. We, too, have to make our own decision to follow Him.

D. A WISE JUDGEMENT BY A WISE KING

1 Kings 3:16-28 Now two women who were harlots came to the king, and stood before him. 17 And one woman said, "O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. 18 Then it happened, the third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we were together; no one was with us in the house, except the two of us in the house. 19 And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. 20 So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. 21 And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne." 22 Then the other woman said, "No! But the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son." And the first woman said, "No! But the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son." Thus they spoke before the king. 23 And the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son, who lives, and your son is the dead one'; and the other says, 'No! But your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.'" 24 Then the king said, "Bring me a sword." So they brought a sword before the king. 25 And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to

one, and half to the other.” 26 Then the woman whose son was living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, “O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!” But the other said, “Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him.” 27 So the king answered and said, “Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she is his mother.” 28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.

I don't think that this problem is such a big issue nowadays. All they have to do is get some cheek swabs from each mother and the baby and they do a DNA test. Viola! We find the real mother and send the faker to the same place where all the perjurers go – like Washington, D.C.

But they didn't have this kind of fancy scientific method to find out who the real mother was. So Solomon relied on the love of the real mother.

One thing we have to notice is the goodness and generosity of Solomon. Not many kings would take the time to settle a dispute between two prostitutes.

E. SOLOMON'S ADMINISTRATION

In chapter 4, Solomon brings the kingdom to its zenith. The things that marked his kingdom were peace and prosperity. But the peace that Solomon and those in his kingdom enjoyed was made possible by David, the man of war.

This has a spiritual application for us. Some people would like to think that God forgives sin because He is just lovey dovey. God does not forgive sin on a low standard like that. A battle has been fought, and a great sacrifice has been made. Blood has been shed that we might have forgiveness of sin. The Lord Jesus Christ made peace by the blood of His cross. It is only through His blood that we can enter into peace.

F. PROSPERITY AND WISDOM OF SOLOMON'S REIGN

1 Kings 4:24-34 For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River from Tiphshah even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and he had peace on every side all around him. 25 And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. 26 Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. 27 And these governors, each man in his month, provided food for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table. There was no lack in their supply. 28 They also brought barley and straw to the proper place, for the horses and steeds, each man according to his charge.

29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. 30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men--than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. 33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. 34 And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

I don't think that king Solomon was a regular cowboy to have this many horses. But Solomon violated the Law of Moses not only by marrying many wives but also by multiplying horses and depending on chariots according to Deut. 17:14-17. During Solomon's reign, the outward splendor and wealth of Israel only masked an inward decay that led eventually to division and then destruction.

Deuteronomy 17:16-17 But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' 17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

I'd like to bring your attention to v27-28.

In Solomon's court all his governors had a service to carry out, 'every man according to his charge.' It is exactly the same in the kingdom of our LORD Jesus Christ.

If we are truly His, He has called us to work, office and home or wherever, our God expects us to work hard and diligently. We are not to goof around at our work places, but hard workers; not compromising with darkness for the sake of pleasure or popularity, but burning and shining lights for the Lord. Everybody and everything should be for Jesus and His glory alone.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Intelligence does not guarantee a godly living, nor a good beginning doesn't guarantee a good ending.

2) We cannot ride someone else's spiritual coattail, but we must make conscious decision in every moment to follow our Lord Jesus.