

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON

STUDY NUMBER EIGHT – 1 KINGS 4:20-34

Solomon got married in our last study.

Do you realize that this King has everything that everybody wants who thinks that they have the good life.

- 1. He is married to a wonderful woman that he dearly loves, at least for right now.**
- 2. And secondly, he has lots of money, he never has to worry about anything.**
- 3. And third he has a powerful position. He is the king of an extensive kingdom as you are going to see.**

We could call today's study the "Perils of Prosperity."

Let me set the stage properly for today's study.

The kingdom of Solomon is characterized this way:

- 1. Number one by STABILITY. He is a wise and strong leader. So they have good leadership.**
- 2. Secondly, the kingdom is characterized by SECURITY. There is a national defense in place so they do not have to fear enemies or people coming to take away from them all of these things that they have acquired.**

3. And then third there is total SATISFACTION because there is a strong economy. You are going to see here in just a minute everybody has everything they want. And therefore they are a very happy people.

So it is utopia.

1. We have NATIONAL UNITY.
2. We have SECURITY.
3. We have PERSONAL PROSPERITY. We are saying, “whoop” what else could we ever want?

Are you excited?

v. 20 The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy.

You could summarize verse 20 with great peace and great prosperity, the unity of the nation.

Let's look at the first phrase,
“The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore;”

Does that say anything to you other than the fact that there are a whole bunch of them?

Do you remember when God made that covenant with Abraham way back there in the beginning, what did He say to him?

Here is a guy, he has a wife that is barren and cannot have kids and He says guess what? The day is coming when your seed is going to be like the sand on the seashore. And that was in Genesis 22 just after he was willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. God said because you did not hold back the gift that I gave you, I am going to give you something else. Your descendants are going to be like sand on the seashore.

Genesis 22:15-18

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Now it is fulfilled. You know God keeps promises. Some people do not believe that but He is so good. If you just get to know Him you are going to find that you like Him better and better and better. And He knows how to bless your socks off if you would just let Him by expressing an obedient heart and be willing to allow Him to do what He does. He is famous for that. And He said, Abram, your seed is going to be like sand on the seashore because there is going to be so many of them.

So sand on the seashore and the seed of the nation Israel, the Jewish race, is a picture of God's blessing to this people.

Now look what it says:

“The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore” and then they did three things:

- 1. “THEY ATE,”**
- 2. “THEY DRANK”**
- 3. and “THEY WERE HAPPY.”**

They had a good time. You can take those three words and you can say they had all their PHYSICAL and EMOTIONAL needs met and there is an EXCITEMENT and ENTHUSIASM in the air because everything is wonderful.

I love reading the book of Ecclesiastes because I think Solomon had a midlife crisis and when he had his midlife crisis it was recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes. I do not have too many other people who agree with me on that but I am going to demonstrate that before this series is over because I like to grind that axe just a little bit to help you understand that there was somebody in the Bible who did have a midlife crisis so you are not weird.

Do you remember in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 when Solomon goes through the litany of life: a time to be born, a time to die, a time to sow and a time to do all that stuff? And then you come down to verse 11 and you forget it is there. He makes all things beautiful in His time. In His time and in His way He is going to make it beautiful if you will just trust Him.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

And then he ends that and he follows it right up with this:

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God.

So you are saying, okay, what is the peril of prosperity? That is wonderful. The peril of prosperity is you get the big head. You form two assumptions.

- 1. Number one you are responsible for everything you have.**

2. And number two you also forget that God is the one that is doing the providing and the blessing.

And when you forget those two things you get into deep yogurt. You get into real trouble.

Now, Moses when he is standing on the plains of Moab and he is saying goodbye to the nation they are just getting ready to go into the promised land under Joshua and he is giving this speech. Listen to:

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

You may say to yourself, [*when you get into that land and you have all that good stuff*] “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Do not ever get the big head. Do not ever get the idea that you had anything to do with it. It is God blessing you and orchestrating your life so that this has happened for you. Do not ever forget that.

You see the peril of prosperity is you forgot to dance with the one that brought you.

Want to hear a president of the United States say it better than any other person has ever said it? See if

you can guess who said it and see if you can guess when he said it:

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us. We have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom in virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace. Too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended power, to confess our national sins and to pray clemency and forgiveness upon us.

April 30, 1863 – Abraham Lincoln.

v. 21 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.

When you see from the river, that is the River Euphrates in the Abrahamic Covenant, the boundary in

the north was the River Euphrates and the boundary in the south was Beersheba or the Gaza Strip way down in the south and this is the first time the kingdom has reached the extent of the Abrahamic Covenant. You have the boundary in the north and the south and Solomon is ruling over the whole nine yards. And it says two things:

1. They “brought tribute”
2. And they “were Solomon’s subjects all his life”

Now do you think this is a big kingdom? Well I want you to look at the manifest for the Whitehouse on a daily provision and you will understand how big this is, look at that.

There is the invoice, verses 22 and 23.

v. 22 Solomon’s daily provisions were thirty cors [that’s not beer] of fine flour and sixty cors of meal,

v. 23 ten head of stall-fed cattle, twenty of pasture-fed cattle and a hundred sheep and goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks and choice fowl.

There are ten items on this manifest for the daily provision for the king and his kingdom.

This is enough to feed 10 to 14 thousand people daily that are sustained by the Whitehouse menu.

v. 24 For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the River, from Tiphseh to Gaza, and had peace on all sides.

Tiphseh, that is the major seaport city on the River Euphrates. From there to the Gaza Strip. And they have peace on all sides. There was no military action taking place.

v. 25 During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, *[that is another way to describe the extent of the boundaries. Dan was the tribe that was the farthest north up near the Labenese mountains and Beersheba is the city way down south where old Jacob stopped and said Lord is it alright to go into Egypt? Remember that when he was leaning on his staff and talking to God and God said yeah, it is alright for you to go. So, from Dan to Beersheba but it says something else, they]* lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree.

To live "*in safety*" means that you had a military potential that took care of you so you would be safe and you had a police department that took care of you and so everything was safe.

And then each person lived "*under his own vine and fig tree*," that is a figurative expression that occurs in the Bible in many places especially in the kingdom passages that describes what it is going to be like when the Lord Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. It

just means peace and prosperity; everybody enjoying the fruit of their labor, sitting under their vine and their fig tree.

You know I mean you can flat get hung up on that stuff and that was the picture.

v. 26 Solomon had four thousand stalls for chariot horses, and twelve thousand horses.

All right, now, in this sophisticated society of patriot missiles and aircraft and all of those things, that is what we would be telling you in this verse. We are saying that our defense program is totally adequate. We have “*four thousand stalls for chariot horses and twelve thousand horses.*”

Now we have a problem, remember the theme today is about the peril of prosperity. Remember what David said in Psalm 20 and verse 7? Listen to Solomon's daddy.

Psalm 20:7

Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Can I go back to Moses' farewell address a moment? I want to show you something. Listen to this. Here is Moses talking.

Deuteronomy 17:16

The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.”

Where did the horses and the chariots come from? You know full well that when Pharaoh got his nose out of joint and lost all those people and they got to the Red Sea he sent the chariots and the horses after them. You learned chariot warfare from Egypt. Shulamith is going to have another woman in the palace and she is Pharaoh's daughter and she is going to bring all this stuff in there. And so Solomon may be going along with it.

Listen to this.

Deuteronomy 17:16-17

The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.”

“He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.”

Solomon is beginning to get caught up:

- 1. in wealth and**
- 2. in women and**
- 3. in weapons**

And when you have all three of those things, who needs God, huh?

Somebody said it so well:

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

**Money is like manure. Stack it up and it stinks;
spread it around and it makes things grow.
p. 135**

**You know that is our responsibility to shovel some of
that stuff around and make good things grow while we
are here.**

Now look at verse 27.

**v. 27 The district officers, each in his month, supplied
provisions for King Solomon and all who came to
the king's table. They saw to it that [what?]
nothing was lacking.**

Let me give you six little statements so you can get a picture of the extent of this kingdom.

1. Back in verse 20 you had three of them: “they ate,”
2. “they drank”
3. “and they were happy.”
4. Verse 24 they “had peace”
5. Verse 25 they “lived in safety” – great national defense.
6. Now, verse 27 “nothing was lacking.” They had everything that the heart could conjure up and had every desire that they would like to have fulfilled, fulfilled.

So Solomon has it all.

Look at verse 28.

v. 28 They also brought to the proper place their quotas of barley and straw for the chariot horses and the other horses.

Everything that was needed was there.

v. 29 God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

I want to stop on the words “*God gave.*”
God is in the business of giving.

God is a gift giver.

John 3:16, you know that verse.

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,

Paul would say to the Corinthian saints,

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

In Ephesians 2:8-9 you have to be humble enough to take the gift.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

God is a giver and when God is involved in making a provision it is always the greatest. Solomon had prayed for this wisdom and now God is just saying I have been faithful to give it to him and there are three parts of it:

1. He gave him “*wisdom*”
2. He gave him “*very great insight*” and
3. He also gave him “*a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.*”

v. 30 Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.

The two citadels of wisdom in those days were Egypt in the south and the men of the East. Remember the wise men came from the east, known and characterized by wisdom.

Solomon exceeded all of that and look at his resume.

v. 31 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 all the surrounding nations.

Those guys are all musicians. Their names occur in the Psalms and in various places. They were also known and characterized as very, very wise individuals.

v. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five.

Remember last time we studied his platinum record in that beautiful tribute to love in the Song of Solomon.

v. 33 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.

Man he is a botanist. He is also a zoologist and several other “ists” or whatever you want to call it.

v. 34 Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

The potential for arrogance and pride at this point is incredible because everybody is looking to him as the fountain of wisdom. What he says really counts and that is the last word on the subject.

(Paraphrased from *No More Excuses: Be the Man God Made You to Be* by Tony Evans, p. 167)

The eagle swooped down in the river in the middle of the winter, saw the floating ice and the precarious waterfalls on beyond the river and knew that he could take a rest and he landed on the chunk of ice to rest and enjoy. And as the ice got closer and closer to a waterfall, he knew that in a moment he would be airborne but when he started to his feet were frozen to the ice and he went over the falls.

The world has a way of doing that to you. It can get you so caught up in the here and now you forget. You

forget to be the person who seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness knowing that all these other things will be added to you.

CONCLUSION:

LESSON #1: The people of Judah and Israel ate, drank, and were happy in the early stages of Solomon's kingdom.

LESSON #2: "I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live" (Ecclesiastes 3:12).

LESSON #3: "That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God" (Ecclesiastes 3:13).

LESSON #4: Solomon's kingdom was characterized by adequate daily provisions and peace.

LESSON #5: The citizens of Judah and Israel lived in safety during Solomon's lifetime.

LESSON #6: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7).

LESSON #7: The peril of prosperity is to begin to love the provisions rather than the person who is making them.

LESSON #8: When God is involved in making the provision it is always the greatest.

LESSON #9: God is in the business of giving gifts.

LESSON #10: God has been faithful to fulfill His promise of wisdom for Solomon.

LESSON #11: It is one thing to know what to do and another thing to do it.

LESSON #12: It is between the knowing and the doing that Satan works.

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QUESTIONS:

1. Read 1 Kings 4:20-34 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What is said about the people of Judah and Israel in verse 20?

3. What is said about Judah and Israel in verse 25?

4. What three things did God give Solomon, according to verse 29?

5. How was Solomon's wisdom related to his contemporary's, according to verse 30?

6. What is said about his writings and his music, according to verse 32?

7. What did Solomon do, according to verse 33?

8. Describe what is happening in verse 34.

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

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