

## Lesson 9      31 March 2013

### Solomon's Request for Wisdom

**Lesson Scope:** 1 Kings 3 and 4

#### Lesson Focus

In his early years as king, Solomon's conduct was godly. He desired to obey God, and he governed Israel as his father David had. The kingdom was established in his hands after attempts by his brothers to secure the throne had been thwarted and after he had taken action against several others who had opposed David.

Although Solomon had become king over a people who could not be counted for multitude, yet he viewed himself as God's servant (3:8). He sensed his inadequacy for the task. He had not maneuvered for this position, but he humbly accepted the charge placed upon him to lead God's people, not only as a judge in temporal matters but also as a spiritual leader. To fill the place that David had held in the hearts of the people was not an easy task.

Solomon expressed his devotion to God at Gibeon by offering a thousand burnt offerings. God then appeared to him in a dream, offering to grant whatever he requested. Solomon's response to this offer reveals an attitude of heart that should characterize every worker in God's kingdom.

God entrusts aspects of His work to mankind. The responsibility that each child of God has to this work should cause him to cry out to God for divine wisdom.

This lesson offers benefits for persons of all ages, but especially for young adults who, like Solomon, are assuming greater responsibility in family and church life. A sense of inability in our own strength, along with a realization that God stands ready to supply all that we lack, will lead us to look to Him for His aid to face the future with confidence.

Solomon did not ask for things to benefit himself (1 Kings 3:11) but for what would make him more useful to God. Let us hold that worthy example up for us to follow.

**Lesson Aim:** To recognize the aspirations and rewards of one who desires godly wisdom.

**Theme Verse:** [James 1:5](#). If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

### **Lesson Text**

#### **"Ask What I Shall Give Thee"**

[1 Kings 3:3-5](#) <sup>3</sup> And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. <sup>4</sup> And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that *was* the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. <sup>5</sup> In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

#### **"Give ... Thy Servant an Understanding Heart"**

[1 Kings 3:6-9](#) <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Give therefore thy servant an understanding 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?

#### **"God Gave Solomon Wisdom and Understanding"**

[1 Kings 3:10-15](#) <sup>10</sup> And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. <sup>11</sup> 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; <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. **1 Kings 4:29-34** <sup>29</sup> And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that *is* on the sea shore. <sup>30</sup> And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup> For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. <sup>32</sup> And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. <sup>33</sup> And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that *is* in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. <sup>34</sup> And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

## Questions for Study

### "Ask What I Shall Give Thee"

1. In what ways did Solomon express his love for God?
2. How are worship and service related?

### "Give ... Thy Servant an Understanding Heart"

3. How was Solomon's humility expressed?
4. Why is a sense of indebtedness to the Lord important?
5. What considerations will enlarge our vision for propagating the faith?

### "God Gave Solomon Wisdom and Understanding"

6. For what reasons did God give Solomon more than he asked?
7. How does our response to present blessings affect our future usefulness to God?

## Analyzing the Passage

Gibeon (3:4) was located eight miles northwest of Jerusalem. The tabernacle of the congregation that Moses had made in the wilderness was located there. But the ark of God was in a tent David had pitched for it at Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 1:3, 4).

High places (3:3) were used by the Canaanites for their idol worship. Israel was commanded to destroy these places (Numbers 33:52). Israel's use of high places for the worship of God indicates a heathen influence. God's appearance to Solomon in a dream showed that He was pleased with Solomon's devotion and that He desired to bless Solomon by giving him a choice of gifts (3:5).

Although he was a grown man, Solomon referred to himself as a little child (3:7). This conveys his sense of insufficiency for the responsibilities placed upon him. Therefore he requested that God would grant him the resources to fill his role as Israel's king. God granted his request and also gave far more than he asked.

The Hebrew word for understanding (3:9) has a broader meaning than our English word. It goes beyond perception and discernment to include obedient response.

"Largeness of heart" (4:29) means "increased capacity and expansion of one's mind." The word heart refers to the center of one's being. It includes the feelings, the will, and even the intellect.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"Ask What I Shall Give Thee"**

1. Love for God is an important attitude of one who desires wisdom (3:3). Love and obedience go hand in hand in the lives of those who serve God acceptably. God shows His favor to those who are wholly dedicated to Him, granting them increased capacity and opportunity for service in His kingdom.

2. Respect and appreciation for the faithfulness of others inspires a desire for wisdom to likewise be faithful (3:3, 6). Solomon followed the good example of his faithful father. Having the precedent of his father's example as a pattern for his own life, Solomon had no need to experiment with innovative or deviant methods of self-expression. He understood that David's walk in truth and righteousness had brought God's mercy and favor upon him. Solomon could expect the same by doing as his father had done.

3. Worship holds priority for those who desire godly wisdom (3:4).

The time and expense required for a thousand burnt offerings reveal that Solomon gave God a prominent place in his life. Personal devotions and collective worship prepare us to hear God's voice and to grow in godly

wisdom.

4. God recognizes and rewards a sincere desire to follow and obey Him (3:5). The faithful ones of all ages have learned that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). God supports and strengthens those who choose His ways.

### **"Give ... Thy Servant an Understanding Heart"**

5. A faith that comprehends God's work in the past is prepared for present usefulness (3:6). As we review past events, we connect the dots and thus can trace God's moving and observe His design. The work of God transcends the scenes of the present time.

6. Humility is essential for receiving wisdom (3:7). A sense of insufficiency, however, should not result in an unwillingness to be used in God's service. Rather, it should motivate a humble prayer for divine enablement. Paul wrote, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). By humbly acknowledging our weakness, we give God the opportunity to exhibit His strength through us.

7. A desire for wisdom is prompted by the great responsibility of promoting the kingdom of God (3:8). Those who perceive the magnitude of kingdom work will take seriously every opportunity to serve. Though our efforts seem feeble at best, God will grant sufficient wisdom to be fruitful in our field of service.

8. Understanding, discernment, and the ability to give sound judgment are blessings of godly wisdom (3:9). God's wisdom is more than adequate for anything we may encounter along life's path. We need the ability to discern what is true and right in a world filled with many shades of gray.

### **"God Gave Solomon Wisdom and Understanding"**

9. God desires to give abundant blessing to those who are found worthy (3:13; 4:29, 30). Indeed, all that we have comes from Him. He is the source of all our blessings. God is not a stingy giver.

10. We are responsible for how we respond to God's blessings, and our response will affect future blessings (3:14). Our success must not reduce our sense of dependence on God. God's continued blessing upon us is contingent on how we respond to Him and on how we utilize present blessings.

11. Faithfulness is rewarded with fellowship with God (3:15). Right responses to God's favor will strengthen our connection with God and

thus maintain our usefulness. "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1).

### **Important Teachings**

1. Love for God is an important attitude of one who desires wisdom (3:3).
2. Respect and appreciation for the faithfulness of others inspires a desire for wisdom to likewise be faithful (3:3, 6).
3. Worship holds priority for those who desire godly wisdom (3:4).
4. God recognizes and rewards a sincere desire to follow and obey Him (3:5).
5. A faith that comprehends God's work in the past is prepared for present usefulness (3:6).
6. Humility is essential for receiving wisdom (3:7).
7. A desire for wisdom is prompted by the great responsibility of promoting the kingdom of God (3:8).
8. Understanding, discernment, and the ability to give sound judgment are blessings of godly wisdom (3:9).
9. God desires to give abundant blessing to those who are found worthy (3:13; 4:29, 30).
10. We are responsible for how we respond to God's blessings, and our response will affect future blessings (3:14).
11. Faithfulness is rewarded with fellowship with God (3:15).

### **Answers to Questions**

*1. In what ways did Solomon express his love for God?*

He walked in the statutes of David his father. He sacrificed a thousand burnt offerings upon the altar.

*2. How are worship and service related?*

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). Service confirms and demonstrates that our worship is sincere. One who worships will honor God by being involved in the work of His kingdom. Service, however, is not a suitable substitute for obedience or righteous living.

*3. How was Solomon's humility expressed?*

Solomon acknowledged God's mercy upon his father and also upon himself. He referred to himself as God's servant. Calling himself a

child, he admitted his own weakness and insufficiency.

*4. Why is a sense of indebtedness to the Lord important?*

God has given us a goodly heritage. His favor and mercy upon our lives is unmerited. Our sufficiency is not our own, for as Jesus told His disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

*5. What considerations will enlarge our vision for propagating the faith?*

Such considerations include an appreciation for the way God faithfully aided and supported those who served Him in the past, a view of the great harvest fields awaiting reapers presently, and an awareness of the great rewards God will give the faithful in the world to come. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

*6. For what reasons did God give Solomon more than he asked?*

God knew that Solomon's needs were greater than he realized. God desired to demonstrate that He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20). God wanted Solomon to know that He was the Giver of all these blessings.

*7. How does our response to present blessings affect our future usefulness to God?*

In the parable of the rich man in Luke 12:16-21, Jesus showed the folly of hoarding God's blessings for oneself. When we use our intellect, our material resources, and our time to advance the work of God today, we make it possible for God to open up opportunities for expanded usefulness in the future.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Pride and self-sufficiency are the enemies of effective service. But when we humbly consider our own weakness and rely on God's almighty power, He will respond with ample resources.

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7).

## **Research Guide**

1. Read and study Proverbs 3:1-26 to learn the value of wisdom to the one who finds it.
2. See James 3:13-18 for an explanation of the difference between earthly wisdom and godly wisdom