

Exploring God's Word – Week #24

1 KINGS 2 THROUGH 1 KINGS 12

1 Kings 2

Before David died he gave Solomon advice to walk in the ways of God and reminded Solomon of David's enemies. When David passed away, Solomon took care of all of David's enemies. Adonijah asked Bathsheba for Abishag. Solomon refused and had Adonijah killed by Benaiah. He allowed the priest Abiathar to live since he carried the ark. Solomon then had traitors like Joab killed and then Shimei, who disobeyed Solomon's request for him to stay outside Jerusalem.

The natural body is the body we now possess, the body that will die and be laid in the grave to deteriorate and return to dust. But the spiritual body is the body we will possess once we cross the portals of death, the body that will be permanent. With the spiritual body we will never again have to die, but instead we will live in the presence of God in all the majesty, glory, and splendor of heaven itself. And we will live in God's presence forever and ever. Death holds no fear, no dread for the genuine, committed believer who faithfully walks day by day in the Lord Jesus Christ. The faithful, obedient believer lives in expectation and hope of eternal life.

This was the great hope of King David. And in this chapter, David dies. The greatest of all Israel's kings passes from the scene of human history. But not the impact of his life. The great faith and hope of David's heart lives on today just as it has down through the eons of human history. But David's death is not the only death covered in this chapter. Four other deaths are recorded, the deaths of men who posed a threat to the dynasty of David and to the reign of his son King Solomon. As long as these four men lived, there was the possibility of an insurrection against the throne. There was the threat of a rebellion, a coup against King Solomon. To consolidate the power of Solomon's throne and to secure the nation Israel, these four men and the threat they presented had to be handled. This is the subject of this great passage of Scripture: The Death of David and the Consolidation of Solomon's Power: A Picture of Death and of Justice, 2:1-46.

1 KINGS 3

Solomon had a dream in Gibeon that God came to him and asked him what Solomon wanted God to give him. Solomon recognized how difficult it was to lead these people so he asked for wisdom. God agreed, acknowledging all the things Solomon did not ask for (long life, riches, death for enemies), but gave those things to him anyway. Solomon's wisdom was displayed when two prostitutes argued over a child and Solomon revealed the true mother by offering to cut the child in two.

Does wisdom dwell on the earth today? Are there many wise men and women within society serving in governmental, business, educational, and other leadership positions? Are there many husbands and wives who possess genuine wisdom, who develop wise relationships between themselves and with their children?

Wisdom is the ability to understand and to discern what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. Wisdom knows what to do and does it. Wisdom knows right from wrong, and always does what is right. Wisdom recognizes wickedness and has nothing to do with sin and evil. Wisdom knows what responsible behavior is and lives responsibly, turning away from all acts of irresponsibility.

Wisdom was the great concern of Solomon. Remember that Solomon had just consolidated the power of his throne. He had shattered a rebellion, a coup against the throne by his half-brother Adonijah. And he had executed all the powerful, influential conspirators who had supported the uprising of Adonijah. The nation was now unified under his leadership, and peace swept through the land.

Solomon's father, King David, had recently died, and Solomon sat all alone upon the throne of the nation. Sensing deep inadequacy and helplessness to handle the task laid out before him, he felt the need to seek the face of the LORD. He desperately needed wisdom, a very special ability to understand and to discern what to do as he governed the great nation Israel.

1 KINGS 4

A list of Solomon's officials and governors. The time of Solomon's reign was very peaceful. Solomon's wisdom of plant life, animals, birds, reptiles and fish became world renown and people came from all over to listen to him.

Leadership is the focus of this present passage of Scripture. Solomon had just squashed the rebellious uprising led by his half-brother Adonijah. And he had executed all the powerful, influential leaders who were supporting the coup. Furthermore, he had been able to consolidate his power and bring peace to the nation. Accordingly, the nation had just held its inaugural celebration. Now it was time for Solomon to form his government, to search for capable leaders to fill the administrative positions of his government. This is the subject of this important passage of Scripture. Today there is a dire need for good leaders. A shortage of qualified, courageous leaders exists throughout the world. The solution to the scarcity of leadership is simple: leaders must be trained. The basic qualities of leadership are these: initiative, skill, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, decisiveness, and a heart filled with the great qualities of character. To say that a person has character implies that he or she possesses the great qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). If a person has these qualities of character and leadership, the person is a very capable leader.

1 KINGS 5

This chapter has to do with Solomon's preparations for building the temple. Remember, he had just consolidated his power and selected the leaders to fill the administrative positions of his government. Now he set out to achieve the burning passion of his heart, that of building the temple to honor the name of the LORD his God, to provide a house of worship for the citizens of Israel.

During the course of our lives, most of us become involved in, or at least exposed to, some building project. The project may be a house, a hut, a porch, a landscaped yard or area, an office, a tree house or playground, a highway or driveway, a church or temple or synagogue. Everywhere we look, there is some building or construction that someone has done or is doing. In every building project one thing is essential: preparation. Preparations have to be made for the project to turn out as it should. A foundation can be built upon sand, but it will crack and sink. A building can be constructed without a design or blueprints, but the structure will begin to squeak and the walls or floors or ceilings or roof will become uneven and weaken. Without preparation, a building can become a shack.

1 KINGS 6

When we think of a church, a temple, a synagogue, or a mosque, we usually think of a building—brick and mortar. But not God. As important as the buildings of our church or worship center are, the primary interest of God is the living temple. The living temple is the believer's body in which God's Spirit dwells.

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is one of the great teachings of God's Holy Word. Once a person is saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God enters the life of the new believer. The body of the believer actually becomes the temple of God's Holy Spirit. Imagine the very Spirit of God Himself dwelling, abiding, living, and being present within the body of the believer. A phenomenal, awesome truth! God's Spirit abides within us in order to guide us as we walk day by day, teaching and empowering us to conquer and overcome throughout life. The Spirit of God grows us into the image of Christ, conforming us to His very character.

1 KINGS 7

Solomon built the temple of the LORD, and then he built his palace. He put the LORD and the LORD'S temple first, before his own residence. Throughout the points of this chapter, note how Solomon always put God first.

God demands priority in our lives. He is to be put first. And when we put God first, He promises to take care of us, looking after every affair and detail of our lives. He promises to provide food, clothing, and shelter—the very basic necessities of life (Mt. 6:33). No matter what we face, God promises to empower us, to give us the strength to conquer and to walk through the trying times of life.

But there is a requirement of us. God's triumphant, conquering power is conditional: we must put God first in our lives. We must turn our lives over to Him and let Him control them. Unless our lives are under His control, His power cannot be present to help us.

Putting God first is the practical subject of this passage. Solomon built the temple of the LORD, and then he built his palace. He put the LORD and the LORD'S temple first, before his own residence. Throughout this chapter, notice how Solomon always put God first.

1 KINGS 8

The ark was brought into the temple with great fanfare and sacrifice. Solomon dedicated the temple with prayer and thousands of sacrifices. The glory of the Lord showed up and the party lasted fourteen days.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary gives an introduction on the dedication of the temple that is well worth quoting in its entirety. With the completion of the temple and with all the furniture in place, the crowning event was about to take place, the placement of the ark into its permanent home. For Israel it marked the beginning of a new era: Now, more than ever before, there was a feeling of permanence. The ark was no longer housed in a temporary shelter in Jerusalem; the dichotomy in the sanctuary, with the ark in Jerusalem and the tabernacle at Gibeon, was ended.

To mark this great occasion with the dignity and solemnity it deserved, Solomon assembled all the elders of Israel with the tribal and family chiefs. As God's anointed shepherd, he involved all Israel through its elders and chiefs in the moving of the ark, and the dedication of the temple. This involved more than mere pomp and ceremony. Solomon was very much in earnest about the spiritual significance of this occasion; and he desired that the heart of all Israel be knit together in the dedication of the temple and, more importantly, in the dedication of their hearts to God.

1 KINGS 9

God warned Solomon about turning away or God would turn the temple into rubble. Solomon gave ten towns to the King of Tyre, but the king was not pleased with them. Solomon conscripted labor from many of their enemies, but the Israelites did not act as slaves. Solomon built ships to get gold from Ophir.

The concern of the present passage of Scripture is the duties and obligations that faced King Solomon. Solomon was obligated to obey God and to be a faithful, diligent, hardworking king on behalf of the Israelites. Before God, Solomon was obligated to fulfill his task, and to fulfill it faithfully and diligently.

1 KINGS 10

Queen of Sheba stopped by to admire Solomon's wisdom. Solomon grew in riches, receiving 666 talents a year in gold. Solomon accumulated shields, chariots, horses and built a huge throne. He had so much gold, silver was considered worthless. People came from all over to hear his wisdom, bringing more and more gifts.

What is the purpose of life? Who are we? Where did we really come from? Did we come through a process called evolution? Or from the hand of God? Or from nothing, just appearing out of nowhere? Also, why are we here upon earth? And where are we going? What is our end, the end of mankind? The great philosophical questions of life cross the minds of most of us sometime during our lives. And each of us begins to wonder: What is the purpose of it all? What am I really here for? Where am I going after death? Is there life after death as preachers say, or is it the end of life as atheists say? In thinking about these issues, many people wish they had the answers and knew the truth. They say to themselves, "If I only knew, I would know what to do and how to behave, know whether I could live as I wanted as the atheists and agnostics say or whether I must live a life of self-control, discipline, and righteousness as the preachers say."

Seeking after the truth is what the present Scripture focuses upon. One of the most fascinating stories in all the Bible is seen in the Queen of Sheba's search for truth. And in her search, she gives a strong testimony to the wisdom of Solomon and his relationship to the LORD.

1 KINGS 11

Solomon tied the knot 700 times, with 300 concubines thrown in too. His wives led him astray with high places and false idols such as Ashtoreth, Molek and Chemosh. Because of Solomon's disobedience by intermarrying and his worshipping of foreign gods, God raised up adversaries such as Hadad and Rezon. Jeroboam, a foreman on the city wall, was told by the prophet Ahijah that God would tear the kingdom away and give him ten nations. God promised to bless that new nation if Jeroboam followed closely to God's ways. Solomon died after forty years of reign. His son Rehoboam succeeded him.

Luxury and pleasure became the downfall of King Solomon, the great king of Israel. As we have seen, Solomon had achieved the summit of power and wealth, of luxury and pleasure, and of fame and influence. Up until this point in Scripture, only the crest of his achievements has been seen. But now, shockingly, his story takes a tragic turn. By degrees, Solomon's luxury and pleasure slowly began to eat away at the strength of his character and spiritual commitment to the LORD. Solomon began to travel down the treacherous path of turning away from the LORD and turning to a life of immorality and false worship.

1 KINGS 12

Rehoboam became king and rejected the advice of wise advisers who asked him to lighten the load on the people. Instead, he made things harder. The people rejected him and turned to Jeroboam. Ten nations followed Jeroboam and two (Judah and Benjamin) followed Rehoboam. God refused Rehoboam permission to attack his fellow Israelites to the north. Jeroboam, worried that people would go to Jerusalem to make sacrifices, set up two golden calves in an altar in Bethel and Dan, telling the people to worship their gods there.

A spirit of arrogance and God's sovereign judgment—these two subjects are the focus of the present chapter. It was the arrogance of Solomon's son Rehoboam that was to cause the divided kingdom of Israel. arrogance is a terrible evil, for it puts people down, pushes them away, and treats them as inferior. Arrogance exalts oneself above others, degrading them and often humiliating and shaming them. But standing opposite the sinful spirit of arrogance is the surety of God's sovereign judgment. God is sovereign, which means that He has the power to execute justice upon the earth. All who are arrogant will stand face-to-face with God when He executes judgment upon the wicked of this earth. For one of the great warnings of God is that of coming judgment. And by His sovereign power, He will move events toward that glorious day when true justice will be executed upon this earth.