

**1 Kings 4**  
**November 3, 2024**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: In what ways do earthly leaders fail us? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** All of us appreciate a good leader. Whether it is a CEO, or a small business owner, or a pastor, or the President of the United States. Every strong leader understands that they can't lead alone. They need a strong team around them.

Solomon understood that, and he is going to put together a “cabinet,” if you will, to delegate responsibilities to successfully rule as the king over all Israel. You won't be required to pronounce all the names, but let's pay attention to the roles being assigned. Let's begin.

**BOOK:**

***Solomon's Officials and Governors***

**4** So King Solomon ruled over all Israel. <sup>2</sup> And these were his chief officials:

Azariah son of Zadok—the priest;

<sup>3</sup> Elihoreph and Ahijah, sons of Shisha—secretaries;

Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud—recorder;

<sup>4</sup> Benaiah son of Jehoiada—commander in chief;

Zadok and Abiathar—priests;

<sup>5</sup> Azariah son of Nathan—in charge of the district officers;

Zabud son of Nathan—a priest and personal adviser to the king;

<sup>6</sup> Ahishar—in charge of the palace;

Adoniram son of Abda—in charge of forced labor.

<sup>7</sup> Solomon also had twelve district governors over all Israel, who supplied provisions for the king and the royal household. Each one had to provide supplies for one month in the year. <sup>8</sup>

These are their names:

Ben-Hur—in the hill country of Ephraim;

<sup>9</sup> Ben-Deker—in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh and Elon Bethhanan;

<sup>10</sup> Ben-Hesed—in Arubboth (Socoh and all the land of Hephher were his);

<sup>11</sup> Ben-Abinadab—in Naphoth Dor (he was married to Taphath daughter of Solomon);

<sup>12</sup> Baana son of Ahilud—in Taanach and Megiddo, and in all of Beth Shan next to Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth Shan to Abel Meholah across to Jokmeam;

<sup>13</sup> Ben-Geber—in Ramoth Gilead (the settlements of Jair son of Manasseh in Gilead were his, as well as the district of Argob in Bashan and its sixty large walled cities with bronze gate bars);

<sup>14</sup> Ahinadab son of Iddo—in Mahanaim;

<sup>15</sup> Ahimaaz—in Naphtali (he had married Basemath daughter of Solomon);

<sup>16</sup> Baana son of Hushai—in Asher and in Aloth;

<sup>17</sup> Jehoshaphat son of Paruah—in Issachar;

<sup>18</sup> Shimei son of Ela—in Benjamin;

<sup>19</sup> Geber son of Uri—in Gilead (the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and the country of Og king of Bashan). He was the only governor over the district.

### *Solomon's Daily Provisions*

<sup>20</sup> The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank, and they were happy. <sup>21</sup> And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the (Euphrates) 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.

<sup>22</sup> Solomon's daily provisions were thirty cors (185 bushels) of fine flour and sixty cors (375 bushels) of meal, <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the River, from Tiphseh to Gaza, and had peace on all sides. <sup>25</sup> During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree.

<sup>26</sup> Solomon had four (2 Chron 9:25) thousand stalls for chariot horses, and twelve thousand horses (or charioteers).

<sup>27</sup> 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 nothing was lacking. <sup>28</sup> They also brought to the proper place their quotas of barley and straw for the chariot horses and the other horses.

### *Solomon's Wisdom*

<sup>29</sup> God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. <sup>30</sup> Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> 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.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

Living under God's rule brings life and blessing. We will only experience that in its fullness in the new heavens and new earth.

## Close in Prayer

### Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

*Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Kings 4). Victor Books.*

#### **IV. Solomon Enjoys God's Wealth (4)**

In vv. 1–6 we have the names of the men in Solomon's "cabinet," and in vv. 7–19 the names of those who were overseers of the divisions of Israel. Samuel's warning about the king certainly came true: read 1 Sam. 8:10–18 as well as Deut. 17:14–20. It appears that the material prosperity of the nation was not matched by a spiritual prosperity, for in a few years the kingdom would be divided and Solomon's splendor would fade away. The people were "eating, drinking, and making merry" (4:20), but we do not read of their interest in the Law of the Lord. It is possible for a person to enjoy material prosperity and still be spiritual, as in the case of Abraham, but most people cannot handle much wealth.

Solomon's kingdom was the largest in Israel's history (v. 21, and see Gen. 15:18). Those were days of peace and prosperity (v. 25). However, the seeds of sin and apostasy were being sown. Solomon brought horses from Egypt (10:26–29) in direct disobedience to the Law (Deut. 17:16). He also multiplied wives (11:1 with Deut. 17:17). These sins eventually brought ruin to the kingdom. Solomon was a great student of nature, as you cannot help but notice when you read the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. We do not have all of his 3,000 proverbs, and the only "songs" we have are in the Song of Solomon. Certainly we may learn much of the ways of God watching nature; Jesus pointed to the lilies, seeds, sparrows, and other forms in nature to teach us about God.

Yet Jesus Christ is "greater than Solomon." Certainly He is greater in His person, being the very Son of God; and He is greater in His wisdom (Col. 2:3) and in His wealth (see Col. 1:19 and 2:9). Solomon took foreign wives, yet Jesus Christ will one day be married to His bride, the church, made up of blood-bought sinners from every tribe and nation. Christ is greater in His power and glory, and one day He shall reign over a greater kingdom forever and forever.

**Constable, C.L. (1985). 1 Kings. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 495-498) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

### 3. SOLOMON'S POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION (CHAP. 4)

This chapter reflects the wisdom God gave Solomon (cf. 3:12) as manifested in his administrative leadership of Israel.

4:1–3. Delegation of authority is a mark of wisdom. **Solomon** appointed 11 **chief officials** over his government. Three men are called priests: **Azariah** (v. 2), Zadok, and Abiathar (v. 4). Azariah, a **son of Zadok**, was Zadok's grandson (cf. 1 Chron. 6:8–9). "Son" often means descendant. **Elihoreph and Ahijah** were **secretaries** or scribes. This was an important office; the scribes prepared royal edicts affecting trade, commerce, and military alliances and kept official records. **Jehoshaphat** was the **recorder** who maintained the records of all important daily affairs in the kingdom. Jehoshaphat had also served in this capacity under David (2 Sam. 8:16; 20:24).

4:4. **Benaiah** was **commander in chief** of the whole army. **Zadok** and **Abiathar** had served as co-high **priests** under David (2 Sam. 15:35). But Abiathar had sided with Adonijah in the attempted coup so the priest was dismissed by Solomon (1 Kings 2:20–27). Zadok continued as high priest (2:35). Abiathar is listed here as one of Solomon's officials because even though he was fired from being high priest he retained the title and honor after he was deposed. Perhaps Azariah (4:2) and Zadok (v. 4) then served together as Abiathar and Zadok had done previously.

4:5–6. Two men are listed as sons of **Nathan**. They may have been the sons of one man or the sons of different Nathans. **Azariah** (not the Azariah in v. 2) was **in charge of the** 12 district officers named in verses 8–19. **Zabud** was of the priestly line and served as the king's **personal adviser**. **Ahishar** was **in charge of the palace**, perhaps overseeing the servants and other workers there, and **Adoniram** (cf. 5:14) supervised the **forced labor**, non-Israelites living in Israel who were conscripted to work for **the king** (cf. 5:13–14; 9:15, 21; 2 Chron. 2:2; 8:8).

#### *b. Solomon's district governors (4:7–19)*

4:7–19. **Solomon** made each of his **12 district governors** responsible to supply **provisions** for **the royal household** (and for his thousands of horses, v. 28), one governor for each **month**. These provisions were huge (cf. vv. 22–28). This work doubtless kept these men busy. Interestingly two of the governors were sons-in-law of Solomon (vv. 11, 15). All 12 of them are mentioned only here in the Bible except for **Ahimaaz**, who possibly was a son of Zadok the priest (cf. 2 Sam. 15:27). On the boundaries of the districts see the map "Solomon's 12 Districts and Surrounding Nations." Judah, not included, was perhaps exempted by Solomon from the levy requirement.

#### *c. Solomon's prosperity (4:20–28)*

4:20. Solomon's kingdom was unified, secure, strong, and prosperous, with a large population. (On **Judah and Israel** see comments on 1:35.) The people became **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**.

The Israelites had enough to eat and drink, **and they were happy**, enjoying the basic comforts of life (cf. 4:25).

4:21. Solomon's domain stretched from **the Euphrates River** (cf. v. 24) on the east and north **to the land of the Philistines** on the west and **Egypt** to the southwest. This does not mean that the Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled in Solomon's day (Gen. 15:18–20), for not all this territory was incorporated into the geographic boundaries of Israel; many of the subjected kingdoms retained their identity and territory but paid taxes (**tribute**) to Solomon. Israel's own geographic limits were "from Dan to Beersheba" (1 Kings 4:25).

4:22–25. The ability of the nation to provide **Solomon's daily provisions** (cf. v. 7) testifies to its prosperity (vv. 22–23). Those provisions included **30 cors** (about 185 bushels; cf. NIV) of **fine flour ... 60 cors** (about 375 bushels; cf. NIV) of **meal**, **30 head of cattle ... 100 sheep and goats**, and wild meat (**deer, gazelles, roebucks**) and **fowl**. These provisions were made possible by the great geographical extent of the kingdom—from the town of **Tiphseh** in the north (on the bank of the Euphrates) **to Gaza** in the south (cf. v. 21). **Each man** living **under his own vine and fig tree** (v. 25) is a figurative expression for peace and prosperity (cf. Micah 4:4; Zech. 3:10). The vine and fig tree were both symbols of the nation Israel and pictured the Promised Land's agricultural abundance.

4:26–28. Solomon's numerous **horses (12,000; cf. 2 Chron. 1:14)** and many chariots (1,400 according to 2 Chron. 1:14) were kept in several locations (called "chariot cities" in 2 Chron. 9:25; cf. 1 Kings 9:19). Though the Hebrew here has 40,000 **stalls** (cf. NIV), this was probably the error of a copyist in transcribing the text which read **4,000**, the number in 2 Chronicles 9:25. The **horses** and chariots, used for national defense, served as a strong deterrent to potential foreign aggressors. **Barley and straw** for all Solomon's **horses** was supplied daily by **the district** governors.

#### *d. Solomon's skill (4:29–34)*

4:29. This additional information about Solomon's wisdom demonstrates God's faithfulness in blessing the king as He had promised (cf. 3:12; 5:12). **Wisdom** is the ability to live life successfully. While Solomon possessed this ability, he did not always apply it to his own life. Thus, the wisest man who ever lived (i.e., with the greatest wisdom) did not live as wisely as many others who preceded and followed him. Having insight into life does not guarantee that one will choose to do what is right. Solomon's **great insight** was his ability to see the core of issues (e.g., 3:16–27). His **understanding** was vast; today he would be described as a man of encyclopedic knowledge.

4:30–31. His **wisdom** exceeded that of **all the men of the East** (cf. Job 1:3) and **all the wisdom of people in Egypt**, both areas known for their wisdom. He was also superior to other men renowned for their wisdom, including **Ethan the Ezrahite** (whose name appears in the title to Ps. 89, which suggests that he wrote that psalm), **Heman** (both Ethan and Heman were musicians; cf. 1 Chron. 15:19), **Calcol, and Darda**. The last three of these four were **the sons of Mahol**, but in 1 Chronicles 2:6 they, along with Ethan and Zimri, are said to be "sons [descendants] of Zerach." Apparently Mahol was the father of the four (Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Darda) and Zimri (whose father was Zerach) was an ancestor several generations earlier (cf. comments on 1 Chron. 2:6).

4:32–34. Several hundred of Solomon’s **3,000 proverbs** have been preserved in the Book of Proverbs as well as a few in Ecclesiastes. One of his **1,005** songs is the Song of Songs. Solomon’s literary output was extremely prolific. He became an authority in botany and zoology too. The statement in verse 34 is a hyperbole (an overstatement to make a point); obviously not every nation on earth **sent** a representative to visit Solomon. The point is that many important visitors from faraway places visited Solomon who received them openly at his court. He was recognized as the wisest man of his day as God had promised he would be.

**Tatum, S. L. (1972). 1 Kings. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher’s Bible Commentary (pp. 195-196). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

### **The Wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings 3:1–4:34)**

*The passage*—Solomon is well known for his wisdom. Unfortunately, that wisdom was not used altogether. Solomon was foolish in marrying foreign wives, giving way to lust, and in his materialism.

God appeared to Solomon at Gibeon and offered to bless Solomon according to his request. Solomon praised God for his blessings to David. His one request of God was for wisdom. He wanted an understanding mind to be able to govern well. God granted his request and also promised him riches and honor as well as long life.

Solomon’s wisdom is well illustrated in his dealing with the two harlots. Each claimed to be the mother of a baby and said the child of the other had died. Solomon told them to cut the baby in half so each mother could have a share. The true mother asked that the baby be allowed to live and be given to the other woman. Solomon granted the baby to its real mother. All of Israel recognized his profound wisdom. His wisdom is also shown in the very efficient organization of his government as described in chapter 4.

Israel prospered under Solomon. Its borders were greatly enlarged. There was peace. The people and Israel’s neighbors also were happy with his reign and their welfare.

*Special points*—Solomon’s marriage to so many foreign wives was a matter of political expediency. The problem, in addition to the immorality of the situation, lay in the religious practices of his foreign wives. Solomon erected heathen shrines for them.

*Truth for today*—The Bible warns against the marriage of Christians to non-Christians. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14) or “Do not be mis-mated with unbelievers.”

When we seek God’s will first, he always adds other blessings to us. Solomon’s primary desire for wisdom enabled God to bless him in many other ways, even in spite of his errors. “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Matt. 6:33).

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Kings 4). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**