

**"THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING  
OF WISDOM."**

***– 1 KINGS 3:14,15. – DECEMBER 6. –***

SOLOMON began to reign when he was twenty years of age, and under unfavorable conditions in several respects. His elder brothers were ambitious for the throne, and the chief General of King David's army, Joab, had been deflected from the course of fidelity to the King. So had Abiathar, one of the chief priests, so that the young King had not a path of roses before him. The loyalty of his heart to the Lord and to the duties imposed upon him by his divine appointment to the kingship are remarkable for one so young. They clearly indicate the good training he enjoyed, and his father's wisdom in putting him under the tuition of the Prophet Nathan. Amongst the earliest acts of Solomon's reign was the calling of a religious convention, to which was assembled the chief men of the nation at Gibeon. Solomon realized the importance of religion to himself and to the people – that God must be first; and this assemblage was doubtless intended to stir up the religious enthusiasm of the nation, as well as to convince all that Solomon acknowledged the Lord, and that the course of the new kingdom would be after the same pattern as that of his father – loyalty to the Lord as the great King, and recognition of himself as merely his servant and representative.

It is generally understood that the thousand burnt offerings sacrificed on this occasion were burnt offerings only in the sense that they were offered in connection with a religious ceremony in acknowledgment of God, that certain of the inward parts were burned upon the altar, and that the shoulder of each was devoted to the priesthood. It is generally understood that the multitudes feasted upon the remainder of the flesh of these sacrificed animals. This custom was not only recognized in Israel but in various heathen nations, each acknowledging its own gods. Thus Croesus, King of

Lydia, "offered up three thousand of every kind of sacrificial beasts," to the god of the Delphian oracle, as Herodotus relates. Xerxes, according to the same authority, "made an offering of a thousand oxen to the Trojan Minerva." Whether the heathen nations copied these sacrifices from the Jews or not cannot be positively stated, but the earliest and most authentic histories seem to so indicate.

It was while Solomon's mind was active in religious matters at Gibeon that the Lord appeared to him in a dream and asked him to choose what he would of any gift. We are not from this to infer that all dreams are of the Lord, but simply to understand that God is able to use dreams when he so chooses to convey lessons and instructions to his people. Many illustrations of this might be sighted – for instance, Joseph's dream Nebuchadnezzar's, Daniel's, Paul's, Peter's. We have the best of inspired assurance that these were really messages from the Lord, and hence are justified in attaching importance to them, believing in their fulfilment, etc. It is well to remember, however, that many dreams are simply operations of nature; that by reason of indigestion, or some other abnormal condition, one department of the brain seems to be awake while other departments are benumbed with sleep. Such dreams are apt to be inconsistent and unseasonable, because the judgment and counterpoise of reason from various standpoints and various sides are lacking. Such dreams are inconsistent and meaningless. Another kind of dream or vision should be mentioned, namely, those which are quite evidently inspired by evil spirits and which not infrequently represent the Lord as speaking to the individual, directing, commanding, etc.; these are in line with trance-medium development of spiritualism. The authorship of dreams being so much in doubt, as well as the fact that with the death of the apostles plenary inspiration ceased and the inspired class canonized, should make us very dubious, very skeptical, in respect to dreams that might come to any **[R3278 : page 430]** of us. Hence every dream and the lesson which it would seem to inculcate should be considered quite subordinate to the written Word of God. If they speak not in harmony

with this Word, it is because there is no light in them. Those who are misled by dreams ascribe to them authority of a special revelation, and in so doing are not wise, but are greatly in danger of being side-tracked by our wily Adversary.

Solomon was living in a time before the Scriptures were completed, at a time when it could not be said that the Scriptures are able to make wise, sufficient that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. (2 Tim. 3:17.) Besides, the declaration is that his dream or vision was from the Lord. Even then we see that the Lord was not operating contrary to the freedom of Solomon's will, because had the young King's mind been full of ambition for power, for victories over his enemies or for great riches, undoubtedly in the dream he would have responded by asking the things uppermost in his heart. His reply shows us that he was full of appreciation of the great work which God had committed to his care, that he recognized that his father's success had been of the Lord and not of his own power, and that whatever others thought of his father's real sentiments. Solomon recognized his loyalty to God, to truth, to righteousness, to uprightness of heart. In acknowledging the Lord's kindness in raising him to the throne he was acknowledging that God was the real King, that he merely sat upon "the throne of the kingdom of the Lord." This is further evidenced by the words, "God, thou hast made thy servant King instead of David my father." What a strength it gave this young man to realize that he was in God's hands; that it was not merely to his father's foresight and wisdom that he came to the throne, nor by the superior prestige of his father's influence over the army and the majority of the people, but of the Lord's providences.

Similarly, this should give strength to all of the Lord's consecrated people who realize that they have come into the present grace and Truth not by their own wisdom nor by the wisdom of others, but through the wisdom and grace of the Lord. The same thought should be entertained by all who serve the Church of God as ministers, servants in any department, in any manner responsible to

the Lord for their position in the household of faith, and their opportunities to serve as the Lord's mouthpieces should be felt and confessed. But failure to confess it even implies a failure rightly to appreciate it.

The humility of the king is beautifully indicated by his declaration, "I am but a little child and know not how to order my course in life, my outgoings and incomings," and yet he was in the midst of the Lord's people, the center or head of the nation – though he felt himself incapable of the proper management of these high and responsible duties. He did not say "my people," but "thy people which thou hast chosen." We feel like suggesting a lesson here to some of the elders of the Lord's flock, who, after the manner of the Babylonians, are inclined to speak of the congregations to whom they minister, as "my people," "my flock," "my church." They probably do not realize how inappropriate are such expressions; that if natural Israel was the Lord's people, whom he had chosen, how much more the antitypical Israel should be thought of and spoken of as the Lord's people, the Lord's flock. The very fact that any one would speak of the congregation of the Lord's people as his own indicates a dangerous condition of mind and a tendency to be heady, high-minded, injurious, detrimental to the interests of spiritual Zion. Those who have had such a tendency of mind should correct themselves with fasting and prayer, peradventure their wrongdoing may be forgiven of the Lord and they may be kept from stumbling into further self-assurance. And the Lord's flock everywhere should be quick to resent any such human ownership or control. A failure to quickly discern and properly resent such self-assurance on the part of leaders is an indication that the flocks to whom they minister are not fully appreciating and enjoying the liberty with which Christ is pleased to make free all who are truly his sheep and who acknowledge him as their chief Shepherd.

In speaking of the numbers of Israel, Solomon used a form of expression common in his day for a large multitude – namely, a great

people that cannot be numbered or counted for multitude. It is estimated that the numbers at this time were about 6,000,000, and probably without the conveniences at hand for taking an enumeration it was actually impossible to determine the number of people – the facilities for keeping track of births and deaths being much less convenient and much less accurate than at the present time.

With this preamble as showing his estimate of his own incapacity and of the greatness of the work, and that the people were the Lord's people, and that he himself was the Lord's appointment to be the King, Solomon now comes to the expression of his choice, namely, "an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people?" Solomon recognized that the most necessary thing for the welfare of the nation was righteous judgment of the various questions pertaining to the nation's welfare as well as those affecting individual matters. Doubtless he had come to realize, as his subsequent written proverbs clearly indicate, that selfishness is a foe to justice, and that the very wisest and best of governments need to be carefully guarded lest the selfish interests of some should work injury to others – to many. The whole world realizes this today, and if we would ask civilized humanity in **[R3278 : page 431]** general what is the one great need of the world, the answer unquestionably would be, We need to have righteousness established between nations, between individuals, and we need wisdom to discern the right from the wrong, the false from the true, the pure from the evil. Many of the wisest people of the world, although realizing the needs of the present time, have reached the conclusion that it is useless to attempt to secure evenhanded justice in all particulars, amongst all classes; and those who are best informed respecting the teachings of the divine Word have been led to pray with greater earnestness than ever before, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." They realize that earthly beings are all more or less fallen, more or less selfish, and that a crying need of the world today is for a perfect government, backed up by full power to enact, and to execute as well,

laws of righteousness which shall control the whole world, subduing evil, exalting good. The antitype of Solomon, the Prince of Peace, Messiah, is to accomplish this in the world in the Father's good time, in the Millennial age.

The Lord was pleased with Solomon's choice; he could not have chosen better. Some have suggested that he might have chosen spiritual things, and thus have made a still wiser, better choice; but such forget that the spiritual things were not open to be understood or to be chosen or to be acquired in Solomon's day, nor until the great atonement for sin had been made – until the call went forth inviting believers who had fled from sin and who had laid hold on the hopes set before them in Christ to become self-sacrificers with him, joint-participators with him in the holy Spirit of adoption and ultimately to be joint-heirs with him in the kingdom. Solomon, therefore, chose as wisely as was possible for him to choose of the things that were known to him and attainable in his day.

It was just like our heavenly Father to give Solomon the riches and honors which he had not asked as a reward of his appreciation of wisdom. Indeed it is Solomon himself who expresses the thought that riches and honors are in the right hand of wisdom as her reward. It is thus implied that the Lord in giving to anyone wisdom, grants also the rewards which wisdom brings – namely, riches and honor. Some one then may inquire, How comes it that those who now seek the wisdom from above, the highest of all wisdom, first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated and full of mercy and good fruits – how is it that such very rarely get earthly riches and honors? We reply, that in Solomon's time the Lord was dealing with natural fleshly Israel, and his promises were along natural fleshly lines, but that during this Gospel dispensation he is dealing with spiritual Israel and his promises and blessings are along spiritual lines. The wisdom that his people are to seek and to enjoy, the wisdom that cometh from above, is not the wisdom of this world, as the Apostle clearly points out that the riches and honors which are in the hands of this heavenly

wisdom, which comes to the Lord's consecrated Church, are spiritual riches and spiritual honors which the world sees not and appreciates not in this present time – which, like the wisdom itself, can be appreciated only by those whose eyes of understanding have been opened and who can and do thus discern the riches of God's grace toward his elect Church, which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of [the] natural man, but which God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit." – 1 Cor. 2:9,10.

The riches and honors which came to Solomon incidentally with his wisdom are world-renowned, and the blessing of long life which was made conditional was partly fulfilled. Solomon lived to be sixty, whereas, we believe, under this promise he would have lived until eighty had he been more obedient to the divine will, but with him as with many others, prosperity was much more difficult to stand than adversity.

When Solomon awoke and realized that these things had been a dream, a visitation of the lord, he returned to Jerusalem, the Capital city where the ark was located, and presented himself as a sacrificer, offering burnt offerings and peace offerings and making a feast for his servants, and realizing that the Lord was **[R3279 : page 431]** prospering him in the matter to which he had called him, he evidently was full of joy and satisfaction and peace. So it should be with all the Lord's people who have been called to be heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, for "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept through faith and by the power of God unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." They, too, should realize that the proper way to show their appreciation of the Lord's promised blessings is by a manifestation of faith in him, confidently trusting and rejoicing in these. Wherever we find fear, trepidation, unrest, we may know that these are symptoms of some spiritual malady; because whatever may be the outward disturbances, troubles, vexations, it is the privilege of those who are the Lord's to

have the peace of God which passeth all understanding continually ruling in their hearts. It is their privilege to realize fully, thoroughly that all things are working together for good to them because they love the Lord, and with this thought of their call to the Kingdom and of the Lord's willingness that they should serve therein, and with the assurance that he will give grace and glory and no good thing withhold from those who walk uprightly, we certainly have reason for thankfulness and heart-rejoicing before him.

