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## **A New Beginning**

1 Kings 3:3-15 and Luke 11:29-32

We have just ended our study in 2 Samuel. We have come to the end of David's reign. The first 2 chapters of 1 Kings deals with the last days of David's life, his instructions to crown Prince Solomon and the establishment of Solomon's reign. This is a new beginning in Solomon's life, kind of like today, which is also a new beginning as it signifies our calendar's New Year. To be clear, the bible doesn't follow our Roman calendar, but rather the Jewish calendar. So in that light, today is just another day wherein God's mercies are New (Lamentations 3:22-23). We are going to explore the life of Solomon and see what we can learn to apply to our own lives as we too have a new beginning of a year ahead of us just as Solomon had a new reign ahead of him.

### **Read 1 Kings 3:3-15 and Luke 11:29-32**

What is going on here? Solomon pleases the Lord. God appears to Solomon in a dream and tells Solomon to ask for anything. Solomon asks for an understanding heart or discerning mind to judge between good and evil. God gives him that and more. Solomon goes on to become the Wisest man to have ever lived. Solomon finishes the plan of David to build a Temple for God.

We are going to look at 3 things that characterize the life of Solomon which pleased God, before God appeared to him in a dream or vision. Then we are going to look at what Solomon asked God and why he got what he asked for. And finally we are going to see what Jesus had to say about Solomon. 5 points in total.

#### **1. Solomon loved the Lord.**

How did Solomon love the Lord? His love for the Lord is clear in the way he prayed at the Temple dedication.

**1 Kings 8:23; 54-** 23 O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart; 54 Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven.

What is Solomon doing here? He is acknowledging who God is, acknowledging the extent of God's reach or power which is over all the heavens and the earth. Solomon is also clear about his humble relationship with respect to God that God is the Master, Solomon is the servant. Solomon also acknowledges that God is a relational being; that is God keeps His Word or God is a covenant keeper. Solomon acknowledges that God's covenantal- love (hesed) is reserved for His servants who walk before Him with all their heart. In other words, Solomon understood that God sees the heart (1 Kings 8:39). Solomon's love for the Lord is evident in the posture of his heart as well as his physical posture, he was kneeling by the time he finished his prayer. It is interesting because, he starts out standing, but somewhere during his prayer, he begins to kneel.

So the application for us today is simple, how do we love the Lord? What is the posture of our heart today? To us is He the Master? If so, do we behave as His servants? Do we believe He is all powerful over the heavens and the earth? If so do we have reverential fear of Him? The bible does mention that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom. Solomon got this part correct early in his life.

## **2. Solomon walked in the ways of his father David.**

What does this mean? And how did his father David walk?

**1 Kings 3:6-** he walked before You in truth (or faithfulness), in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart.

Solomon watched his father David and learnt a few things. Firstly, David walked before God. In other words, David performed for an audience of one. The ONLY ONE that matters. Granted David had his faults and sins, yet God called him a man after God's own heart.

David walked- this is physical action verb based on the Spiritual condition. You see, David understood that if the heart is fixed, then what comes out in terms of action is simply a reflection of what is already in the heart.

How do we know this? By reading what David wrote. Here are a few examples- Psalm 23:3 He restores my soul, He leads me in paths of righteousness. In this popular Psalm, David acknowledges he was broken to begin with and that he needs restoration, something that only God can do. David even goes further to say that it is God who leads him in righteousness. Remember God can lead, but we still have a responsibility to follow. Something that David longed to do.

Another example of the ways of David-

**Psalm 25:4-5** Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You *are* the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.

Here David not only attributes salvation to God, he also shows his own desire to know the ways of the Lord. In fact, David is willing to wait for God to show up. We have no problem acknowledging the Savior Jesus, but do we go one step further in desiring to know His ways and to wait for Him to move so that we can follow?

One more example of the ways of David-

**Psalm 26:1-3** Vindicate me, O LORD, For I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the LORD; I shall not slip. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart. For Your loving-kindness *is* before my eyes, And I have walked in Your truth.

At first glance it might seem that David is self righteous almost boastful when he claims to have walked in his own integrity. But looking closer, it is evident that David's goal in his walk is in front of him. God's loving kindness or mercy or *Hesed*. In other words, David is boasting in God as a covenant keeper and is claiming God's mercy and protection. That's why he is confident in saying "test my heart oh God, try my mind". This attitude is found in other Psalms of David as well.

So what is the Way of walking like David? Firstly to acknowledge that we are broken and need fixing or restoration, then calling on God for Salvation, then making sure we have a desire to know the ways of God and to also wait for Him to move so that we can follow Him.

What have we seen so far in Solomon's life? Solomon loved the Lord and Solomon walked in the ways of his father David.

### 3. Solomon Worshiped the Lord.

The text here indicates “high places”. These places were copied from the Canaanites. They were typically set on hilltops where locals would offer sacrifices to the local deities for various favors such as rain, fertility, victory over enemies, etc. The text here also is in a negative connotation, Solomon loved the Lord, walked in David’s ways BUT or - except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.

Why was this a bad thing? Because God had specifically forbidden the Israelites to copy the Canaanites. They were to worship Yahweh differently. God overlooked this transgression of Solomon, because even though the method was wrong, Solomon’s heart and motives were right. In fact throughout the history of Israel in the Old Testament these high places of sacrifice were snares for the people to go astray and worship the Canaanite idols.

Lest we think that such “high places of worship” are nonexistent today, allow me to quickly burst that bubble! Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What does Jesus mean? We will worship what we value.

When I was in college, you couldn’t tell if I was in the world or the world was in me! I valued what the majority of my college peers valued. A hot body! So I would spend countless hours in the gym doing various things and then continue exercising outside by running on the road for countless miles all with the express goal of looking fabulous. And I worshiped that ideal. How do I know that? It gave me the greatest joy to hear compliments on my great legs! Vanity is a high place. I count that as rubbish, dung and an abomination now because of Christian maturity. Cannot even imagine what I was thinking back then. Nowadays I would be very happy just to lose 10 pounds of weight.

High places still exist today. It can be a big boat, the latest phone or even a pair of shoes. God wants to give us much more than cheap trinkets. He wants to give Himself to us.

Solomon worshiped God at Gibeon. The Tabernacle of Yahweh was at Gibeon. This was the tent that was initially built by Moses as God had

instructed carefully for dwelling His presence. The Ark box was however at Jerusalem. At this early time in Solomon's life God saw in Solomon an upright heart of worship and chose to overlook the mistakes with regards to offerings at high places. Solomon understood the core message of the Gospel which is that God is relational and not just for the Jews but for the Gentile as well. Look at his prayer of dedication of the temple.

**1 Kings 8:27, 30, 43-** But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!  
30 And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.  
43 hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as *do* Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name.

How is Solomon worshipping? He is acknowledging the greatness of God who is beyond our earthly dimension. Solomon rightly understands that God dwells in the heavens. And no temple or building made by human hands can house this great God. Solomon also understands by faith that God is able to hear a human prayer. He even understands that it isn't the sacrifice that brings forgiveness of sin, forgiveness for sin comes from God's mercy in hearing a sinner's cry. Lastly, Solomon understood the reason for worship, which is to declare these truths to the Gentiles so that they too may call on the name of Yahweh, who will hear them as well. Solomon understood that Evangelism leads to more worshipers.

How do we worship the creator of the universe? How do we worship the one who gave His Son for our sins? How do we worship the one did not withhold anything for our sakes that we might one day be with Him.

Dear Brother dear Sister, I hope this New Year we sharpen our desire to worship the living God, by wanting to be with Him, by longing and seeking after God's dwelling.

We have seen that Solomon loved the Lord, walked in his father David's ways and Solomon worshipped God rightly.

**4. Solomon asks God for an understanding heart or mind to discern good and evil.**

This is what we refer to as the Wisdom of Solomon.

God appears to Solomon after worship. Just to be clear this is not the Genie in the bottle showing up and granting one wish. Not at all. There is much more to this.

God in essence says “Ask. Whatever you want I will give you”.

You might remember Jesus saying something similar “Ask and it shall be given you” (Matthew 7). And also in **John 16:24** Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

We are going to look at why Solomon got what he asked for and how we need to ask.

Our living God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is asking us the same question today. What will our answer be? How should we even approach this question? Perhaps an illustration might help.

This holiday season I had the opportunity to go fishing with my kids. We were on a dock and the water was quite clear. After a fruitless hour of watching fish clearly swimming as we placed shrimp right in front their mouths yet not a nibble, I finally gave up and called in my troop. My son of 7 years, immediately burst out crying. I was bracing for an argument and fight about quitting the dock but was quite surprised at what the tears were about. Apparently Nikhil had prayed and asked God that he would catch 1 fish at least. And he was wondering why God didn't give him just 1 fish and whether God was even there. After a few seconds of thinking how to handle the theology, I came up with my counter argument. I told him God was like a loving Father, in fact similar to his own father. And I went on...Whenever we go to a store, my son invariably always comes up to me wanting to buy some merchandise. And usually I will say no. I used this example to explain to him that even though I refuse to buy what he asks for, I still love him tremendously. In fact, I asked him to remember an occasion when I have indeed granted his wish to buy certain things. And I asked him why he thought I allowed the purchase on certain merchandise and not others. The approval rate for his choices are typically a very low 10%. I believe it slowly dawned on him that his dad knows his needs and will buy things that he needs not just wants. My daughter is much older, 12 years of age and has caught onto “the mind of the father”. She is mature enough to think and ask

herself the question “would dad approve of this?”, so that, very intelligently, she eliminates things that she knows I would never go for and as a result the approval rate for things she shows me are quite higher perhaps 70%. The only person who gets whatever they ask for is my wife, but that’s another reason altogether!

The point I was making to my son was that he needs to begin to think like his earthly father and by extension eventually have the mind of the Heavenly Father. That’s why Paul says in **Romans 12:2** - do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

We have to first be transformed into a right mindset before we can even begin to ask rightly such that our prayers are answered all the time. So the real question now is NOT what shall we ask for, rather Do we know What the Father WANTS to be done? But we do know what the Father wants to be done because He has revealed His plans in His Word.

There is His plan of salvation, there is His desire for us to be sanctified, and there is His plan of coming back again to the earth and of Him taking us to be with Him forever in fellowship. So now that we know His plans for mankind, we have to ask according to His will. We know what His plans are for mankind, the question is where do we fit into His plan. Do we even want to be a part of His plan? If we do, then we will ask wisely and our prayers will be answered.

Solomon began his reign very well. But what matters is how we finish the race that is set before us. For Solomon, the end was a tragedy. Solomon married foreign wives. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. And the bible records that Solomon began to worship idols in the end.

**1 Kings 11: 4, 6** – For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done.

What happened? God promised that Solomon would be the wisest man ever to live and that did come to pass. How is it that the wisest man missed the mark and in the end did evil in the sight of the Lord? How did the wisest man that ever lived become a fool by doing evil in the sight of God?

What did Solomon ask for? Discernment between good and evil. Just because I know to discern evil does not make me immune to evil temptations. His wives were the source of evil temptations. Solomon asked for something good, Wisdom. But David asked for the best and God answered David's request too.

Both David and Solomon had the correct understanding of who God was. Both of them recognized the awesomeness of God in that He cannot be contained in a mere building or temple. His dwelling place was and will always be in the heavens. However it was only David who wanted to go to God's dwelling.

**Psalm 27:4, 13-** One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple; 13 That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.

What was David's desire? David sought after the dwelling place of God. In Psalm 27 he could not have been talking about the temple, because Solomon's temple had not yet been built. David wanted to be with God in God's home. He even understood that in the heavens there is a temple where God is worshiped. We know that from Isaiah and Revelation. David wanted to be there. Where is this temple? It is in the Land of the Living. And David also knew by faith that God was able to take him to the land of the living. What is this land of the living? From the beginning to the end of the bible God is described as the "Living God". So when David says that he believes that he will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, he was talking about the dwelling place of God. Isn't that marvelous and amazing? Our God is a living God. David wanted God's presence, God's relationship and God's fellowship more than anything else. He wanted God Himself as a reward. That is why God testified of him saying that David is a man after my own heart. David had a transformed mind because he was able to abide in the Almighty. David was able to finish well laying aside every weight and burden to run his race because his eyes were fixed on the prize of Jesus Himself.

**Luke 11:31-32-** <sup>31</sup>The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.



Jesus is God revealed or manifested as a human. Solomon was a creation, Jesus is the Creator and Infinitely wiser and greater than Solomon. And when we accept His plan for our life beginning with His salvation, God promises to forgive all our sin and promises to live in our heart. It is amazing, and He is giving you another day to choose wisely. But only you can make that decision and experience it yourself.

**John 14:23**- <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

## **5. David chose Jesus.**

**What is our choice this day?**