

# OpenTheo

## September 12th: 1 Kings 4 & Hebrews 3

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The good order of Solomon's administration. Christ like Moses but much greater.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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## Transcript

1 Kings 4. King Solomon was king over all Israel, and these were his high officials. Azariah, the son of Zadok, was the priest. Eli-Horef and Ahijah, the sons of Shishah, were secretaries.

Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilod, was recorder. Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, was in command of the army. Zadok and Abiathar were priests.

Azariah, the son of Nathan, was over the officers. Zebed, the son of Nathan, was priest and king's friend. Ahijah was in charge of the palace.

And Adoniram, the son of Abder, was in charge of the forced labor. Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel who provided food for the king and his household. Each man had to make provision for one month in the year.

These were their names. Ben-Hur in the hill country of Ephraim. Ben-Dikr in Machaz, Jealbim, Beshemesh, and Elam Beth-Hanan.

Ben-Hesed in Ereuboth. To him belonged Soko and all the land of Hepha. Ben-Abinadab in all Napheth-Dor.

He had Taphath, the daughter of Solomon, as his wife. Beanna, the son of Ahilod, in Teanach. Megiddo and all Bessian that is beside Zarethan, below Jezreel, and from Bessian to Abel-Meholah, as far as the other side of Jokhmiam.

Ben-Geba in Ramoth-Gilead. He had the villages of Jea, the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead, and he had the region of Agab, which is in Bessian. Sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars.

Ahinadab, the son of Iddo, in Mahanaim. Ahimeaz in Naphtali. He had taken Basimath, the daughter of Solomon, as his wife.

Beanna, the son of Hushai, in Asher and Beoloth. Jehoshaphat, the son of Perua, in Issachar. Shimei, the son of Elah, in Benjamin.

Geba, the son of Uriah, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bessian. And there was one governor who was over the land. Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea.

They ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cores of fine flour and sixty cores of meal, ten fat oxen and twenty pasture-fed cattle, a hundred sheep besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fat and fowl. For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tifsa to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates, and he had peace on all sides around him. And Judah and Israel lived in safety from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.

Solomon also had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, and those officers supplied provisions for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table, each one in his month. They let nothing be lacking, barley also and straw for the horses, and swift steeds they brought to the place where it was required, each according to his duty. And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.

For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezraite and Heman, Calchol and Dardah the sons of Mahal, and his fame was in all the surrounding regions. He also

spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall.

He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom. In 2 Samuel chapter 8 verses 15 to 18 and in chapter 20 verses 23 to 26 we find lists of the officials in David's administration.

In 1 Kings chapter 4 we find a far more extensive list for the figures in Solomon's administration. Solomon is at the centre of the glorious ordered world of his kingdom. He is a new Adam in a new and far more expansive garden.

It begins with the high officials of the house before moving to the officers over the land. It's a greater list than that of David, not just for the people in the inner court, but also because the extent reaches out further to include officers over the land. The story centres upon eating and drinking.

This is a realm of rejoicing and thanksgiving. God is blessing his people Israel. They are flourishing and spreading out of the land.

We can see in the list of the officials the continued influence of whose son Azariah is in office. Also Nathan who has two sons in office. He was a faithful prophet of the Lord to David and now he is rewarded with two sons of his own in office.

As a good king David blesses his faithful servants. Ben-Aniah and Zadok are also blessed at this point. The priest is the chief steward of the Lord's house who can instruct the king in the law of the Lord.

Alongside the you have the secretaries. They keep records and prepare correspondence. The recorder is probably also a herald.

He's someone who communicates the words of the king to the people. The king's friend is the official position of close counsellor. He's the one who's nearest to the king who can give him advice and help him to decide on particular courses of action.

Then there is someone who has to oversee the king's properties, looking out for his household and all his different possessions. The overseer of the forced labour, Adoniram, was probably a very unpopular figure. We see in chapter 12 verse 18 that as the first great act of the splitting of the kingdom the people lynch him.

A few more things can be noted in the names of the officials. There are possibly Egyptian figures here. The secretaries Eli-Horef and Ahijah and Shisha their father are likely of Egyptian origin.

It says something about the cosmopolitan character of Solomon's reign at this time.

Some of the figures mentioned here would have served in succession rather than serving at the same time, serving in different periods of Solomon's reign. Twelve officers are placed over the land, each of whom provisions the king's table for a month of the year.

Maybe we're supposed to see a connection between the twelve tribes and the months of the year here. Two of Solomon's sons-in-law are among the officers. The picture is of a well-ordered land.

The king's decrees go out to all of the land and the riches from all corners of the land come into the king for his table. It's a well-integrated kingdom. We should consider that the many kingdoms of this time were fairly loosely bound together.

As you moved out from the capital you might find that life proceeded with little reference to the king and to the central government authorities. The extent of Solomon's kingdom is also seen in the fact that his rule truly spreads out over the whole of the land and isn't just narrowly focused in the area around the capital. The officers don't all oversee the same extent of territory but we are given all of their names.

Solomon is building an effective and a good central government. Indeed Solomon does not just rule over Egypt, he also rules over the surrounding kingdoms as a suzerain. From Egypt to the Euphrates people are bringing him tribute from all the kingdoms round about.

We might see fulfilments of the promises to Abraham here. Likewise with the fact that Israel is like the sand by the sea. Israel is eating, drinking and rejoicing and the king at the very heart is leading the feast.

We hear a lot about the way that his table is provisioned with the great fair of the kingdom gathered in from all around. He eats the typical meats but he also eats deer, gazelles, roebucks and fat and fowl. He's bringing in the different meats that might also represent bringing in the Gentiles.

Solomon's reign is associated with spices, different meats, it's associated with different trees, things that are brought in from outside. Solomon's reign is one in which the glories of the world are coming into the land of Israel. It's a time of peace and plenty.

Solomon rules not just over peoples but also over nature. His wisdom, not just the people, is like the sand by the seashore. This is a fulfilment of the promise of Deuteronomy chapter 4 verses 5 to 8 as the people gather in to hear his wisdom.

See, I have taught you statutes and rules as the Lord my God commanded me that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who when they hear all these statutes will say surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there that has a God so near to it as the

Lord our God is to us whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? Solomon's wisdom is described in great detail.

It is rooted in his breadth of mind. It isn't just an abstract wisdom but a wisdom that relates to all areas of reality, natural and human. His wisdom is compared to that of the Egyptians and the people of the east, also to Ethan the Ezraite who composed Psalm 89 and Heman who composed Psalm 88 and was a Levitical musician.

The connection of wisdom with song is perhaps especially interesting. The sort of wisdom in view seems to be a wisdom more seen in poetry and its analogical forms of knowing than in abstract and prosaic reasoning which separates things out and which we tend to focus upon. Solomon's wisdom as a poetic wisdom relates to the particularity of things.

He knows different types of trees and creatures. People come from all around to hear his wisdom. He's naming the creation like a new Adam.

He has been given the knowledge of good and evil and we can see his reign over the creation extended. A question to consider. What distinct features of the biblical vision of wisdom, especially in contrast to modern notions of genius, knowledge or expertise can we discern in this chapter? Hebrews chapter 3 Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken later.

But Christ is faithful over God's house as a son and we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting and our hope. Therefore as the Holy Spirit says, Take care brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day as long as it is called today that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

For we have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Hebrews has presented Christ in his exalted relationship to God and over the angels, chiefly in the first chapter. In chapter 2 his relationship to mankind was explored, as the one who fully partakes in our condition and after his humiliation is lifted up as our representative, our champion, our deliverer and our high priest. Chapter 3 now continues to speak of Christ as our high priest, especially in the first six verses which speak of his status.

This is followed by an exhortation from Psalm 95 verses 7 to 11 until the author returns to the theme of Christ as our high priest at the end of chapter 4. Thomas Long observes a sort of theology of the church in miniature in the opening line of this chapter. As brothers we are one, bound together in the family of God. We are holy, set apart by God.

We are apostolic, formed by the message of the great apostle, Jesus Christ himself, which is then passed on to his ministers. The author begins by comparing the faithfulness of Christ and his calling to the faithfulness of Moses before proceeding to contrast the stature of these two figures. Moses is an extremely important figure in the Old Testament.

He's the paradigmatic leader. He's the great leader of Israel during the Exodus. Moses' relationship to the Lord was unique in the Old Testament.

Exodus chapter 33 verse 11 reads, thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. The author references one of the key passages concerning Moses in Numbers chapter 12 verses 6 to 8 where the Lord speaks to Aaron and Miriam concerning Moses who is described as the most meek man on the face of the earth. And he said, hear my words, if there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision.

I speak with him in a dream, not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth clearly and not in riddles.

And he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? Moses was made as God both to Aaron in Exodus chapter 4 verse 16 and to Pharaoh in Exodus chapter 7 verse 1. Moses saw the Lord's back and entered the very presence of the Lord at Mount Sinai. Moses was regarded as a lower sort of God by the Israelites who sought to replace him with the golden calf when they feared that he had died.

He intermediated for the entire people bearing and leading them before the Lord. In Sirach chapter 45 verses 2 to 5 we have a sense of how Moses was viewed by other people of this period. He made him equal in glory to the holy ones and made him great to the terror of his enemies.

By his words he performed swift miracles. The Lord glorified him in the presence of kings. He gave him commandments for his people and revealed to him his glory.

For his faithfulness and meekness he consecrated him, choosing him out of all mankind. He allowed him to hear his voice and led him into the dark cloud and gave him the commandments face to face, the law of life and knowledge, so that he might teach Jacob the commandment and Israel his decrees. There were various legends about Moses circulating at this time and many early Jewish Christians would wonder where Jesus

might stand relative to Moses.

The point is not to diminish Moses so much as it is to elevate Jesus. Behind both this chapter and chapter 1 we might perceive many of the speculations that occurred about various figures of the heavenly courts. We should also probably consider the place of Deuteronomy chapter 18 verses 15 to 19 and the expectation that this represented.

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers. It is to him you shall listen, just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire anymore lest I die. And the Lord said to me, they are right in what they have spoken.

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers and I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him and whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. Jesus is much greater than Moses though. Playing with the concept of Moses' faithfulness in God's house in Numbers chapter 12, the author of Hebrews explores different aspects of that concept, the concept of the house.

Long uses the illustration of the jewel that is turned so that the viewer can see different facets. The author starts by exploring the concept of the house as a physical building. Moses is part of the house but Christ is the builder of the house.

Now a different facet is seen. The house is the household. Moses is the faithful servant and steward but Christ is the son who is over the entire house as it belongs to him.

Finally, one further aspect is seen as we ourselves are identified with the house. We are the household of the son and we are the building that he is constructing. His glory says something about our elevated status as his people too.

We are the people of Christ as Old Testament Israel were the people of Moses. The author has both compared and contrasted Moses and Christ. Now he develops this point by relating a warning given on the basis of the failure of the wilderness generation led by Moses in Psalm 95 to his hero's situation in the first century AD.

At the beginning of chapter 2, after he had demonstrated the supremacy of Christ over the angels in chapter 1, he had delivered a warning to pay closer attention. If rejection of the law given by means of the angels came with such punishment, how much more rejection of the message of Christ? The logic of the quotation of Psalm 95 after his argument for the supremacy of Christ over Moses is much the same. The author will return to unpacking the character of Christ as high priest after this mini-sermon, but here his point is to drive home something of the practical import of the supremacy of Christ over Moses.

Within the passage that follows, he will especially work with the key hook words of today and rest. As he has connected and contrasted Moses with Christ, the author is now able to relate Old Testament scriptures concerning Moses and his people to the situation of the recipients of the book. It is worth noting the way that such typology serves the task of preaching by placing Christians into clear analogical relationships with former groups of God's people and enabling words delivered to them to speak directly into our present situations too.

Paul does a similar thing in 1 Corinthians 10, where he employs the cautionary example of the Israelites. Verses 6-11 of that chapter read, Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were, as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

Psalms 95 emphasizes the urgent importance of hearing the word of the Lord. This was also the point stressed in chapter 2 verses 1-4. The term today is one that he returns to on several occasions.

Today stresses the urgency of the message and the danger of failing to respond to it. Sin hardens us. Those who delay their response will find that their capacity to respond diminishes over time.

Before long, we might have closed our window of opportunity and become insensitive to the message. If you hear God's truth, respond immediately. Do not delay.

Do not let that slight twinge of conscience that you feel be the last dying embers of a grace that you have long sought to quench and will soon utterly extinguish. Nothing matters more than this. In the hardening that the author describes, we might also remember the cautionary example of Pharaoh, who progressively hardened his heart to his own utter destruction.

The progressive yet almost imperceptible character of such developments are particularly significant for the author of Hebrews. We must take care for this reason. Our own hearts are treacherous, they can betray us, and sin can outwit us.

We must be vigilant and be on our guard. The danger of falling away from the living God is real. One of the ways that the Lord preserves us as his people is through such serious warnings.

It is imperative that we heed them. In verse 6, the author wrote, And we are his house, if



indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting and our hope. He makes a similar statement in verse 14, For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Both of these are rather surprising statements. They seem to make one's current status dependent upon future perseverance. However, this may not be all that strange.

Future actions can definitely change the past in certain ways. The meaningfulness of our past sacrifices, for instance, depends largely upon what becomes of them. If we abandon past commitments, the past actions made in service of those commitments are emptied of their meaning, and our past selves can be betrayed and robbed.

Our current participation in Christ is a participation in hope. It is anticipatory. The meaning of my current participation in Christ depends largely upon whether I will persevere in it or not.

If I abandon it, my current participation is also robbed of much of its force. I will have betrayed my current self and deprived myself of the sure hope that I currently found my faith upon. The Israelites, of course, had the promise of entering into the rest of the promised land.

They ventured out into the wilderness to receive it. However, by abandoning their faith, they robbed themselves of the promise and emptied their former decision to follow Moses and the Lord out of Egypt, of its meaning, by not following through with it. They ended up going out into the wilderness to die.

Later events can poison past ones, as anyone who has experienced a bitter divorce or betrayal can testify. Memories are curdled. Sacrifices are made in vain.

Years of our lives devoted to a particular cause can be wasted. As participants in Christ, we currently have in our hands the most precious treasure of all. We must be careful never to reject it, because our current possession of it depends greatly upon how we persevere in it or not.

Chapter 3 ends with the author recapitulating the story of Israel's unfaithfulness in the wilderness as a cautionary tale for Christians. Their story did not end well. While the author of Hebrews is confident of much better things for his hearers, he wants them, as the people of Christ, to learn from the example of the people of the lesser Moses.

He will develop this sermon further in the chapter that follows. A question to consider. Where else in the New Testament do we see Christ compared and contrasted with Moses?