

2 Chronicles 1 • Establishing God's Work

Introduction

It seems to be universally expressed in every culture, the opportunity to make a wish and have it come true. Whether it's blowing out the candles on one's birthday cake, or finding a genie in a bottle, or hoping God will materialize during prayer time, fantasy abounds as to what we'd request if granted such a wish. Solomon provides as example of how such an opportunity reveals the true condition of our inner, spiritual life, and how God's most fervent followers have a greater desire for the work of the kingdom than the works of this life.

¹Now Solomon the son of David established himself securely over his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and exalted him greatly.

[Read v.1]

Q: Why do you suppose that it's important to note that the very first step for Solomon was to establish "himself securely"?

A: The first step in every spiritual situation – be it salvation, sanctification, or pursuing God's will in any way – is establishing one's self.

Q: What was the tangible result of Solomon's security? How did it take shape?

A: "...the LORD his God was with him and exalted him greatly." His personal relationship with God was established to the degree that it became visibly evident to everyone that the source of Solomon's greatness was God Himself.

Point: Have you noticed how God often takes a person away to give them time to mature properly before sending them out to accomplish His will? There are examples such as Moses, Paul, and even Jesus being tested in the wilderness 40 days before fully engaging in His earthly ministry. God doesn't send people out before properly preparing them.

[Read v.2-6]

²Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the commanders of thousands and of hundreds and to the judges and to every leader in all Israel, the heads of the fathers' households. ³Then Solomon and all the assembly with him went to the high place which was at Gibeon, for God's tent of meeting was there, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness. ⁴However, David had brought up the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the place he had prepared for it, for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem. ⁵Now the bronze altar, which Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, was there before the tabernacle of the LORD, and Solomon and the assembly sought it out. ⁶Solomon went up there before the LORD to the bronze altar which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

Q: So having established himself personally, what does Solomon seek next to establish?

A: God's people corporately.

Q: What is significant about how Solomon leads the people? What is Solomon's goal?

A: He is simultaneously leading them all back to God. His goal is to achieve for the group what is stated in v.1 as having already been achieved for him personally, for God to be with them to the degree that it becomes visibly evident that it's God who's exalting them greatly.

Q: Why is the tabernacle at Gibeon?

A: We don't absolutely know for sure. The locations of the tabernacle in Israel as specifically stated in Scripture were first Gilgal, then Shiloh, then Nob, and finally Gibeon. It's probably because this is a town belonging to the Levites, chosen so it would be near those charged with its care and operation.

Q: What is unusual about this tabernacle and the things associated with it?

A: The ark of the covenant is not present in this tabernacle, but residing apart in a special tent provided for it by David in Jerusalem. Ever since the ark was lost to the Philistines during Eli's days (and then recovered), the ark has never been placed back into the tabernacle, but maintained separately. But all the rest of the original things of the tabernacle were still in Gibeon, such as the original bronze altar mentioned in v.5.

Q: So what do you think is implied as one of Solomon's goals for building a temple?

A: To unite all the things of God under one roof, so to speak.

Point: *It's actually amazing that Solomon and the people knew to still go to the altar at the tabernacle in Gibeon to worship God and render sacrifices, since they could have interpreted all that happened to establish a separate place for the ark as a sign to worship there. Some might have argued that God's presence was only with the ark or at the least that neither was fully complete without each other.*

Q: What can we learn from the fact that God responded to them at the tabernacle even though the ark was in Jerusalem?

A: God cannot be contained by **ANY** earthly structure or constraint. He is not restricted to man's setting things up in a certain way but responds to a right heart wherever it is.

Q: Why do you suppose they went to the extreme of offering 1,000 burnt offerings?

A: In Old Testament terms it was a way of expressing to God the depth of their sincerity towards Him, that they weren't just ritually coming together to make a token gesture. Solomon was leading them to seek God in earnest in the best way they knew how for their time.

Point: *True spiritual leaders lead by example by first establishing the quality of their own spiritual walk before leading the people back to the proper beginning of that process for them as well.*

[Read v.7-13]

⁷In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you."

⁸Solomon said to God, "You have dealt with my father David with great lovingkindness, and have made me king in his place. ⁹Now, O LORD God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. ¹⁰Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?"

¹¹God said to Solomon, "Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, ¹²wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you."

¹³So Solomon went from the high place which was at Gibeon, from the tent of meeting, to Jerusalem, and he reigned over Israel.

Q: How does Solomon preface his request? What might it teach us as far as our own prayer life?

A: Solomon begins by affirming that God has been faithful to fulfill His will in the past and up to the present, suggesting faith in God to do likewise for the future. It's similar to the "Lord's Prayer" provided as an example by Jesus to pray for God's will to be done. We should pray seeking not our own will, but His.

Q: Is Solomon's request simply to be the best leader possible?

A: Solomon's request betrays a desire for spiritual depth. He is asking for the ability to apply God's Word and will properly to his personal life so he'll not just be personally secure, but established as a spiritual role model for the rest of the people.

Q: How would you categorize the list of things God is pleased Solomon didn't request? What do they have in common?

A: They're all things that would only benefit Solomon personally and have no lasting spiritual impact either on himself or the people.

Q: What does earthly wealth often represent in the Old Testament?

A: It was often seen as a positive, outwardly visible sign of a right heart and relationship with God.

Q: But for that to be true, what was the correct sequence of events? Did wealth automatically bring about righteousness?

A: The physical blessings came as a **RESULT** of first establishing a right heart. As proved by Job's testing, his heart was neither the product of, nor affected by the removal of, earthly possessions. They were an outward sign of an internally right relationship with God.

¹⁴Solomon amassed chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem. ¹⁵The king made silver and gold as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamores in the lowland. ¹⁶Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue; the king's traders procured them from Kue for a price. ¹⁷They imported chariots from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver apiece and horses for 150 apiece, and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

Point: *Having been established personally, God subsequently elevated Solomon personally.*

[Read v.14-17]

Q: *Some interpret this passage as documenting Solomon's violation of the rules for kings provided in Deuteronomy 17:14-17. However, why might this not be true?*

A: First, Scripture usually qualifies sin by stating it plainly to remind the reader that something is wrong. Second, in the previous paragraph God promised to make Solomon wealthier than any king in history. The staggeringly great sums of wealth associated with Solomon may be a fulfillment of that promise.

Q: *Were the physical blessings limited to Solomon alone?*

A: Statements such as those in v.15 that he "made silver and gold as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones" clearly shows that **everyone** benefited from these blessings.

Point: *Having been corporately established in God, like Solomon the people were subsequently elevated by God.*

Epilogue

At least in the beginning of his life, Solomon – leading by personal example – established God's work in the people's lives so that they were all working towards the same spiritual goals so as to reap the same rewards. In the beginning, the tabernacle, the ark, the Levites, and even the people were all separate parts which needed to become a unified, spiritual whole under one roof symbolized by the temple to be built in Jerusalem. Likewise, all our efforts should be working towards the unification of the New Testament temple, the church. It begins with a sincere return to the beginning basics, a sincere acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, and a desire to put into practice His will instead of our own.

How might these elements be applied to your own personal journey? And to that of your local church?