

# BIBLE BRIEFING

## “*Livin’ Large*”

First Kings 4:20-34

### Introduction

In the Hebrew Bible, First and Second Kings are a single book, aptly titled, *Kings*. They trace the royal dynasties in Israel and Judah. Throughout these books, the focus is on the various kings. As the kings go, so go the nations:

1. When the king walked with God, the nation was blessed.
2. When the king did not walk with God, no blessing came.

The book opens with the death of David and some intrigue surrounding Solomon becoming king. After Solomon’s death, the kingdom of Israel split in two. The northern kingdom was called Israel; the southern kingdom was called Judah.

The northern kingdom of Israel had **no** godly kings. The good kings of Judah included Hezekiah, Joash, and Jehoshaphat. Despite their human failings they were men who walked with God.

The first half of First Kings traces the life of Solomon, David’s son. Under his leadership, Israel rises to her earthly zenith. It is those heights that I want to highlight.

You get a pretty good idea of Israel’s greatness under Solomon in chapter four, verses twenty through thirty-four.

1 Kings 4:20 Judah and Israel *were* as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing.

1 Kings 4:21 So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River *to* the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. *They* brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

1 Kings 4:22 Now Solomon’s provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour, sixty kors of meal,

1 Kings 4:23 ten fatted oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl.

1 Kings 4:24 For he had dominion over all *the region* on this side of the River from Tiphseh even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and he had peace on every side all around him.

1 Kings 4:25 And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.

1 Kings 4:26 Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

1 Kings 4:27 And these governors, each man in his month, provided food for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table. There was no lack in their supply.

1 Kings 4:28 They also brought barley and straw to the proper place, for the horses and steeds, each man according to his charge.

1 Kings 4:29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.

1 Kings 4:30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.

1 Kings 4:31 For he was wiser than all men - than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.

1 Kings 4:32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.

1 Kings 4:33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish.

1 Kings 4:34 And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

Let's face it: We're almost embarrassed by Solomon's large-living. We're not accustomed to such extravagance. It almost seems wrong to us; maybe even wasteful. Then, too, when we think of Solomon, we think of him as backslidden and overly-indulgent.

Solomon was notorious for his backsliding – for turning his back on a relationship with God. His multiple marriages to foreign women led his heart into idolatry:

1 Kings 11:1 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites;

1 Kings 11:2 from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love.

1 Kings 11:3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.

1 Kings 11:4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.

1 Kings 11:5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

1 Kings 11:6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David.

Solomon was not in his backslidings yet. The things you read about in chapter four were ordained by the Lord. They brought glory and honor to the Lord God of Israel.

We certainly want to be wise in our stewardship over the resources God entrusts to us. We want to heed the many warnings to the rich that we encounter in the Bible, especially the New Testament. We do not want to be affected by the heretical teaching of health and wealth ministers who distort the Gospel of Jesus Christ for their own gain.

Having said all that... I think sometimes we forget that the Lord Himself is extravagant. He is extravagant about His love for you.

For example: The apostle John is describing the Lord's extravagant love when he exclaims,

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

- being changed to bring change -

Or consider this description of the Lord's extravagant love, from the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, *saying*:  
"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

We believe that God created the heavens and the earth in order to have fellowship with mankind. Do you ever think about how extravagant the universe is? It is an extravagant backdrop to God's great love.

God's buildings, within which we approach Him, can be extravagant. God's original plans for the Tabernacle in the wilderness occupy

seven chapters in Exodus. Another six chapters describe its construction.

In the coming 1,000 year Kingdom of God on earth there will be a Temple at Jerusalem. Its description occupies seven chapters in the Book of Ezekiel.

The eternal city, the New Jerusalem, is constructed of gold and jewels and precious materials. It is totally over-the-top in terms of being extravagant. It is God's gift to you – like a wedding ring.

Once you start to think about it, it isn't hard to come up with examples from the Bible that point to God's extravagance.

Extravagance is a characteristic of romance. God is romantic; He romances us and part of doing so is lavishing His love upon us.

What can we glean from all this talk of living large? We, too, ought to be somewhat extravagant – at least in a spiritual sense.

Our passage in First Kings shows Solomon being lavished with **wealth**, then with **wisdom**.

Every New Testament believer has been lavished with more of both than Solomon!

1. As to wealth, we enjoy **all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ** (Ephesians 1:3).
2. As to wisdom, Jesus is to us who believe **the wisdom of God** (1 Corinthians 1:24). If we lack any wisdom, James tells us to simply ask for it, and we will receive it.

Let's take a quick look at **wealth** in verses twenty through twenty-eight.

Verses twenty and twenty-five describe every Jewish family as being more than satisfied with their individual lives as there was no lack of provision for them.

1 Kings 4:20 Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing.

1 Kings 4:25 And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.

Judah's and Israel's physical blessings are illustrating your spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Unlimited spiritual wealth makes it possible for you to be satisfied with your individual life.

Your physical circumstances may be ones of being abased; you may be impoverished, or poor, or struggling financially. You might be suffering. But you can learn in all things to be content. You can experience God's abundant grace being sufficient in all things.

Jesus is greater than Solomon. With Him as your King, life can and should be filled with spiritual satisfaction. The other verses in this first section describe life in Solomon's palace. It was one continual feast, with no end of provision. This can be typical of our gatherings as believers. In a very real sense, there is no end to the Lord's provision in our gatherings. He is there to meet every person – saved and unsaved, weather they come weeping or rejoicing. We should come expecting to be fed and satisfied; we should assume that God will do the same for any who come, if they will only receive it.

Let's consider wisdom, in verses twenty-nine through thirty-four.

1 Kings 4:29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.

If we take **wisdom** as a heading, then it is described in two ways: As **exceedingly great understanding**, and as **largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore**.

**Exceedingly great understanding** is the practical application of **wisdom**. It is knowing what to do based upon the wisdom God grants. We can know what God's Word says, and what God's will is; but we still need to apply it.

**Largeness of heart** would be the spirit in which we practically apply God's wisdom. It speaks of compassion, grace, patience, longsuffering. The description of it as being like **the sand on the seashore** keeps it in a decidedly spiritual dimension. I cannot have largeness of heart as a natural quality. It is not a personality trait. It is given by God to reveal the extent of His extravagant love to people.

1 Kings 4:30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.

1 Kings 4:31 For he was wiser than all men - than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.

Solomon was wiser than any of his noted contemporaries. This is probably a list of guys in the world that people looked-up to for advice and direction. In any generation, you could make such a list of men or women that people look to and listen to.

You know what? The simplest believer in Jesus Christ has more wisdom than any unbeliever. For one thing, no matter their advice on issues, if they are not saved, what does it matter ultimately?

If you know Jesus, He is the wisdom of God, and you have something to share.

This section ends with a little bio info on Solomon – almost as if you're reading a book jacket:

1 Kings 4:32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.

1 Kings 4:33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish.

1 Kings 4:34 And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

Solomon was prolific. Interesting, though, that of his **three thousand proverbs**, only a few hundred are in the Bible. Of his over a thousand **songs**, only one is in the Bible.

More is not always better. Sometimes it's just more! We have just what we need in God's inspired Word – no more, but no less. It is

everything you need pertaining to life and how to live it in a godly way.

Are you livin' large spiritually?

