

# [ ben-hur ]

:: 1 kings 4.7-8 ::

This morning, we're in 1 Kings, chapter 4, starting at verse 7. Here we find a great one-verse-wonder: Ben-Hur.

**1 Kings 4.7-8 - And Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each one made provision for one month of the year. These are their names: Ben-Hur, in the mountains of Ephraim.**

By 1 Kings 4, Solomon had a unified reign over Israel. In chapter 5 he would begin his preparations to build the temple of the Lord. Here in verse 7 and 8 we're given a little insight into his administration.

12 regional governors were appointed for service. One month out of the year, their region would be responsible to supply provision and food for the king and his household. Ben-Hur, not the chariot-racing one, was the first listed and is our subject today.

First let's talk about the job. There are really 3 aspects to this job that we can think about and apply to ourselves as servants of our King, Jesus Christ.

First, they had a regular, ongoing service to Solomon. He had selected them individually for this job. It was an important station, which would've taken a continual effort, continual focus, continual planning. Their offering to the king would have to be planned and cultivated and prepared so that it could be delivered fit and on time to Jerusalem.

Our personal devotion and worship could be likened to this offering that these governors had to deliver to the king. As we read through the Bible and see God's comments on our personal love and our personal worship of Him, we find that His desire is that we do not just throw together an offering at the last minute, but that when we present ourselves to the Lord it is personal and sacrificial and worshipful in a true sense.

First and foremost, Ben-Hur's job was to bring the king an offering that would bless him and please him. The things he brought to Solomon should be worthy of him. Can you imagine Ben-Hur showing up with just one wagon of wilted cabbage to give to the king and his household? Of course not.

Our worship, our service to the Lord, our offerings should be **worthy** of God and worthy of the blessings that He has given us.

Paul described this sort of offering by saying that we present our bodies as living sacrifices. That our reasonable service to our King is to give *everything* to Him. Everything. Ben-Hur may only have had to provide one month a year, but that offering would've been developing in his life throughout **all** 11 months beforehand.

We may come together to worship God once a week, but that offering, should be cultivating day by day as we prepare our hearts to serve God and to hear from Him.

Second item we should notice: Ben-Hur was to provide for the king's household.

It wasn't just that they would come and parade this great provision before Solomon as some sort of excessive display of the nation's wealth. But it was to help and nourish the king's family.

As Christians, called into the service of the Lord, we are commanded to serve the family of God. We are commanded to bear one another's burdens. We are commanded to edify one another. We are commanded to forgive and to teach and to help the people of God. They are His family and we have been appointed and gifted and commanded to serve them regularly and personally in love.

Third aspect of his job: he was to represent the king.

Ben-Hur had this specific job that took him once a year to Jerusalem, but for the rest of the year, he was a governor of Solomon's kingdom. He was a representative to the people of the king.

I think we need more of this mindset as Christians. We each need to remember that we are here, out in the field, representing Jesus Christ. When people look at us, they are seeing Jesus. Therefore, it is important that we portray our King accurately. We must speak like He speaks. We must treat people like He treats people. We must behave like He behaves. And we need to own up to the fact that, as Christians, people are making judgments about our God based on how we interact with them.

When people saw this guy, they saw him as a representative of their king. I think sometimes we get a little too individualistic, or a little too compartmentalized and we can forget that my mouth, my habits, my mindset, my choices, my way of life **colors** the name of Jesus to the people around me.

The way that we live successfully as servants of the King is subtly found in our man. He is listed as 'Ben-Hur', which simply means 'Son of Hur.' Meaning, we don't know his real name. He was known for who his father was, and, perhaps we could say, he was his father's son. So, devotionally speaking, if we want to be successful in these areas of service: worshiping the Lord, serving His family and representing Him in our region, then we must reflect the Father. That's what's important.

There's one more thing I'd like us to think about regarding this guy. We're told his region, which was the Mountains of Ephraim.

If you want an interesting study, get into your e-sword later and look up the phrase *Mountains Of Ephraim*. There's a lot of really great stuff to mine in those mountains.

But for our purposes, here's how we look at them. They were the inheritance that Ben-Hur was given, the area which God called him to in order to do His work.

You have been given a life to inherit in the Lord. Now, like the Israelites, we are free to go in and take that inheritance or we can sit back and refuse it. But in God's word He sets before us this life and says, "Ok, here's what I want for you. Here's the place and the provision and the opportunity that I've set aside for you, individually. A life full of resources and space and work. An inheritance prepared for you so that you can be the most effective, the most mature, the most spiritually blessed." That is the promise of God. That is the spiritual inheritance He offers us, aside from eternal life in heaven.

Now this morning our example is Ben-Hur. His inheritance, his region was the Mountains of Ephraim.

Apply that to ourselves, and we can learn things about our spiritual living, our inheritance from God.

The Mountains of Ephraim were at several times a rallying point for the people of Israel to unify and fight against their enemies. Judges 3 and Judges 7.

Our lives should inspire others to serve the Lord. Not only that, but our lives should be a place of victory over sin, as we remember God's power and His presences with us.

The Mountains of Ephraim were home to a city of refuge. Our lives should be places where people can come for spiritual refuge, where they will receive help and wisdom and a word from the Lord. We should be men of compassion and truth, who open our lives to assist those who are in need of shelter.

The Mountains of Ephraim were the place of Deborah's judgment seat. Therefore, our lives should be absolutely governed by the word of God. When we have a decision, when we have a problem, when we have a desire, it should be judged by the Scriptures, not our own worldly wisdom.

Those are some good things to meditate upon, but it wasn't all good. The Mountains of Ephraim were also home to wickedness from time to time in the Old Testament.

During 2 Chronicles, they were filled with idols which Asa had to remove. Thus, we should be careful to remember that just because we love the Lord and just because we serve Him does not mean we are immune from sin or from going after other things in place of God. We must diligently search out any idols in our hearts and remove them before they take root in our lives.

During the time of the judges, the Mountains of Ephraim were home to Micah, the wicked man who set up for himself a shrine and an ephod and his own priest. He re-wrote his spirituality to fit his own desires. We have to be really careful about this, because it is the natural desire of our hearts to confine God and make Him in our own image. We do not define spirituality or righteousness, He does. We have to be careful that we are not putting up our own priesthood, our own morality, our own system in place of that which God has already delivered to us. He is the authority, we are not.

So here's where we find ourselves this morning.

We are like Ben-Hur: Men who have been given a spiritual inheritance, placed by God in a specific region so that we can represent Him to others, so that we can bring worship to Him and so that we can serve His household and out in His Kingdom.

This life that we've been given is precious and wonderful and incredible, but it requires everything. It requires personal discipline, personal devotion, personal sacrifice, personal availability. But if we're willing to receive this inheritance that God has made for us, then the result is a life full and strong and eternal. The choice is ours to take what God is offering or to refuse it.

Go out today, represent your Father, serve your King, nourish His family and receive the full promise that God has made to you in His word.