

We have to remember that the **whole** of the Bible is inspired by God and has been preserved so that people in every century and every part of God’s creation can receive what God wants us to know. If it isn’t within the covers of this great book, then it’s of secondary importance – God has inspired men through many centuries to write down in words all that we need to know so that we can be in a right relationship with our Maker. It’s all **here**.

But the **other** side of the coin is that we can’t afford to neglect **any** part of what God has given us. If he’s preserved it, who are **we** to say we don’t need it? We must make sure we expose ourselves to the **whole** word of God, the **whole** truth and allow **every** part of what God has given us to speak to us.

So in both meetings today, we’re going to be looking into one of the historical books of the Bible in the Old Testament. Turn with me, if you would, to the second book of Chronicles, chapter 1. You’ll find 2 Chronicles easily enough – it comes just after 1 Chronicles! We’re going to be looking at Solomon, king of Israel about 1000 years before Jesus was born, and two encounters he has with God – the 1st this morning, and the 2nd one this evening.

[Read 2 Chronicles 1]

When I was at school, I found it really hard to take part in lessons. I was very shy – I know, hard to believe – but yes, I was very shy, and I found it incredibly hard to put my hand up and answer questions in class. The thing was, I did know the answers, and I really wanted to take part. But **others** ended up doing what **I** wanted to do, and I’d end up getting very cross with myself, because I wanted to do it and I knew I **could** do it. Something I wanted to do, but others managed to do it instead.

Solomon’s father David had something that he really wanted to do for God, he wanted to build a temple for him. He made great preparations for the building of the temple, but God didn’t want **him** to be the one to build it. God wanted **Solomon** to be the one to provide the temple in Jerusalem. And those of us following Explore Bible Notes were reading of this last month.

God said to David, *‘You are **not** to build a house for my Name, because you are a **warrior** and have shed blood ... Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. I will establish his kingdom for ever ...’* 1 Chronicles 28:3, 6.

David really wanted to build a temple for God in Jerusalem, a symbol of God's permanent presence with his people. But God said that his son Solomon was the one to do the building. Sometimes we have to accept that there are things that we would very much like to do, even in our service of God, but they're not within his purposes and plans for our lives. We have to say, '**Your** will be done, not mine.' We have to recognise that God knows **best**, and we have to fall in line with him. David accepted God's will that it was going to be his son who was going to build the temple, not him. God has purposes for you – may his will be done.

So let's look at this encounter Solomon has with God one night, what he asks for, and how he asks for it, and on the way we'll find important things we need to apply to **our** lives.

David was a warrior king, he shed blood, he won many victories in the name and in the strength of God. Solomon, however, was to bring a time of **peace** for God's people. And I don't think it's a **coincidence** that his name is similar to the Hebrew word for peace – shalom. Solomon, man of peace. He's God's chosen king.

1 Chronicles 29:25 tells us '*the Lord made him very great in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on **any** king before him in Israel.*' [ESV] He'll build a most magnificent temple. He'll build a splendourous palace. His rule will be established and **glorious**. What a great king!

But before we go any further, let's burst the bubble! The parallel text in 1 Kings chapter 3 says, '*Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married his daughter.*' You may say, 'Yes – and?' and it may well slip by your mind without registering. But later on in the history of his reign we see that this is Solomon's **weakness** which will bring his downfall.

Chapter 11 of 1 Kings tells us that Solomon loved **many** foreign women; but God had told his people **not** to intermarry with foreign people because they would turn their hearts to foreign gods. We're told that Solomon's 1000 wives led him astray. **1000** wives! How did he ever get into the royal bathroom in the morning? And the royal car park must have been chaos!

Joking aside, God said, 'Don't do it! Don't do it! It'll turn you away from me.'

Relationships are difficult areas to control. We fall in love, and love takes over. We think we're **OK**, and before we know it, God's been **replaced** in our lives by our love. We're led astray. God says 'don't do it' – why? Because he loves you, and he wants you in relationship with **him** – he wants what's **best** and **right** for you.

You may be saying, ‘He’s not speaking to me, I’m OK with my love life.’ But you don’t get away with it that easily, my friend. It may not be the love of a woman that leads you astray – we all have something that has the potential to lead us astray – admit it – you know what it is, I don’t, but God knows. He says ‘Don’t do it! It’ll lead you astray.’ We can’t compromise in our love for the Lord – the love of a man or a woman, this or that pleasure lasts only a little while – don’t put in jeopardy your love for God which lasts forever. Above all else, you need the love of God.

Solomon put his relationship with God at risk, all for the love of women. Just like his father David, the opposite sex led him astray. Solomon was a man, not a **perfect** man, just a **sinful** man. But as well as giving us a warning, this also gives us **hope**, because God still had dealings with Solomon in all his weakness; so God will have dealings with you and me, even in **our** weakness.

Solomon is here the latest in a long line of those in whom God fulfils his promises. We read God’s promise to **David** in 2 Samuel 7:12, *‘When your days are over ... I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.’* God’s promise to David is being fulfilled in Solomon, verse 8, *‘You [God] have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place.’*

But he’s **also** part of God’s promise to Abraham many years earlier, and we read of this in Genesis 12:2, *‘I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you.’* Solomon says to God in our passage, verse 9, *‘Now Lord God let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth.’* God’s promises to his people are being fulfilled.

But of course that long line continues today – God has promised to have one of David’s offspring on the throne **forever**: Jesus, humanly speaking a descendant of David, is King of God’s kingdom, Lord of his people, **forever** – his reign will **never** end; and God has promised to build his church. **You** – if you’re a believer in Jesus – are **part** of that promise. Maybe not a king. Certainly not perfect. But one of the chosen people of God who are great, too numerous to count. What a privilege! Praise God.

In verses 2 – 6 we find Solomon seeking God at the beginning of his reign. He goes to meet God and worship him. He shows he wants to go God’s way and offers sacrifices. But I want to concentrate on his encounter with God that night.

Verse 7, ‘*That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”*’ “Ask for **whatever** you want me to give you.”’ What an offer! God, creator of everything, with power over everything, ruler of the whole universe, here says to Solomon, “*Ask for whatever you want me to give you.*” Incredible. Unbelievable. What will Solomon ask for? The latest, fastest, sleekest chariot? The most magnificent, the largest palace that could be built? The best and most relaxing holiday on a remote island in the known world? Or another 1000 wives?!

We’ve read the passage, we know he doesn’t ask for **any** of these things. I want us to look at what he **does** ask for, and how he asks for it.

What does Solomon ask for? Solomon firstly recognises the kindness God has shown in making him king of his people. But he asks for what he recognises he **needs** - wisdom and knowledge to carry out his kingly duties and to lead God’s people. He asks for **wisdom**.

He doesn’t ask for wealth, riches and honour for himself; he doesn’t ask for an easy life; he doesn’t ask for a longer life. These things aren’t the important things – it’s **wisdom** he needs, to distinguish between right and wrong. He doesn’t need all those things I listed just now – he needs wisdom.

Roman philosopher Cicero said, ‘The function of wisdom is to discriminate between good and evil.’ And that’s what Solomon needs as king of God’s people, a heart to see the difference between good and evil, right and wrong. He needs to know **God’s** heart, **God’s** mind on what is good and right, as he leads the people. He needs wisdom.

So what will **you** ask God for? The latest, fastest, sleekest new car? The most magnificent, the largest mansion that can be built? The best and most relaxing holiday on a remote island in the known world? Or the most beautiful or attractive partner in the world?

I tell you, that’s **not** what you need. You don’t need worldly wealth or riches – you need the wisdom of God to know what to do with what God has **given** you. You don’t need well-being, you don’t need comfortable or long life – you need the wisdom of God to lead the life God has **given** you, in a right relationship with him. You don’t need worldly pleasures and excesses – you need the wisdom of God to enjoy what he **gives** you in love. The Bible says, ‘*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*’ You don’t need to please man, you need God’s wisdom to please **him**. You don’t need them – you **need** the wisdom of God.

You'll remember that before Jesus began his preaching ministry on earth, he went into the desert, and while he was there, the devil **tempted** him with power and wealth and riches. These are the temptations of the **devil** – to **distract** you from a relationship with God. Don't be like the man who said 'I can resist everything except temptation.' You don't need wealth and power and riches, because Jesus warns in Luke's gospel, *'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'* Luke 12:34. Be warned – don't be tempted.

Solomon asks **God** for wisdom – he doesn't ask men for wisdom, he doesn't ask the wisest men in his kingdom for wisdom – he asks **God** for wisdom, because only **God** knows everything, only God knows right and wrong, good and evil. It's no use seeking the wisdom that this **world** has to offer, because those that give wisdom in **this** world are fallible, they're not perfect, they don't know everything, they're not God. Paul says to the Corinthians, *'the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.'* You don't need worldly wisdom – you need the wisdom of **God**. God is good – why accept any **lower** wisdom?

Solomon writes in Proverbs, *'Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.'* James writes in his letter in the New Testament, *'If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault; and it will be given to him.'* James 1:5. If you are without God you lack wisdom. But the good news is that we can approach God for that wisdom, and he will give generously.

We need wisdom to know the right way, the right path to tread – we need God. We need **his** wisdom. What the world has to offer is superficial, it comes and goes – what we gain on earth, we lose in heaven; but if we gain the wisdom of God on earth, we gain the eternal riches of heaven. I urge you, don't put that at risk. None of us is a king, but we still need God's wisdom to lead our own lives in a way which pleases God, not man. God will show you what is right, he'll show you what is good, and in the context of eternity, this is what you need more than **anything**. So come to him, resist the pull of worldly wealth and pleasures, and ask him for what you need in your life.

He's made it easier for you. God has provided such an easy way for you to gain wisdom. Look at Colossians 2:2-3. Paul writes, *'My purpose is that they [those who've not met Paul] may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, [listen to this] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'*

All the **treasures** of wisdom and knowledge are to be found in Jesus. So easy. So clear. So straight forward. So what're you waiting for? **Jesus** is all you need. All God's wisdom is found in him. Jesus is the right way you need. Jesus is good. Jesus is what you need more than any worldly wealth or riches. You need Jesus. **How** you need Jesus. Don't be satisfied with anything less. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in **him**. Find Jesus, you find wisdom. Paul writes, *'It is because of God that you are in Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.'* You have Jesus, you have God's wisdom.

Let's move on and consider secondly **what we can learn from the way Solomon comes to God here.**

Solomon actually **asks** God, he puts into **words** what he's asking for, he **speaks** to God. God wants people to actually ask him. He encourages Solomon to ask him for what he wants: *'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'* God says. He asks Solomon to be specific – 'What do you want?'

And this reminded me of Jesus asking blind Bartimaeus in Mark's gospel *'What do you want me to do for you?'* It wasn't because Jesus didn't **know** what Bartimaeus wanted, Jesus **knew** he longed to be able to see. But Jesus wanted him to ask him in **words**, to be specific. God wants us to ask him **personally**, even though he knows already what we want. **Speak** to God. Throughout the Bible we're urged to come to God and **ask**. Paul writes to the Philippians, *'Do not be **anxious** about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, **make your requests** to God.'* Philippians 4:6. Ask and you will receive.

Solomon knows that God's will is for him to lead the people, so when he asks for wisdom to lead, he knows that he's asking something which will **please** God and therefore is according to God's will. How do **we** know we're doing the same when **we** come to God with requests?

Well, we have to get to know the **mind** of God by getting to know **him**, by reading the Bible, by spending time getting to know him, as Derek was sharing with us last week.

The better we **know** him, the more we can pray on the right lines. Solomon knows God's character – he knows he continually shows kindness to his people (verse 8), he knows he is faithful and keeps his promises (verse 9), he knows God wants to help him and so he can pray confidently for wisdom.

Likewise, when **we** pray, when we come to God, we should come recognising who God is, his loving, faithful and gracious character, and pray on the basis of these things.

So when you come before God in prayer, don't just come armed with a list of requests. Remind yourself of who God is, and what he's done, and of his promises. Read the Psalms, remind yourself how God has loved you. Then you can pray with **confidence** prayers that God is pleased to hear. Don't pray for wealth and riches and power and pleasure, pray for things which please **God**. If you want God to be **real** in your life, you have to seek the things which will bring honour to God; not superficial things that last only for this life, but for things that will bring **you** closer to God forever, and which will bring **others** closer to God forever.

That's what Jesus means when he says, '*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,*' (Matthew 6:33). Solomon could have asked for wealth etc, but he **didn't**, because he knew God wanted him to lead his people, and Solomon wanted to do that, so he asked for what he needed to be able to **do** that – wisdom and knowledge.

God commends him in verse 11 that his heart's desire is to serve God and his people – we need to have this desire, to live a life honouring to our Maker, a life as God **intended** it to be. And for this we need to keep coming to God to ask for wisdom to live a life pleasing to him. Abraham Lincoln said, 'I don't think much of a man who is not wiser **today** than he was yesterday.' Our wisdom and understanding of God and his ways needs to grow each day. What does he want for you?

Let me finish that quote in Matthew 6:33: '*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*'

We find this verse exemplified in Solomon here: verse 12, '*therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honour, such as no king who was before you had and none after you will have.*' He asked for wisdom, but God also added all these things. Wisdom is a gift from God, all these things are **also** a gift from God

Now don't immediately start thinking, 'Oh, if I pray for wisdom to lead my life God's way, I'm going to have loads of money and property and prestige.' That's **not** what this means. But what it **does** mean, in the light of Matthew 6:33, is that if the desire of your heart is to seek to go **God's** way, to live a life honouring God and doing his will for the good of others, then God will bless you with all you need to do that. He will provide everything necessary to go his way.

Let's remember that we come in prayer to a God who can do much more than we could ever imagine or think.

We've seen that to get it right, and live lives as they're meant to be - in relationship with God - we need God's wisdom. We don't need even the best that this world has to offer, because even the best will leave you spending eternity away from God, even the best this world can give is nowhere near what God has to offer – eternal life with him.

We can know God's wisdom by coming to God and asking him for it – he's given us his Son, Jesus, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I know what I'd choose –how about you?

Seek God's wisdom, seek God's way, seek God's Son. All these are there, ready and available. God says, *'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'*