

Kings and Prophets 13-03-01b

Let's resume our study now in the Kings and the Prophets. We're in 1 Kings chapter 4. Looking about halfway through the chapter or more at verse 29, I guess we're toward the end of the chapter, God gave Solomon wisdom and exceeding great understanding and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt, for he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezraite, and Haman, Chalcol, and Darda the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.

Now, why out of all of the things that you could say would you pick these guys, whoever they are, who is Charcoal? And who is Deirdre? And who is He-Man? There used to be a toy that little boys liked to play with, He-Man. So who are these people? Why would Solomon in the living and eternal word of God be compared to them? Well, it's really interesting. You would tend to just go over this and say, well, these are probably some famous contemporary wise guys.

Who are these to whom Solomon is compared? Well, first of all, in verse 30, he excels the wisdom of the men of the east and the wisdom of Egypt. Now, if you were going to trace the history of the people of God, where does that history begin? In Genesis chapter 12, after the flood, after the proliferation of people, God appears to Abram and says, in Ur of the Chaldees, get thee up out of thy people and kindred and go to the place I will show you. Where does Abram start? Ur of the what? Chaldees.

And what is the Chaldees and the Chaldeans? That's the east. That's the wisdom of the east. Where do the wise men come from that look for the Christ child? From the east.

They are Chaldeans. They are wise men. And this tradition goes back hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, literally thousands of years.

Abraham is 2,000 years before Christ, give or take. And they are noted for their wisdom even back in those days. They had the ziggurats, which weren't just big piles of rock.

They were astronomical observatories. And there was a great deal of scientific knowledge that was developed and maintained in that area. So that's the east.

And then the wisdom of Egypt. Why would there be wisdom in Egypt? Out of Egypt I have called my son. Remember the famine survival strategy that was superintended by Joseph, the great grandson of Abraham, Ur of the Chaldees, to Egypt.

Egypt was an international power in those days and continued to be through the days of Moses and all the way down into the days of Solomon. And depending on how credible you find that the Chaldeans were, you find the revised chronology, and I find it fairly persuasive, if you reorder Egyptian history in that light, you wind up with Egypt at one of several peaks of its history during the time of Solomon. You're near or in the time of Hatshepsut and great international power in Egypt.

And Solomon's wisdom excels that. So you say, well, okay, I get that. Solomon's wiser than the Chaldeans.

He's wiser than the pharaohs and the wise men and the highfalutin magician cabinet officers down in Egypt. He's a really smart guy. How could you top that? Well, then you get to the next verse.

He's wiser than Ethan the Ezraite, Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahal. Well, you can't find any M-A-H-O-L, Mahal, in scripture. You can look in vain through all the genealogies and all the descendant lists and the guy's just not in there.

So who is he and why are his sons so famously wise? Well, it isn't a he, it's an it. And these names actually are quite fascinating. If you want to keep your place here, turn to 1 Chronicles 2. Now in the early part of Chronicles, one of the reasons it's called Chronicles is you've got lists of fathers and sons weaving down through time.

The very first word in 1 Chronicles, Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cain, and Mahal, Eljared. And this kind of reminds you of the descendant of the Lord Jesus in Luke chapter 3 or in Matthew chapter 1, where in one of them you go all the way back to Adam. And so you're coming all the way down and you get to the family of Ishmael, you come down to the family of Keturah, Isaac, Seir, kings of Edom, then you get to chapter 2, the family of Israel.

This is starting at the beginning and moving forward. These are the sons of Israel and you've got the 12 sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. Now, start paying closer attention at verse 3. Pay really close attention.

The sons of Judah. This is the tribe we're interested in, right? What tribe is David from? Judah. What tribe is Solomon from? Judah.

What's the ruling tribe? Judah. Judah has the scepter. Judah's got the white teeth and the colt tied to the vine and all that in Jacob's prophecy.

Er, Onan, and Shelah. These three were born to him by the daughter of Sheua, the Canaanites. Remember that? That was bad.

His father was grieved. He's supposed to be the ruler and he marries a Canaanite. He doesn't marry from among the sons of his people and the daughters of the sons of the people.

He gets this Canaanite. So he's got Er and he was wicked so the Lord killed him. Then you remember the story of Tamar because Er died and so Onan was supposed to be her husband but he would not father any children with her and so Tamar bore him Perez and Zerah.

She dressed up like a what? Like a what? Like a what? Prostitute. She dressed up like a prostitute and she had how many sons? Two. Two sons.

Zerah and Perez. Now, just hold on to that thought because we have a two-branched investigation of this. Perez and Zerah, all the sons of Judah were five.

The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. The sons of Zerah were, now look at verse 6, who are the sons of Zerah? Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Chalcol, and Dara. Five of them in all.

Now, keep your finger there, flip back to 1 Kings chapter 4, Solomon was wiser than all men than Ethan the Ezraite, Heman, Chalcol, and Dara, the sons of Mahal. Well, how is Mahal the same as Zerah? Well, he's not. But, who is Ethan? Ethan is a what? Ezraite.

Look at that word real close. Take the E off the front. What do you have? Z-R-A as in Zerah.

He's the Zerahite. Ethan the Zerahite. Now, if you get this far and you say, well, somebody in some commentary somewhere has to have noticed this.

So, there ought to be a note. It ought to be saying, hey, these guys are mighty men of old, men of renown for their wisdom. But the commentators say, these aren't the same guys.

Here's why. I don't know if you've got enough fingers to keep them in both of those and turn over to the Psalms and look for Psalm 88. We're going to look at Psalm 88 and Psalm 89.

This is why the commentators say they can't be the same guys. Psalm 88, look at the very top. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah to the Chief Musician said to Mahalat Leonot, a contemplation of who? He, man, the Zerahite or the Ezraite.

Look at Psalm 89. A contemplation of Ethan the Ezraite. Now, Ezraite, these guys are way more famous than you thought, aren't they, that Solomon's wisdom is compared to? Because two of them have Psalms in the hymn book and their names or namesakes go all the way back to the grandsons of Judah, right? So, are they the same guys or aren't they? And you think, well, you know, there are Psalms of Moses that are in the hymn book of Israel in the Psalms.

So, maybe these are songs that these guys, the grandsons of Judah wrote and they just came on down through the family. The problem with that is, if you read the songs, particularly Psalm 89, take a look at verse 3. I have made a covenant with my chosen. I have sworn to my servant David.

Well, maybe it just means David, maybe it means beloved and maybe it's not really David, it's just a description. Flip over to the area of verse 20. I have found my servant David with my holy oil.

I have anointed him with whom my hand shall be established, my arm shall strengthen him. My mercy I will keep with him forever. Verse 28, my covenant will stand firm.

Verse 30, if his sons forsake my law and do not walk in my judgments, if they break my statutes and not keep my commandments, I will punish their transgression with the rod. But my faithfulness, if I look down at verse 35, once I have sworn by my holiness, I will not lie to David.

His seed shall endure forever.

I mean, come on, this is David. So, the grandson of Judah isn't going to be able to write a Psalm that details all of these things about David and his throne and his sons and his covenant, right? So, hence the conundrum and people say, well, this has got to be a different Ethan, the Ezraite, than the grandson of Judah or else he lived a really long life. Because the guy is like 400 years old now to be writing Psalms about David.

And is he living a Methuselah type of lifespan? Probably not. So, what's going on here? Because you cannot get over it. When you go back to 1 Chronicles chapter 2 and verse 6, and you've got Ethan, Heman, Chalcol, and Dara.

I mean, did somebody just consciously go back and name their sons after these guys? Well, here's where it gets interesting. And I will make a suggestion to you, you can take it for what you will. But it does have a point.

We are leading to something that is actually applicable here. What's going on? Because the inspired word of God says Solomon's wisdom is greater than these guys and so evidently these guys were really, really wise. Let's assume for the sake of argument that all of these names are referring to one set of brothers.

These are the grandsons of Judah, every case that you find them. That's who Solomon is wiser than. That's who wrote the Psalms.

You say, that doesn't look to me like they can. Well, just hold that in abeyance. Let's just say that they were.

There are some interesting things that come out of this. Let's deal with the Psalms first. It is a common place in the songwriting world to take an existing song and update it, add to it, make it your own, bring it into the present day.

But if you are honest, you give credit to the original author. I would suggest to you that when you look at Psalm 88 and it says, this is a masculine, that's what contemplation is in Hebrew, masculine, M-A-S-C-H-I-L, of Haman the Ezraite, and I think Ezraite is a variation of Zeraite. This is Haman and Zerah.

This is an old family heirloom song. This goes all the way back in the family to Zerah. Now, we know that David and Solomon are descended from Judah.

What is the line? What's the fastest way to find that out? Where would you turn if you needed to check it real quickly? You could look around in Chronicles and try to find these are the sons of Judah, or you could go to the New Testament and look at the line of Christ, right? If you do that, you find that, of course, in both Matthew and Luke 3, one going forward and one going backward, the line is the same all the way down to David. Both lists are essentially the same down to David, but Joseph, the legal line of Christ, descends through Solomon. The line of Mary,

which Jesus was, as it was thought, the son of Joseph, that's the Matthew account, and it works backward.

That goes all the way back through, which is actually Mary's line, and it's different all the way until you get to the sons of David, but Mary was descended from David through Nathan, David's son, Nathan. So that's where the line splits. It splits in the generation we're looking at.

Nathan is one of Solomon's brothers that didn't die before he had children, didn't rebel, didn't get assassinated or executed. He's the son of David, and he has offspring, and that's eventually going to result in Mary. Solomon himself is going to have sons down to and through Jeconiah, but Jeconiah is cursed, and this is why an actual son through that line, he's legally through Joseph, Mary's husband, but not biologically because of the Jeconiah curse.

But all of that converges at David. Well, which son of Judah is David descended from? He's the son of Jesse, and you go back through Obed and Salmon, and you can look in either Luke 3 or Matthew chapter 1, and what you find out is that David is descended from Judah through Perez, not Zerah. Zerah is like an uncle.

Perez is the bloodline from Judah. And you think, well, now I'm even more confused. Why have I got Ethan and Heman and Chalcol and Darda, and they're not in the line.

They're uncles to the line. They're cousins to the line. They're beside.

They're the brothers to the line. Well, this goes all the way back to the Tamar story. So you have to go back to Genesis.

So you can lose all your places if you want, and go back to Genesis chapter 38. Genesis 38. Judah in verse 2 marries the daughter of Sheua.

She conceives, has the son Ur, another son Onan, conceived again, has Shelah. Judah took a wife for Ur is firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Ur was wicked.

The Lord slew him. Judah said to Onan, go into your brother's wife, lever it law. You've got to raise up offspring so that there will be a descendency and so on.

But Onan in verse 9 knew that the heir would not be his, so he didn't comply. Verse 10, the thing which he did displeased the Lord, so the Lord killed him also. First son of Judah, God kills him.

Second son of Judah, God kills him. The guys are too wicked to live. So Judah said to Tamar, remain a widow until my third son Shelah is grown.

But in his heart he's thinking, this gal is like poison for sons. If I marry my last son to her, I'm not going to have any line at all. So he refuses to let Shelah marry her.

So in the meantime, Tamar says, well, this isn't right. So she dresses up like a prostitute. Verse

14, took off her widow's garments, covered herself with a veil, wrapped herself, sat in an open place on the way to Timnah.

She saw that Shelah was grown and she was not given to him as his wife. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot because she had covered her face. Turned to her by the way, let me come to you.

Did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. You have this security pledge of the staff and the seal. So verse 19, she arose and went away, laid aside her veil, put on the garments of her widowhood after they had relations and she gets pregnant.

He doesn't get his staff or his signet back. So then there's a big scandal because she's pregnant and she's not married. She's supposed to be wearing her widow's weeds and Judah is all incensed with it.

So when they bring her to trial, in verse 24, Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has played the harlot. She is with child by harlotry. This ought to ring a bell, what we covered in the first session tonight, somebody being with child in harlotry.

Bring her out and let her be burned, says Judah. Well, she was sent to her father-in-law and says, by the man to whom these belong, I am with child and she gives him the signet cord and staff. Judah acknowledges them and says she's been more righteous than I because I didn't give her my son.

Now verse 27, this is where it gets interesting. Came to pass at the time for giving birth that behold, twins were in her womb, two babies. And so it was when she was giving birth that one put out his hand.

So he's the firstborn. First guy to break out into the world, he's the firstborn. Sticks out his hand.

The midwife is aware that there are twins coming. She says, well, this guy is the firstborn. So she ties a scarlet thread onto his hand saying this one came out first.

Then it happened that that little baby drew his hand back in and his brother popped out, broke out. It's kind of like he, you know, kind of reminds you of Jacob and Esau, except this brother, he's kind of like, oh no, you're not. And he pulls him back and he comes out first.

And the poor guy that stuck his hand out first winds up being born second. And so the midwife says, how did you break through? This breach be upon you. Therefore his name was called Perez.

He was going to be the secondborn because Zerah is on his way out. Perez says oh no, you don't. And he comes out first.

But Zerah had the scarlet thread. Everybody say those two words with me. Scarlet thread.

Say it again. Scarlet thread. Who's the scarlet thread baby? Zerah.

Who is the guy that ends up being firstborn? Perez. Wasn't going to be, but he makes it so. He comes out first.

Now I mentioned those genealogies over in Matthew and in Luke. There is an interesting and little known piece of Bible trivia that you will now be able to know and amaze your friends with. There is in the Luke genealogy only one man mentioned that isn't actually in the line of Christ.

Every man that is mentioned in that genealogy is in the line of Christ except one. There is an extra guy mentioned in the genealogy. The only man mentioned who is not actually in the line.

Do you want to hazard a guess as to who that is? Turn over to Luke chapter 3 just right quick. Verse 23. Jesus began his ministry at the age of 30 being as it was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Mattath, the son of the son of the son of.

Now this line goes all the way back in a straight line, one of each. Now go to Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1 goes forward. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Verse 3. Judah begot who? Perez and Zerah by Tamar. Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram, Ram begot Mennadab, Mennadab begot Nashon, Nashon begot Salmon, Salmon begot Boaz, Boaz begot Rahab and you have the women that are mentioned.

This is where you get Rahab and Ruth and that. But the only man mentioned in this whole list all the way down that isn't actually in the line is Zerah. He is named because he and his brother are twins.

When you have two of a thing associated with Jesus Christ it's always interesting to look at it because who is, who of that pair of twins, who represents the rulership, the kingship, the ruling line? Who is David and Solomon descended from? Perez. But who appeared first and who is marked with scarlet? Zerah. If you wanted to think in terms of the first advent of Christ and the second advent of Christ, the suffering servant who is set aside and it is only later that he comes and rules, this would be one very interesting way to do it, would it not? The very first appearance but you don't see him fully, it's just his hand.

If you don't believe my words, believe the works and it's his hand and it's marked on all of the possible materials. Why is it a scarlet? It doesn't even say scarlet thread, it says a scarlet. Look at your Bible, thread is in italics.

He is marked with scarlet. Zerah is. And while Perez becomes the father of the ruling line and that's both sides, Mary and Joseph, Zerah is the father of these wise men.

And you have the word, you have the wisdom, you have the knowledge, you have the revelation of important things in the sons of Zerah. Solomon, when he appears as the ruling king, finally

unites, it seems to me, Zerah and the sons of wisdom, because by the way, when it says sons of Mahol, M-A-H-O-L, that word is a musical term. They are sons of song, they are musicians, they are lyricists, they are songwriters.

And in their songs, a masculine is always a didactic or a teaching song. It's not just go down Moses or swing low sweet chariot, it's more like rock of ages, cleft for me. Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed be of sin the double cure, save from wrath the blood and make me whole the water, washing of water by the word.

Rock of ages has got a beautiful teaching lyric in it. Martin Luther's mighty fortress, there's much doctrinal truth in many of those old hymns. Isaac Watt, you can't touch for teaching content.

These are masculine, these are teaching songs. But how do you preserve that wisdom so that it will be remembered? You put it in a musical form. I would suggest, my personal theory is that these uncles, these that were in the non-ruling line, sons of Zerah, Zerah appeared first in the same way that Christ, the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory.

But that was the suffering, that was by his stripes we are healed. That's the scarlet and his teaching and whatsoever things, the quote Great Commission, whatsoever things I've taught you, you pass on to them. Make disciples of all nations, teaching them.

That's the Great Commission. Teach, make disciples and teach. If you want the essence of the Great Commission to the disciples, that's what it is.

As you go, make disciples, teaching them, immersing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And so it seems to me that there's a connection to Zerah with that scarlet thread and the wisdom of those men. I think these songs, these masculine were passed down from generation to generation in the families of Judah, throughout the tribe of Judah and they were known songs.

And when they came down to David, and David is out in the hills, you say, where did David get this tremendous knowledge of God and love for the Lord? Where did this faith come from? How did he know God so well? Way back, generations earlier, these wise men who loved the Lord and learned about Him, laid it down, recorded it, put it into songs and I think these were an heirloom, a transferred thing from generation to generation. When David got them, he personalized them. He made them his own.

He added his own verses, put in his own name. If you study Psalm 88 and 89, it's interesting because 88 is all about suffering. I am like those that go down to Sheol where there's no remembrance of you.

That song is just a dirge, it's for the depressed, it's for the downhearted, it's for the guy at the end of his rope and on his last dime. And 89 is a triumphant, celebratory Psalm of thanksgiving and recognition and expression of gratitude to God. They're a great pair.

They're bookends. They span the gamut of human experience from the very lowest to the very highest and David puts his name in that latter one and he says, even though I have been betrayed, I've been hounded, I've been sought, I've lived in the caves and been outside the camp and so on, look at where God has brought me. You have made a covenant with David, you have promised and he adds it.

But I think it's the old tune. Some of the earlier verses that talk about Rahab, the great dragon of the sea, this goes back to the generations of Job. The other place you see Rahab is in the days of Job.

That's contemporary with the sons of Judah. Remember when we looked at the book of Job? And so I say all of that to say Solomon as the wise king who is also ruling is such a fitting picture of the Lord Jesus Christ who came in the first advent and expressed that word of God and communicated that wisdom of God but was marked with the scarlet thread. It wasn't time for him to inherit.

It wasn't time for him to rule. Both of those pictures of Zerach and Perez come together archetypally, proleptically looking forward in Solomon and they're going to be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. This is why it says Solomon excelled the wisdom, the best wisdom that the family of Judah had ever seen and had.

You can talk about your men of the east, you can talk about your men of Egypt, but right in the heart of the tribe of Judah you had this treasured family wisdom in these mascots and Solomon embodies and transcends and excels even that. So this one little passing note that when you look into it, this is typical of all of these sections, all of these notices, all of these names. You could spend your life in the book of first Kings and never get out.

We're going to go a bit faster but this is just a sample of the reward that you can find in the pages of God's word and what does it tell us? We are provided so much by those who have gone before. What is our task? What did David do and what did Solomon do with the wisdom of the past, wisdom and examples that came from his family? It's not enough to honor it. It isn't enough to recognize it.

David and Solomon both take it and make it their own. David took, I think, these Psalms of his great great great great great uncles and learned them and then made them his own, added to them what he knew and his experience of God and his heritage is combined with his experience to make something that is new and fresh and meaningful to him and this is our opportunity. We have a wonderful heritage in the word of God.

Many of us have a heritage in our family, but we stand on the shoulders of so many people who have loved God and have devoted their lives to understanding the word of God and it's great to listen to them and learn from them, but we want to take that next step and advance and move forward and make it our own. This of course isn't accidental. It isn't spontaneous.

It's something that we arrive at as a fruit of our own concentration and review and reflection and meditation on the truth of God and we say, you know, I can see how this worked for Joshua or for Caleb or for Daniel or for any of the other biblical figures. I can see how it has been reflected in the lives of other people, maybe in my near periphery, but this is what it means to me. This is the reflection and this is the synthesis that I make in my own soul and that is when it really comes alive.

That is when Christ is at home in our hearts, when Christ dwells in us richly by faith. We're looking at that in our Sunday study. What does it mean, Christ in you, Christ formed in you, the hope of glory? Is it his actual personality, his personal presence? It's this wisdom.

It is this that is reflected in the tribe of Judah from Ethan and Darda and Chacol and Haman. By the way, those names, let me tell you real quickly as we close what those names mean. Ethan, the Hebrew root of that means something that is perennial, something that is persistent, something that is durable, something that lasts.

It's like a tree that leaves out and bears its fruit year after year after year. It's predictable. It's always there.

It may cycle, but it never goes away. Ethan, Haman is related to the same word we get amen from and it means, it speaks of assurance, trust, confidence, faith. It speaks of hope and it means something that you can trust.

I believe it, something you count on, something trust and trustworthy. Chacol is from a word that means to feed or nourish or sustain. All of these are really positive, beefy, uplifting concepts.

Chacol, to nourish, to feed, to sustain, to provide, to ensure the health of a thing. Then Darda is real interesting because it's a compound. There's dar and there's da.

The first part means white and it's a word that comes to mean pearl. The second one is related to knowledge or wisdom. Darda literally means pearl of knowledge, pearl of wisdom.

Look at these names, durable, lasting, assurance and trust, nourishment, sustaining, being fed, being strengthened, pearl of knowledge. This is the wisdom of Solomon which contains, encompasses and transcends even these great men and this is our heritage in the faith. Just as we saw with the harlot story, small things, small seemingly insignificant things can really be important, can really make a difference.

Don't shortchange yourself. Don't shortchange the circumstances and events of life that seem not important. Nothing is without significance in the plan and purpose of God.

As the old gospel song says, little is much when God is in it. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for how powerfully it condenses and conveys to us truths that are essential for our fruitfulness and our function and our faith before you. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts. May we be mindful and watchful and resourceful in our faith.

May we be mindful and energetic in the application of these in our own hearts and in our own lives. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.