CHOOSING GOD'S WISDOM

1 Kings 3:3-14

At the beginning of this year we began focusing on the theme of "growing", of growing in our understanding of God and His Bible so that we can faithful represent Him in the world. God has, fortunately, given us many examples in the Bible of the growth He expects from us. This lesson continues a series considering the story of king Solomon, an individual whose life reveals both the look of growth and the challenges that seek to prevent growth. This lesson will explore Solomon's request for wisdom from God in 1 Kings chapter three and how that request for God's wisdom played a role in his growth.

"Give your servant…an understanding mind" [1]

The story of King Solomon's early reign reveals an insight into his identity – "Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David" (*1 Kings 3:3*). His loving obedience prompted God to appear to him and to ask him, "What shall I give you?" (1 Kings 3:5). Solomon's humble response to the question illustrates his devotion to God. He acknowledged God's faithful love to both his father David and to himself and he recognized his own inadequacy to properly govern God's people. He therefore asked God to give him "an understanding mind to govern your people, that [he] may discern between good and evil" so that his rule would honor God's faithful love (*1 Kings 3:6-9*). Pleased with Solomon's response, God generously gave Solomon more than he asked for – He gave him unparalleled wisdom, riches, and honor (*1 Kings 3:10-14*).

The brief account of God blessing Solomon does not merely record the humble devotion that characterized the early part of Solomon's reign; it narrates the scene in a way that connects Solomon to a much larger biblical theme. Consider:

- Solomon asked for the wisdom to "discern between good and evil" (*1 Kings 3:9*), a phrase that connects Solomon's story with the story Adam and Eve.
    - Genesis' record of Adam and Eve reveals that God told them what was good and what was not good (*Genesis 2:15-18*); He was the source of their knowledge of good and evil.
    - Adam and Eve, however, rejected the wisdom God offered to them to instead rely on their own wisdom, illustrated by their decision to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (*Genesis 3:1-6*).
- Because he chose God's wisdom over his own wisdom, Solomon's reign experienced a growth that recaptured aspects of the paradise lost by Adam and Eve's rebellion. Consider:
    - Under his dominion, Judah and Israel multiplied and filled the earth in peace and happiness (*1 Kings 4:20-21; Genesis 1:28*).

[1] All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

    - The peace and prosperity of Solomon's reign resulted in "every man [living] under his vine and under his fig tree" (*1 Kings 4:25*), a description intended to echo the abundance of the garden of Eden God gave to Adam and Eve (*Genesis 2:8-9, 15-16*).
- The story of the queen of Sheba's visit describes the growth Solomon's reign enjoyed because he chose God's wisdom – reports of Solomon's fame motivated her to visit him to see if what she heard was true and, after visiting him, she said his "wisdom and prosperity surpass the report [she] heard" (*1 Kings 10:1-9*).

Applications

- Solomon's story offers an important insight into growth:

Growth requires us to embrace God's wisdom rather than our own wisdom.

- Love alone motivates our choice of God's wisdom over our own wisdom (*1 Kings 3:3, 9; John 14:15; 23-24*).
- Choosing God's wisdom needs love's strong motivation because God's wisdom seeks to unseat our own self-interest and the influence of our world (*Proverbs 3:5-7; 1 Corinthians 1:18-32*).
- For Solomon, God embodied His wisdom in the covenant laws He gave to Israel (*cf. 1 Kings 3:14*). For us, God embodies His wisdom in Jesus (*Colossians 2:3*); choosing God's wisdom thus involves believing and submitting to Jesus's teachings and example.
- Real growth only happens when we embrace God's wisdom because His wisdom instructs us on how to live as genuine humans (*Romans 3:9-18; Job 28:1-28; Proverbs 2:1-9*).
- Jesus, as the embodiment of God's full wisdom, reveals to us that God's wisdom for our lives ought to result in the growth of loving, selfless, service-oriented relationships (*Colossians 2:3; 3:1-4:1; 4:5-6*).

Solomon chose God's wisdom over his own wisdom and consequently experienced tremendous growth in his life and in his rule. His experience illustrates for us the blessings that awaits us if we, like him, choose God's wisdom.