

## **Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 6, 1 Kings 4-5**

### **Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

#### **1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 6, 1 Kings 4-5, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Oswalt's lecture focuses on the biblical books of 1 Kings 4-5, analyzing Solomon's wisdom as demonstrated through his administration and insight.** The lecture explores the organization of Solomon's kingdom and his accumulation of wealth through trade. **Oswalt examines the distinction between earthly and heavenly wisdom, questioning Solomon's motives and the potential pitfalls of wealth and power.** He also considers the favoritism shown to Judah and the forced labor imposed on other Israelites, which he believes sowed seeds of division. **The lecture further explores Solomon's covenant with Hiram of Tyre and the dangers of prioritizing material gains over spiritual integrity.** Ultimately, Oswalt challenges listeners to consider whether they use their gifts to glorify themselves or God, while examining the ambiguous picture of Solomon provided by the Bible.

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 6 – Double click icon to play in  
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]  
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →  
Historical Books → Kings).**



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on06.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 6, 1 Kings 4-5

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Oswalt's lecture on 1 Kings 4-5.

#### Briefing Document: 1 Kings 4-5 (Dr. John Oswalt)

**Main Theme:** "Wisdom, in action," but with a growing tension between earthly pragmatism and true, God-centered wisdom. Solomon's reign, initially marked by administrative success and insight, begins to show cracks as his choices lean toward self-aggrandizement and political expediency, potentially sowing the seeds of future division and spiritual compromise.

#### Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Solomon's Wisdom and Administration:** Chapters 4 and 5 showcase Solomon's wisdom in two primary areas:
- **Administration:** Solomon inherited and expanded upon David's royal cabinet, creating a more complex bureaucracy. Dr. Oswalt points out the evolution of roles like the "recorder" (keeper of royal chronicles) and the possible emergence of a "prime minister" figure. He notes, "What we see here is an increasing bureaucracy, don't we? We've got more officers in each case and more people involved in running the kingdom. Again, here is wisdom. Don't try to do it all yourself. Divide it up."
- **Insight into the World:** Solomon's observational skills, demonstrated by his classification of plants and animals, are highlighted. "Again, it's tremendous observational skills. But it has its limitations."
- **The Grain of the Apple:** While Solomon's reign is initially presented as prosperous and successful, the author-compiler subtly hints at underlying issues. Oswalt emphasizes that the Books of Kings was likely compiled by editors drawing on various sources, including royal chronicles and their own observations, which might explain some discrepancies and implicit criticisms.
- **Economic Power and Its Implications:** Solomon's control over trade routes from Egypt to the Euphrates River made him incredibly wealthy. This wealth, however, led to opulence and potentially compromised his values.

- Oswalt uses the analogy of "the only toll booth on I-75 between the Mackinac Straits and Miami" to illustrate Solomon's economic advantage.
- He contrasts Solomon's extravagant lifestyle with the biblical principle of sharing wealth, quoting Samuel's warning about what kings will do and asking, "What's the biblical principle with regard to wealth? It's interesting that the Bible is very, very ambiguous about wealth. On the one hand, if you've got it, receive it as a gift from God and share it. But most wealthy people didn't get it from God. They got it from crookedness. That's the biblical position."
- **Judah's Exemption and Seeds of Division:** Solomon exempted Judah from providing provisions for the royal household, which, while perhaps politically motivated (avoiding rebellion), created resentment and foreshadowed the later division of the kingdom. "Judah is... in a position to wield considerable power. And so, you better keep them happy. But here are the seeds... It seems to me as though it would have been wiser for Solomon to find a way to not protect Judah off at the side, but to integrate it into the whole." Oswalt highlights the natural geographic division between Judah and the rest of Israel and suggests that Solomon's actions exacerbated this divide.
- **The Hiram Covenant and Compromise:** Solomon's covenant with Hiram, king of Tyre, to secure cedar for the temple involved a "blood covenant," which was forbidden by Deuteronomy. Oswalt argues that this represents a compromise of faith. "This is not friendly relations. This is a blood covenant. Something that is strictly forbidden in the book of Deuteronomy." Oswalt asks, "Putting faith in man instead of God. For anything, the price is too high if you have to sell your soul to get it."
- **Forced Labor and Echoes of Slavery:** Solomon's conscription of laborers from all Israel (excluding Judah) for work in Lebanon is likened to the Hebrews' forced labor in Egypt. "They're back in slavery. A temple for God. Yes." This underscores the ethical problems with Solomon's methods, even if the goal (building the temple) was ostensibly good.
- **Earthly vs. Heavenly Wisdom:** Oswalt emphasizes the distinction between intellectual ability and true wisdom, which he defines as "a heart wholly surrendered... A heart turned outward. A heart that knows it is not God." He suggests that Solomon, despite his initial wisdom, may have gradually lost this crucial connection. He says, "intellectual ability does not always issue in what

James calls the wisdom coming down from above... And this wisdom that comes down from above is a heart wholly surrendered."

- **The Dangers of Riches:** Oswalt warns about the dangers of riches and the temptation to use God-given gifts for self-aggrandizement. He references Abraham's refusal to accept spoils from the King of Sodom as an example of resisting worldly temptation. "The world is not our friend... I'm not going to allow this bad man, and I'm confident that's what's going on."
- **Personal Reflection:** Oswalt concludes with a call for self-reflection, urging listeners to examine themselves in light of Solomon's example. "Every one of us has got to look in this mirror and say, if Solomon could go there, then, my goodness, how easily I could go there. May it not be."
- **Solomon's motives:** Oswalt questions if Solomon built the temple for God's name or his own.

#### Key Questions Raised:

- Is wisdom simply pragmatic success, or must it be rooted in righteousness and the fear of the Lord?
- How can we balance political expediency with ethical integrity?
- How do we avoid the trap of using God's gifts for our own glory instead of His?
- How do we discern when a good end does *not* justify questionable means?
- How to live within one's means.

**Overall Message:** Solomon's reign serves as a cautionary tale, demonstrating how even great wisdom and success can be undermined by pride, compromise, and a lack of focus on God. The lecture urges listeners to self-examine and prioritize true, God-centered wisdom over earthly achievements.

## 4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 6, 1 Kings 4-5

### Wisdom in Action: A Study Guide to 1 Kings 4-5

#### Review of Key Concepts

This study guide is designed to help you review and solidify your understanding of 1 Kings 4-5, as interpreted through Dr. Oswalt's lecture. Focus on the themes of Solomon's wisdom, its application, and the potential pitfalls that accompany it. Pay close attention to the administrative structure, economic prosperity, and foreign relations of Solomon's reign, as well as the potential for these to lead to spiritual compromise.

#### I. Solomon's Wisdom

- **Definition of Wisdom:** Understand the ancient world's perspective on wisdom as pragmatic and observational, focused on what "works." Contrast this with biblical wisdom, which should be rooted in the "fear of the Lord."
- **Areas of Wisdom:** Identify the two main areas where Solomon's wisdom is demonstrated: administration and insight into the natural world (classification of plants and animals).
- **Limitations of Wisdom:** Recognize that intellectual ability and practical skills are not enough; true wisdom requires a surrendered heart oriented toward God.

#### II. Solomon's Administration

- **Royal Cabinet:** Compare and contrast David's royal cabinet (2 Samuel 8 & 2 Samuel 20) with Solomon's (1 Kings 4). Note the similarities and differences in roles and personnel. Consider the potential reasons for changes (e.g., the absence of David's bodyguard).
- **District Governors:** Understand the role of the 12 district governors in providing for the king's household. Note the discrepancies between the districts and tribal boundaries.
- **Exemption of Judah:** Analyze the reasons behind the exemption of Judah from providing for the king's needs. Consider both practical and political motivations.

#### III. Solomon's Prosperity and Foreign Relations

- **Economic Power:** Explain how Solomon's control over trade routes contributed to his wealth. Understand the significance of controlling the land from Egypt to the Euphrates.

- **Daily Provisions:** Describe the scale of Solomon's daily provisions and what this implies about the lifestyle at the palace.
- **Relationship with Hiram:** Analyze the evolving relationship between Solomon and Hiram, King of Tyre. Understand the difference between "friendly terms" and a blood covenant. Consider the potential spiritual implications of making such a covenant with a pagan king.

#### IV. Potential Pitfalls

- **Forced Labor:** Explain how the conscription of laborers from all Israel (but not Judah) to work in Lebanon created potential division and resentment.
- **Opulence:** Analyze the dangers of wealth and luxury, as exemplified by Solomon's lifestyle. Consider the biblical principle of sharing wealth rather than solely indulging in it.
- **Compromise:** Recognize that good intentions (building the temple) do not justify compromising spiritual principles (making covenants with pagan nations, implementing forced labor).
- **Seeds of Division:** Understand how Solomon's actions, though seemingly wise or pragmatic at the time, sowed the seeds of future division within Israel.

#### Quiz: Short Answer Questions

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to the lecture, what are the two primary areas in which Solomon's wisdom was manifested?
2. What was the role of the "recorder" in David and Solomon's royal cabinets, and who held this position across David and Solomon's reigns?
3. Explain why Solomon may have exempted Judah from the requirement to supply provisions for the royal household.
4. How did Solomon's control of trade routes contribute to his wealth and power?
5. What is the significance of the phrase "they cut a covenant" in the context of Solomon's relationship with Hiram?
6. Explain why Dr. Oswalt believes making a covenant with Hiram may have been spiritually problematic.

7. How did the use of forced labor in the construction of the temple potentially sow seeds of discontent among the Israelites?
8. What is the lecture's main critique of Solomon's opulence and extravagant lifestyle?
9. According to the lecture, what is the difference between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom?
10. Explain the significance of the king of Sodom's offer to Abram and Abram's response.

### **Quiz Answer Key**

1. Solomon's wisdom was manifested primarily in two areas: administration, as demonstrated by his organized government structure, and insight into the natural world, particularly his ability to classify and understand plants and animals.
2. The recorder was likely responsible for keeping the royal chronicles or official records of the kingdom. Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, held this position throughout David's reign and continued into Solomon's reign, indicating his competence and reliability.
3. Solomon may have exempted Judah from providing for the royal household due to a combination of factors, including favoritism towards his own tribe and a strategic attempt to maintain their loyalty and prevent them from rebelling.
4. Solomon's control of trade routes, specifically from Egypt to the Euphrates River, allowed him to impose tolls and taxes on merchants, giving him a stranglehold on commerce and generating immense wealth.
5. The phrase "they cut a covenant" signifies a blood covenant, a formal and binding agreement typically sealed with animal sacrifice. This indicates a deeper and potentially problematic alliance between Solomon and Hiram beyond mere friendly relations.
6. Making a covenant with Hiram was spiritually problematic because it involved entering into a formal agreement with a pagan king, acknowledging his gods as witnesses, and potentially compromising Israel's exclusive devotion to Yahweh, which was forbidden in Deuteronomy.
7. The use of forced labor in the temple's construction created resentment because it disproportionately burdened the Israelites while exempting the Judeans,

evoking memories of slavery in Egypt and undermining the sense of unity and fairness within the kingdom.

8. The lecture critiques Solomon's opulence because it contradicted the biblical principle of sharing wealth and living modestly. Solomon's extravagance reflected a self-centered lifestyle rather than one of stewardship and generosity.
9. Earthly wisdom is pragmatic and observational, focused on achieving practical success, while heavenly wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord, characterized by humility, surrender, and a focus on God's will rather than personal gain.
10. The king of Sodom's offer to Abram was to give back his people who were captured, but you may keep for yourself all the goods you've recovered. Abram refuses any spoils from the king, fearing the king would claim to be the source of Abram's wealth.

## Essay Questions

Consider these essay questions to further explore your understanding of the material. There are no answer keys provided for these questions.

1. Analyze the ways in which Solomon's wisdom, as described in 1 Kings 4-5, both benefited and potentially harmed Israel.
2. Compare and contrast the administrative structures of David and Solomon, considering the implications of any changes made by Solomon.
3. Discuss the factors that contributed to Solomon's economic prosperity and evaluate the potential spiritual dangers of such wealth.
4. Critically assess Solomon's relationship with Hiram, King of Tyre, considering the political and religious implications of their covenant.
5. To what extent did Solomon's actions in 1 Kings 4-5 sow the seeds of division within Israel, and how might he have acted differently to promote unity?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Wisdom (Ancient World):** Practical knowledge and observational skills aimed at achieving success and avoiding failure in daily life.
- **Wisdom (Biblical):** Knowledge and understanding rooted in the "fear of the Lord," guiding individuals to make righteous choices that align with God's will.

- **Royal Cabinet:** A group of high-ranking officials who advise and assist the king in governing the kingdom.
- **Recorder:** A royal official responsible for keeping the chronicles or historical records of the kingdom.
- **Secretary:** A royal official responsible for administrative tasks, correspondence, and acting as the king's legal representative.
- **District Governors:** Officials appointed to oversee specific regions of the kingdom, responsible for providing for the royal household.
- **All Israel:** A term used to refer to the northern tribes of Israel, often in contrast to Judah.
- **Cores:** A unit of measurement for dry goods, approximately equivalent to 5 1/2 tons, used to quantify the provisions supplied to the royal household.
- **Blood Covenant:** A formal and binding agreement sealed with animal sacrifice, signifying a deep and often religious alliance between parties.
- **Forced Labor:** A system in which individuals are conscripted to work on public projects or for the benefit of the ruling authority, often without compensation or against their will.
- **Tyre & Sidon:** Prominent Phoenician city-states known for their maritime trade, cedar forests, and worship of Baal.
- **Hiram:** King of Tyre who maintained a relationship with David and later formed a covenant with Solomon.
- **Euphrates River:** A major river in the Middle East that marked the northeastern boundary of Solomon's kingdom.
- **Tribute:** Payments or goods given by one nation or ruler to another as a sign of submission or as a condition of peace.
- **Hyssop:** A small plant that grows out of walls, used by Solomon as an example of his extensive knowledge of plant life.
- **Prime Minister:** The chief advisor to the king, who essentially manages the kingdom.

## **5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 6, 1 Kings 4-5, Biblelearning.org (BeL)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions on Solomon's Wisdom and Reign in 1 Kings 4-5**

#### **1. How did Solomon's wisdom manifest itself, according to 1 Kings 4?**

Solomon's wisdom is described as being evident in two primary areas: his administrative abilities and his profound understanding of the natural world, particularly his skill in classification. The text highlights Solomon's efficient organization of the kingdom through his royal cabinet and district governors. His wisdom extended to a deep knowledge of plant and animal life, demonstrating keen observational skills. However, the speaker notes that the author-compiler hints at potential problems ("a worm in the apple"), suggesting that earthly wisdom may not always align with heavenly wisdom.

#### **2. How was Solomon's royal cabinet structured, and how did it compare to David's?**

Solomon's royal cabinet, as depicted in 1 Kings 4, shows an evolution from David's administrations described in 2 Samuel 8 and 2 Samuel 20. While some positions, such as the recorder (Jehoshaphat), secretary, commander of the army, and priests (Zadok and Abiathar), remained consistent across all three administrations, Solomon's cabinet saw the addition of new roles, such as someone in charge of the officers and someone over the house (possibly a prime minister). The absence of the commander of David's bodyguard (the Cherethites and Pelethites) in Solomon's cabinet suggests either a change in security strategy or the integration of the bodyguard into the main army. Overall, Solomon's cabinet reflects an increasing bureaucracy and division of labor to manage the growing kingdom.

#### **3. What was the significance of Solomon's 12 district governors, and what was their role?**

Solomon established 12 district governors over "all Israel" (excluding Judah) to supply provisions for the royal household. Each governor was responsible for providing supplies for one month of the year, effectively requiring each district to contribute a twelfth of their income to support the king and his establishment. The districts did not perfectly align with tribal boundaries, and, significantly, Judah was exempt from this provision. This exemption, while possibly intended to prevent unrest among Solomon's own people, sowed the seeds of division between Judah and the rest of Israel, foreshadowing the kingdom's later split.

#### **4. How did Solomon's lifestyle reflect the warnings given by Samuel about kingship?**

Solomon's opulent lifestyle, characterized by extravagant daily provisions and a large number of horses and chariots, closely mirrored the warnings Samuel gave when the people demanded a king. Samuel had cautioned that a king would take sons for his army, daughters for his household, the best of their fields, and a tenth of their produce. Solomon's actions fulfilled this prophecy, as he implemented forced labor, extracted resources from the people, and maintained a luxurious court. The speaker questions whether this adherence to "typical kingship" was justified, given the biblical principle of sharing wealth and living below one's means.

#### **5. What were the key elements of the agreement between Solomon and Hiram, King of Tyre, and what was problematic about it?**

Solomon and Hiram entered into an agreement where Hiram would supply cedar and cypress logs from Lebanon for the construction of the temple, and Solomon would provide wheat and olive oil as payment. While this arrangement seemed mutually beneficial, the speaker highlights that the agreement was cemented by a blood covenant, which was strictly forbidden in the Book of Deuteronomy. The speaker sees this covenant as an example of Solomon prioritizing expediency over adherence to God's law.

#### **6. How did Solomon's temple construction project contribute to internal divisions within Israel?**

Solomon conscripted 30,000 laborers from all Israel (excluding Judah) to work in Lebanon, with men spending one month in Lebanon and two months at home. This forced labor, coupled with the exemption of Judah from both the provision of supplies and the labor conscription, exacerbated existing tensions between Judah and the rest of Israel. The speaker draws a parallel between this forced labor and the Hebrews' enslavement in Egypt, suggesting that Solomon's actions were undermining the people's freedom and sowing further seeds of discontent.

**7. According to the speaker, what were some of the negative implications of Solomon's wisdom and wealth?**

The speaker emphasizes several negative implications. Firstly, earthly wisdom doesn't guarantee heavenly wisdom. Secondly, having wealth does not necessarily justify extravagant spending and can distract from principles of sharing resources. Finally, the choices Solomon made reveal a pattern of prioritizing political expediency and personal comfort over spiritual integrity and the welfare of all his people, sowing the seeds of future division and decline.

**8. What lessons can be learned from the story of Solomon in 1 Kings 4-5?**

Several key lessons emerge from the speaker's analysis. It is essential to distinguish between earthly and heavenly wisdom, ensuring that intellectual ability is coupled with a heart surrendered to God. Just because we *can* do something, doesn't mean we *should*; we must be mindful of ethical and spiritual considerations in our actions. Riches can be a snare, tempting us to prioritize self-indulgence over generosity and justice. Finally, we must be wary of using God-given gifts for personal gain rather than for the advancement of His kingdom.