

Studies in 2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles 1:1-17

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Background

Chronicles was first divided into two books by the translators of the Septuagint. Ancient Jewish tradition ascribes authorship to Ezra. The precise date of writing is difficult to determine, although the general view is that this book was completed toward the end of the fifth century B.C. The account here is paralleled in 1 Kings 3 which is worth reading for additional context.

The Message

Imagine coming before the Lord in prayer, and God appears to you saying “*Ask what I should give you*” (2 Chronicles 1:7). What would you ask for? Would you swiftly reply with a ‘shopping list’? Would you ask for “*possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you*”¹? Or perhaps, like Solomon would you think first of others. Solomon’s response was initially to thank the Lord for His ‘*great and steadfast love*’², and then he asked for the promise that the Lord had given to his father David to be fulfilled. He showed consideration for the Lord, for his people and last of all for himself.

Solomon asked for ‘*wisdom and knowledge*’³. Wisdom and knowledge so often go hand in hand since wisdom may be defined as the ability to apply knowledge in a critical or practical way. Yet again Solomon was thinking of his people, since he knew that he would need these attributes to be able to lead them, and that only God could equip him to undertake this responsibility.

We must also remember that immediately before God appeared to Solomon, Solomon had been before the Lord in the Tent of Meeting and had offered a thousand burnt offerings to God on the bronze altar.

These few verses tell us so much:

- Solomon knew full well the responsibility that he had before God for his people
- A thousand burnt offerings could not have taken place quickly, so we may conclude that Solomon must have been before the Lord for a significant period of time
- We should be challenged in how we come before the Lord in prayer. Do we spend considerable time waiting on the Lord and giving a sacrifice (of praise) to Him? Or do we just rush in hoping to ‘conclude business’ quickly?
- Even having made sacrifice to God, Solomon still put others before himself, firstly God Himself and secondly his people

¹ 2 Chronicles 1:11

² 2 Chronicles 1:7

³ 2 Chronicles 1:10

God indicates that what Solomon requested was his ‘heart’s desire’ – *“Because this was in your heart”*⁴... Solomon did not ask what he asked because he felt he should because it was the right thing to say. He asked because more than anything else he wanted to be able to serve the Lord and his people.

God in His generosity, and perhaps out of delight for the unselfish heart of Solomon, also gave Solomon wealth, riches and honour *“such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like.”*⁵ Interestingly, the parallel account in 1 Kings 3:14 also informs us that God also said *“If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.”* One blessing after another is poured out upon Solomon because of his heart’s desire and reverence for God.

Yet perhaps the most important thing we need to be aware of is that God is saying to us too *“Ask what I should give you.”* So often we fail to realise it. God is a God who yearns to ‘commune’ with us, a God who answers our prayers - and He has shown us through Solomon how we should approach Him unselfishly, yet with expectancy and in faith. Jesus said *“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”*⁶

Questions

1. Spend some time in silence examining your heart, and bring to mind the desires of your heart. Compare the things that you would ask God for with what Solomon asked for, and identify if they are similar or different – and why.
2. If you are in a group, discuss what you think about Solomon. Does he inspire you, challenge you, encourage you?
3. Pray *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.”*⁷

⁴ 2 Chronicles 1:11

⁵ 2 Chronicles 1:12

⁶ Matthew 7:7-8

⁷ Ephesians 1:17-19