

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST KINGS 4

As in the preceding chapter we have a proof of the wisdom and understanding which the Lord gave to Solomon, as promised, so in this an account is given of the riches and honour he was possessed of; of him, as king over all Israel, and of his princes, (^{<1040>}1 Kings 4:1-6); of the providers of food for his household in the several parts of the land, (^{<1040>}1 Kings 4:7-19); of the largeness and extent of his dominions, and of the peace and prosperity thereof, (^{<1040>}1 Kings 4:20,21,24,25); of his daily provisions for his household and for his cattle, (^{<1042>}1 Kings 4:22,23,26-28); and of his superior wisdom and knowledge to all others in all nations, which brought some out of all to hear it, (^{<1042>}1 Kings 4:29-34).

Ver. 1. *So King Solomon was king over all Israel.*] As David his father was not at first, only over Judah, and as Solomon's successors were not, after the division of the kingdom under his son Rehoboam; though this seems to have a particular respect to what is related in the preceding chapter concerning the wisdom of Solomon, for which he was so famous, that he reigned by the consent of all, and in the hearts of all the people of Israel.

Ver. 2. *And these [were] the princes which he had,* etc.] That were in office about him, in the highest posts of honour and trust:

Azariah the son of Zadok the priest: or rather his grandson, since Ahimaaz was the son of Zadok, and Azariah the son of Ahimaaz, (^{<1048>}1 Chronicles 6:8,9); though another Zadok may be meant, and his son not a priest but a prince, as the word may be rendered, and was Solomon's prime minister of state, and the rather, since he is mentioned first.

Ver. 3. *Elihoreph and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha, scribes,* etc.] Their father Shisha, the same with Sheva, was scribe only in David's time; and he being dead very probably, both his sons were continued in the office as secretaries of state, Solomon having more business for such an office, (see ^{<1045>}2 Samuel 20:25);

Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder; who was in the same office in the times of David, and now held it under Solomon, (^{<10186>}2 Samuel 8:16 20:24).

Ver. 4. *And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [was] over the host*, etc.] General of the army in the room of Joab, (^{<1025>}1 Kings 2:35);

and Zadok and Abiathar [were] the priests; so they were when Solomon came to the throne; but Abiathar was deposed by him after some time, though he might retain the name afterwards, and be employed, as Ben Gersom thinks, in case of necessity, in the room of Zadok, or, however, be employed as a common priest at Jerusalem, upon a reconciliation with Solomon; though Kimchi thinks another Abiathar is meant, which is not so likely.

Ver. 5. *And Azariah the son of Nathan [was] over the officers*, etc.] The twelve officers who provided food for Solomon's household after mentioned:

and Zabud the son of Nathan; another of the sons of Nathan the prophet: for he being a principal instrument of settling Solomon on the throne, had interest enough to promote his sons to the chief places of honour and trust: and this here

[was] principal officer, [and] the king's friend; a chief minister about him, very intimate with him, that kept him company, privately conversed with him, was in his secrets, and admitted to great privacy and nearness to him.

Ver. 6. *And Abiathar [was] over the household*, etc.] Steward of the household:

and Adoniram the son of Abda [was] over the tribute, over those that collected the tribute, as the Targum, whether from the people of Israel or other nations, or both; this man was in the same post in David's time, (^{<1018>}2 Samuel 20:24).

Ver. 7. *And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel*, etc.] Not with respect to the twelve tribes of Israel, for it does not appear that they had each of them a tribe under them, but some particular places in a tribe; but with respect to the twelve months of the year, in which each took his turn:

which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision; furnished food of all sorts out of the

country in which they presided for the space of one month in a year; by which means there was always a plenty of provisions at court for the king's family, and for all strangers that came and went, and no one part of the land was burdened or drained, nor the price of provisions raised; these seem to be the twelve "phylarchi", or governors of tribes, Eupolemus^{f44}, an Heathen writer, speaks of, before whom, and the high priest, David delivered the kingdom to Solomon; though in that he was mistaken, that they were in being then, since these were officers of Solomon's creating.

Ver. 8. *And these [are] their names*, etc.] Or rather the names of their fathers; for of many of them not their own names but their fathers' names are given, as being well known:

the son of Hur, in Mount Ephraim; a fruitful country in the tribe of Ephraim, from whence this officer was to furnish the king with provisions for one month in the year.

Ver. 9. *The son of Dekar in Makaz*, etc.] A place in the tribe of Dan, on the borders of it:

and in Shaalvim, and Bethshemesh, and Elonbethhanan; all in the same tribe, (see ^{<694>}Joshua 19:41-43).

Ver. 10. *The son of Heses in Aruboth*, etc.] Which seems to have been in the tribe of Judah by the places that follow:

to him [pertained] Sochoh; there were two places of this name in that tribe, (^{<655>}Joshua 15:35,48);

and all the land of Hopher: there was an Hopher in the land of Canaan, which was a royal city in the times of the Canaanites, (^{<627>}Joshua 12:17); and there was an Hopher, the name of a man, a descendant of Judah, to whom, very probably, this land belonged, (^{<106>}1 Chronicles 4:6); unless it can be thought to be the portion of land given to the daughters of Hopher, (^{<673>}Joshua 17:3).

Ver. 11. *The son of Abinadab in all the region of Dor*, etc.] The same with Dor and her towns, belonged to the half tribe of Manasseh, on this side Jordan, (^{<671>}Joshua 17:11);

which had Taphath the daughter of Solomon to wife; not when he was first put into this office, when, in all probability, Solomon had not a daughter

marriageable; but behaving well in it, in process of time he bestowed a daughter of his on him.

Ver. 12. *Baana the son of Ahilud, [to him pertained] Taanach and Megiddo, and all Bethshean, etc.]* All which were places in the tribe of Manasseh, (^{<0671>}Joshua 17:11);

which [is] by Zartanah beneath Jezreel; so described, to distinguish it, as is thought, from Zaretan in (^{<0616>}Joshua 3:16); and the country this officer presided over reached also

from Bethshean to Abelmeholah, [even] unto [the place that is] beyond Jokneam; the two first of these were in the tribe of Manasseh, and the last in the tribe of Zebulun, (^{<0691>}Joshua 19:11).

Ver. 13. *The son of Geber in Ramothgilead, etc.]* A city in the tribe of Gad, and was a city of refuge, (^{<0618>}Joshua 20:8);

to him [pertained] the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, which [are] in Gilead; of which (see ^{<0634>}Numbers 32:41);

to him [also pertained] the region of Argob, which [is] in Bashan, threescore great cities with walls, and brasen bars; called by Josephus ^{f45}Ragaba, beyond Jordan; (see Gill on “^{<0604>}Deuteronomy 3:4”).

Ver. 14. *Ahinadab the son of Iddo [had] Mahanaim.]* Another city on the other side Jordan, where both Ishbosheth and David sometimes dwelt, (^{<0608>}2 Samuel 2:8 17:2-4); this and the places adjacent must be very fruitful, since this officer was to furnish the king with provisions for a month once a year from hence,

Ver. 15. *Ahimaaz [was] in Naphtali, etc.]* Out of that tribe he made a monthly provision annually:

he also took Basmath the daughter of Solomon to wife; another daughter of Solomon's, in course of time; (see Gill on “^{<0611>}1 Kings 4:11”).

Ver. 16. *Baanah the son of Hushai [was] in Asher, etc.]* In the tribe of Asher; a very plentiful tribe, particularly for oil; this officer was perhaps the son of Hushai, the Archite, David's friend, and, it may be, promoted for his sake:

and in Aloth; which signifies ascensions, mountains went upon by steps; near to this place was an high mountain, called the ladder of Tyre ^{f46}; perhaps that and the parts adjacent may be meant here.

Ver. 17. *Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah in Issachar.*] In the tribe of Issachar; he had the whole tribe at his command to make a monthly provision out of for the king once a year, as had the preceding officer and the following one.

Ver. 18. *Shimei the son of Elah in Benjamin.*] So described, to distinguish him from that Shimei that cursed David, who was of the same tribe; (see Gill on “^{<1065>}2 Samuel 16:5”).

Ver. 19. *Geber the son of Uri [was] in the country of Gilead,* etc.] Which was beyond Jordan, and inhabited by the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh; this must be understood of all the country, excepting what was under the jurisdiction of the son of Geber, (^{<1043>}1 Kings 4:13); and which had been

the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan; until it was taken from them by Moses, (^{<0225>}Numbers 21:25);

and [he was] the only officer which [was] in the land; which is not true of Geber; for there was another officer in the land of Gilead besides him, the son of Geber before observed, unless it should be rendered “in that land”, in that part of the land he had; but then the same might have been observed of all the rest of the officers: the words may be rendered best, “and there was one officer in the land”; which some understand of one officer over all the rest, Azariah the son of Nathan, (^{<1045>}1 Kings 4:5); but it seems best what other Jewish writers say ^{f47}, that this was another officer appointed for the intercalated month; when there were thirteen months in the year, there was an officer in the land fixed for that month to make provision out of the land; perhaps any where, where he pleased, being not limited to any certain place. These twelve providers for Solomon’s family were emblems of the twelve apostles of Christ, appointed to provide food for his family, the church; and if you add to them the Apostle Paul, it will make thirteen, as this officer did.

Ver. 20. *Judah and Israel [were] many, as the sand which [is] by the sea in multitude,* etc.] Being blessed with great fruitfulness in their families, and having no pestilential disease among them, nor wars to lessen their number, and so the promise to Abraham was fulfilled, (^{<0227>}Genesis 22:17);

and which was an emblem of Christ's spiritual subjects, especially in the latter day, whom Solomon was a type of, (see ^{<2010>}Hosea 1:10);

eating, and drinking, and making merry; having a large increase of the fruits of the earth, and in no fear of any enemies; expressive of the spiritual joy of believers in the kingdom of Christ, and under the word and ordinances, (^{<2108>}Song of Solomon 2:3,4 5:1 ^{<4110>}Romans 5:2,3,11 14:17).

Ver. 21. *And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms*, etc.] Not only over Judah and Israel, but all people round about him, they standing in fear of him; or who brought him presents, or paid tribute to him, which was an acknowledgment of superiority over them, and doing homage to him:

from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt; that is, from the river Euphrates, as the Targum, which was the border of his proper domains to the east, to Palestine, inhabited by the Philistines, which lay to the west, and as far as the border of Egypt, which was the southern boundary; a like and larger extent of Christ's kingdom is given, (^{<4728>}Psalm 72:8 ^{<3010>}Zechariah 9:10);

and they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life; this explains in what sense other kingdoms besides were ruled by Solomon, and subject to him; of Christ his antitype, (see ^{<4720>}Psalm 72:10,11).

Ver. 22. *And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour*, etc.] The measure here used was the "corus", or "cor", the same with the homer, which was equal to ten ephahs, and, according to Bishop Cumberland ^{f48}, held seventy five wine gallons and five pints, and somewhat more; by which may be known how many gallons of fine flour these thirty measures held, which were all consumed in one day:

and threescore measures of meal: sixty measures of a coarser sort, for the servants, not so finely dressed; the same measure is here used as before; and it is observed by some, that one cor is equivalent to six hundred forty eight Roman pounds, and allowing to one man two pounds a day for his food, there would be food enough for 29,160 men out of 90 times 648, or 58,320 pounds ^{f49}. Others exaggerate the account; Vilalpandus says it would have sufficed 48,600 persons; Seth Calvisius 54,000, and Salianus 70,000 ^{f50}; the Jews say ^{f51} that he had 60,000 that ate at his table; that is, who were maintained at his court.

Ver. 23. *Ten fat oxen*, etc.] Such as were kept up in the stall and fatted:

and twenty oxen out of the pastures; which were killed as they were taken from thence, and not put up to be fed:

and an hundred sheep; out of the folds:

beside harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer; which were clean creatures, according to the Levitical law, (^{<614>}Deuteronomy 14:5); these were hunted in fields, or taken out of the park, or were presents from other countries; so that here was plenty of beef, mutton, and venison: for the spiritual application of this to the antitypical Solomon, and his provisions, (see ^{<121>}Matthew 22:4);

and fatted fowl; such as we call capons ^{f52}; some Jewish writers ^{f53}, because of the likeness of sound in the word here used, take them to be Barbary fowls, or such as were brought from that country: there is a sort of birds called βαρβαροι, which were without a voice, that neither heard men, nor knew their voice ^{f54}.

Ver. 24. *For he had dominion over all [the region] on this side the river,* etc.] Or beyond the river Euphrates, in the sense before given, (^{<102>}1 Kings 4:21); which accounts for the plenty of provisions he had, and the revenue with which he supported such a table he kept:

from Tiphseh even to Azzah; or Gaza, one of the five principalities of the Philistines. Tiphseh is thought to be the Thapsacus of Pliny ^{f55} which both he and Ptolemy ^{f56} place near the river Euphrates, since called Amphipolis; the former places it in Syria, the latter in Arabia Deserta; and which Strabo ^{f57}, from Eratosthenes, describes as 4800 furlongs or six hundred miles from Babylon, and from the place where Mesopotamia begins not less than two thousand furlongs or two hundred and fifty miles:

over all the kings on this side the river; the river Euphrates, or beyond it, in the sense before explained, as the kings of Syria, Arabia, etc.

and he had peace on all sides round about him; in which he was a type of Christ, the Prince of peace.

Ver. 25. *And Judah and Israel dwelt safely,* etc.] Without fear of any injury done to their persons or properties by any enemy; which is, and will be, more abundantly fulfilled in Christ, the antitype of Solomon, (^{<235>}Jeremiah 23:5);

every man under his vine, and under his fig tree; which were principal trees in the land of Judea, put for all the rest; and the phrase denotes the happy, safe, quiet, full, and peaceable enjoyment of all outward blessings, and is used of the times of the Messiah, (³⁰⁰Micah 4:4);

from Dan even to Beersheba; which were the two extremities of the land of Israel, north and south:

all the days of Solomon; so long this peace and safety continued, there being no wars in his time.

Ver. 26. *And Solomon had forty thousand stalls for horses*, etc.] In (⁴⁰²⁵2 Chronicles 9:25); it is only four thousand; and therefore some think that here is a mistake of the copier, of “arbaim”, forty, for “arbah”, four; which it is thought might be through divine permission, in such lesser matters, without any prejudice to the authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith and practice; but without supposing this, a reconciliation may be made, by observing, that here the writer, as Ben Gersom notes, gives the number of the horses that were in the stables, which were forty thousand, there the stables themselves, which were four thousand, ten horses in a stable; or here he numbers the stalls, which were forty thousand, and there the stables, which were four thousand, there being ten stalls in each; and the word there has the letter “yod” in it more than here, which is the numerical letter for “ten”, and may point thereunto; or here the writer speaks of all the stalls for horses Solomon had throughout the kingdom, there of those only he had in Jerusalem. Benjamin of Tudela^{f58} affirms, that these stalls, or stables, which Solomon built very strong of large stones, are still in being in Jerusalem, and that there is no building to be seen like it any where; but no other writer speaks of them; nor is it at all probable that they should remain:

for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; some of the said stalls of horses were for his chariots, to draw in them for various uses, of which had 1400, (¹¹⁰⁵1 Kings 10:26); and others to mount twelve thousand horsemen, who were placed in various parts, to defend kingdom.

Ver. 27. *And these officers provided victuals for King Solomon*, etc.] The twelve before mentioned; and this is repeated here, after the account of his horses, to observe, that they provided for them also, as well as for the sake of what follows; that the large provision made by them was not only for Solomon’s family and domestic servants, but for strangers from different

arts, who came upon messages to him, or to visit him, and to behold the splendour of his court:

and for all that came to Solomon's table; which was an open table for all comers, as there were some from all parts of the earth, (^{<103>}1 Kings 4:34);

every man in his month; each of the twelve officers provided food in the month assigned to him:

they lacked nothing; they always had enough to supply the king with, and they failed not in the performance of their duty, nor came short of their salaries, being fully and punctually paid them.

Ver. 28. *Barley also, and straw for the horses and dromedaries*, etc.] Or rather mules, by comparing the passage with (^{<42>}2 Chronicles 9:24); the particular kind of creatures meant is not agreed on; though all take them to be a swifter sort of creatures than horses; or the swifter of horses, as race horses or posts horses: barley was for their provender, that being the common food of horses in those times and countries, and in others, as Bochart ^{f59} has shown from various writers; and in the Misnah ^{f60} it is called the food of beasts; and Solomon is said to have every day his own horses two hundred thousand Neapolitan measures of called "tomboli", ^{f61}; so the Roman soldiers, the horse were allowed a certain quantity of barley for their horses every morning, and sometimes they had money instead of it, which they therefore called "hordiarium", ^{f62} and the "straw" was for the litter of them: these

brought they unto the place; where the officers were; not where the king was, as the Vulgate Latin version; where Solomon was, as the Arabic version, that is, in Jerusalem; nor

where [the officers] were; in their respective jurisdictions, as our version supplies it, which would be bringing them to themselves; but to the place where the beasts were, whether in Jerusalem, or in any, other parts of the kingdom:

every man according to his charge: which he was monthly to perform.

Ver. 29. *And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much*, etc.] In things natural, moral, divine, and spiritual, and that not slight and superficial, but exceeding deep, and large beyond expression; and this he had not from the acuteness of his genius merely, nor from his industry

and diligence; but by the gift of God, as whatsoever solid wisdom and understanding is in any man, it is from the liberal hand of God, the fountain of wisdom, (^{<3006>}James 1:5);

and largeness of heart, even as sand that [is] on the seashore; he had a genius and capacity to receive anything; his knowledge was vast and comprehensive; it reached to and included things innumerable, as the sand of the sea; there was scarce anything under the heavens, or on the earth, and in the sea, but came within the compass of it, as what are later mentioned show.

Ver. 30. *And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east*, etc.] The Arabians, and Persians, famous for wisdom, and who lay to the east of the land of Judea; whose wisdom lay in the knowledge of the stars, in divination by birds, and soothsaying ^{f63}:

and all the wisdom of Egypt; which it was eminent for in the times of Moses, and in which he was learned and well-skilled, (^{<4072>}Acts 7:22); and hence in later times the philosophers of the Gentiles travelled to get knowledge, as Pherecydes, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Plato, and others to Egypt, said to be the mother of arts and sciences ^{f64}.

Ver. 31. *For he was wiser than all men*, etc.] Not only that lived in his time, but in ages past since the fall of Adam, and in times to come, especially in natural wisdom and knowledge, in all the branches of it; for though some men excel in some part of knowledge, yet not in all, as Solomon did:

than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; men of the same names are said to be sons of Zerah, grandson of Judah, (^{<4386>}1 Chronicles 2:6); wherefore these are either other men, or their father had two names; or Mahol here may be an appellative, and describe the character of these then, and point at what they were famous for, as that they were sons of music, piping, and dancing, as Mahol may signify; the Jews have a tradition ^{f65}, that Ethan is Abraham, and Heman Moses, and Chalcol Joseph:

and his fame was in all nations round about; not for his riches and grandeur only, but chiefly for his wisdom.

Ver. 32. *And he spake three thousand proverbs*, etc.] Wise sayings, short and pithy sentences, instructive in morality and civil life; these were not

written as the book of Proverbs, but spoken only, and were taken from his lips, and spread by those that heard them for the use of others, but in process of time were lost; whereas the above book, being written under divine inspiration, is preserved: and

his songs were a thousand and five; some things that were useful to improve the minds and morals of men he delivered in verse, to make them more pleasant and agreeable, that they might be the more easily received and retained in memory; but of all his songs, the most: excellent is the book of Canticles, called “the Song of Songs”, being divine and spiritual, and dictated by the inspiration of the Spirit of God: he was both a moral philosopher and poet, as well as a botanist and naturalist, and well-skilled in medicine, as the following words suggest, (^{<10B>}1 Kings 4:33).

Ver. 33. *And he spake of trees*, etc.] Of all trees, herbs, and plants, of the nature, virtues, and use them:

from the cedar tree that [is] in Lebanon: a mountain on the northern border of Judea, famous for cedars, the tallest and largest of trees:

even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; which grew about Jerusalem, and in the mountains of it, as an Arabic writes testifies ^{f66}, the lowest and least herb; so that what is between the cedar and hyssop include trees and plants of every kind and sort: whether the same herb we call hyssop is meant, is not certain; some take it to be mint; others marjoram; some houseleek; others the wallflower; Levinus Lemnius ^{f67} supposes it to be Adiantum, or maiden hair: the Targum interprets it allegorically, that he prophesied of the kings of the house of David in this world, and in the world to come of the Messiah:

he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes; he understood the nature of all sorts of animals in the earth, air, and sea, and discoursed of their names, kinds, qualities, and use, with the greatest ease and perspicuity; the Jews fancy that Aristotle’s History of Animals is his, which that philosopher came upon, and published it in his own name. Suidas ^{f68} says it was reported that Solomon wrote a book of medicines for all diseases, which was fixed to the entrance of the temple, which Hezekiah took away, because sick people applied to that for cure of their disorders, and neglected to pray to God.

Ver. 34. *And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth*, etc.] Who sent their ambassadors to his court

to know the truth of what was reported, and bring them some proofs and specimens, by which they might judge of the truth of the relations that had been told them; which perhaps might seem to them to be beyond all belief:

which had heard of his wisdom; for the fame of it was spread everywhere by merchants and travellers, and such sort of persons, who had been at Jerusalem, and were masters of various anecdotes relating to Solomon; which they industriously spread in the several parts of the world they had dealings in.