

# The greatness of the kingdom

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[0:00] Well, please, will you find 1 Kings chapter 4 in your Bible? And you're probably thinking, this is going to be an interesting sermon this morning, life is a journey that only makes sense if you have a destination in mind.

Now, I know people don't agree with that, but I think that's a mistake. I think life does only make sense if you have a destination in mind. Where are you going to?

What lies at the end of it? Where is it heading for? I think it's just foolish to think that life makes sense of itself.

We're heading for something. But what? What's the destination? Now, some people say nothing. When you die, that's just the end of it.

Well, I don't know about you, but I can't think that that really makes sense. People are so valuable and life is so special that to live and then, that's it, nothing.

[1:37] I don't know about you, but I just feel deeply inside myself, that can't be right. It's just an appalling thought. Somebody dies and that's it.

Is there heaven for everyone? That's another thing that people sometimes think. We all go to heaven.

Well, do we? What would be the basis for that? So, now, I'm going to say, as a Christian, I think that's an insubstantial fantasy.

How on earth could anybody have any certainty of saying, we're all going to go to heaven? And what is heaven? Is it harps and wispy clouds?

You spell wispy like that. Yeah, okay. Adam would spell it the same way. Is that what it is? I don't know. A long time ago when Princess Diana died.

[2:37] I don't know. That was a long time ago, wasn't it? People had all sorts of sort of folk, folksy ideas of her flying through the air and living on a cloud or something like that.

Is that what the future is? Now, that's a bit more of an interesting question. And I am going to say that, well, to think that everybody goes to play harps on wispy clouds is a bit vague.

But what I'm going to say is that what we do have in the Bible and what we can look at is God promises things about the future and what does the fulfillment of God's promises look like?

That's what we're going to look at this morning. So it's the same question, but I'm answering it in a different way. I'm saying the future is what God promises and what does the fulfillment of God's promises look like?

Okay, are you with me so far? That's what we're going to look at. What does the fulfillment of God's promises look like? Okay, if you're not with me, you have to say so and we'll open some doors and we'll have to stand up and do exercises because it's a very hot day today.

[3:50] Okay. Right. So here's, first of all, we're going to look at what God's promises look like because God has made promises in the Bible and they fit on a timeline.

Here's where we are originally. Okay. Two people, green stuff. Any ideas of what I'm thinking of here? The Garden of Eden.

The Garden of Eden. And there are trees in the Garden of Eden. The trees are quite significant. And in the Garden of Eden, we have a place and we have people and we have peace.

And that would be one way of summarizing the original human situation, which God said is very good. That's what it was made to be like. However, it didn't stay like that, did it?

Did it? No, it didn't stay like that. We had the intervention of the serpent. And what in English-speaking theology is called the fall.

[5:01] So kicked out of the garden. All of that nice place, people, peace, all of it getting disturbed. And then God begins to put things back together again.

So that's a timeline. That's early. That's late. Okay. A timeline. And here is one person on the timeline and his name is Abraham. Abraham.

And God promises him things for the future. Now, does he promise him clouds, harps, wispieness? No. What he promises is these things.

Land. And descendants. And blessing for the nations. And God spells that out in a number of different places.

But it's always something in that. Those are the main ingredients. I will give you a place. Land. And I will give you descendants.

[6:01] Your descendants will be as many as the sand on the seashore. And through your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed. So there's something international about it.

That's the promises that God made to Abraham. And if you know the story of Abraham, you know that he spent his life living in faith because God made him those promises.

But in terms of land, he hardly owned a square meter of land, did he? Just enough for a burial plot. So he died still trusting that God's promises had a forward trajectory.

The promises were like something thrown up into the air which hadn't yet landed. So let me give you somebody else along this timeline of God's promises. And he's got a beard.

That's supposed to be a beard. To make... So this is Moses. Time has gone on. And Abraham's descendants have indeed become a nation.

[7:02] And through Moses God promises land. You will inherit a land. You will escape from Egypt and you will go and have your own land flowing with milk and honey.

And you will live in safety. And you will be there as a witness to the nations. And that promise has its own trajectory. It goes on.

And here we are with the kingship David and Solomon. And we will... What we're going to look at is to say what... In what... To what extent are those promises fulfilled fulfilled in the kingdom.

That's what we're going to look at. And what I want us to understand is that the promises do land there but in such a way as to say no there's still...

They still haven't been fulfilled properly. And the promises go on into the future. They still go on to Jesus Christ and his cross and his resurrection.

[8:06] And it is in and through Jesus Christ in fact that we expect all these promises to be fulfilled. In the big picture the long term future and what I'm saying this morning is that the promises have the same shape of place and people and peace and including all the nations.

And that's what Jesus came to do. And that's what the future holds. That's how we should think of it. Okay, you still with me? So when we get to 1 Kings chapter 4 I don't know whether you listened to it

like this but I think you could easily have listened to it and said this is the last chapter in the Bible.

All the things that God has promised seem pretty much to be fulfilled. They've got the things that God said to Abraham he would do. Amen.

End of story. So let's look at this morning what does it look like? What does this fulfilment look like? And then as a sort of second question why isn't 1 Kings 4 the last chapter in the Bible? Why is there so much more? What else needed to be done? Okay, that's what we're going to try and do.

[9:34] So would you please look into 1 Kings 4 and I'll read the first six verses. So this is a description of Solomon in the height of his kingdom what he'd achieved what it all looked like.

King Solomon ruled over all Israel. These were his chief officials. Azariah son of Zadok the priest. Elihoreph and Ahijah sons of Shisha secretaries.

Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud recorder. Benaiah son of Jehoiada commander in chief. Zadok and Abiathar priests. Azariah son of Nathan in charge of the district officers.

Zabud son of Nathan a priest and personal advisor to the king. Abishar in charge of the palace. Adoniram son of Abda in charge of forced labour.

This is what the fulfilment of God's promises looks like. And what do we got? I would say here we have a kingdom with human stewardship and order in it.

[10:41] I think it's worth considering what we have here. We've got the king. He's obviously the central person. And who is around him? Now Tony Blair famously said didn't he say we don't do God?

Was it Tony Blair who said Alistair Campbell? Okay. In reference to well he was Tony Blair's advisor. Okay. So if you think if Tony Blair was that person what you would not have is the priest who connects him to God.

But that's the first person on the list. Yeah. So this kingdom is not a secular kingdom where we don't do God. It is a kingdom of heaven if you like where the first person on the list is the priest who connects the king to God.

That's his job to connect the king to God in terms of sacrifices and prayers and everything. So that in itself is highly significant.

What sort of kingdom does God promise? Well a kingdom with him in it. Let's look at the next two people. Eli Horef and Ahijah sons of Shisha secretaries.

[12:01] There they are. A round of applause for them. Welcome to you. Like that. There they are. And you may be interested to know I looked up this word secretaries and it's always a dangerous thing to make too much of the original meaning of a word or where it comes from.

It's always dangerous. Don't let preachers bamboozle you because a word means what it means. It doesn't necessarily mean what it used to mean when it came from Anglo-Saxon or something.

But I will tell you what this word originally means. It means counters. counters. So who does the king include in his kingdom? These two guys whose job it is to count things.

And I think that's a fantastically encouraging thing if your gift in the kingdom is counting. Because usually people who count things get disparaged as being bean counters.

Have you ever heard that expression? Oh they're just bean counters. as if that's a very demeaning thing and nobody's interested in people who have bean counters. Actually they're next on the list.

[13:19] Here are the two people who do the counting. They're valuable people. It's a great gift and a great asset in the kingdom to have people who can count.

How many soldiers have we got? I don't know I can't count. Well get somebody who can count. How many taxes are we bringing in? I don't know I can't count. Well get somebody who can. How many buildings are we building?

Do you see what I mean? Counters. Who else have we got? Little ripple of applause for Jehoshaphat son of Ahelud the recorder. And his again I'm going to do what I said you should be very careful of doing.

What does recorder mean in Hebrew? It means memory. It's the standard word for remembering things. And isn't it interesting that in the kingdom you need people who can count and you need people who can remember.

How did it used to be? How did we get here? What problems have we overcome? What has God done for us? Third in the list isn't it? Somebody who can remember.

[14:26] What was it like? Do you remember what it was like in the church a year ago? Do you remember what it was like in this building? We didn't have these carpet tiles down did we? We had a very different arrangement here.

Have you forgotten that? What did we do last Sunday morning? We had a baptism. Don't forget that. So in the kingdom is remembering.

This person, his job is to remember things. Probably writes things down. He's probably in charge of all the IT system and all the backups and all the databases.

I don't know. But important to have a memory in the kingdom. What's next? Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, he is literally over the host.

Now hopefully we've got a host. There we are, we've got a host. I find it interesting that it's part of the way the kingdom operates to have delegation. So Solomon doesn't command each individual

soldier individually.

[15:28] He has somebody to whom he gives orders and then this person arranges that the orders trickle down to the whole host. It's the same word as what the Lord is.

He's the Lord of hosts. And Benaiah is over the host. And then a little ripple of applause for the next two. Zadok and Abiathar, priests.

We've already got one priest, haven't we? But these two guys, I think their names have cropped up in the story before. I think their names have cropped up in the story some years before.

It seems to me that these guys are the old guard. That in this innovative new kingdom that Solomon is making, he does keep one hand held out to Mr.

Helier, who was pastor here yonks and yonks ago and came. How old was Mr. Helier when he came the other week and spoke about the railway mission? 95.

[16:37] So he was here bright as a button telling us things from a previous generation. He could remember back all that way. And here in the kingdom, I think Zadok and Abiathar are the Mr.

Heliers. They are the people from the previous generation. And they're not put out to pastor and forgotten about but they're valued and they're part of this list. And here is, who have we got next? Azariah son of Nathan in charge of the district officers. So he's in charge of some people and who are these people? There they are, the district officers. Well, shall I tell you what the literal translation of these people in Hebrew, district officers, literal translation, standers.

Literal translation, standers. What do they do? They stand. Ever so useful to have people who stand. As distinct from people who've gone off for a break somewhere.

Where are you when I need you? I want somebody standing there. He's gone off. Or somebody who's gone to sleep, a liar down. Come on, wake up. You're needed.

[17:54] Or somebody just isn't there at all. Where is everybody? He's over the people who stand. I better make it a suggestive thought rather than a cast-iron exegesis.

But in the kingdom, it's a value in having people who stand. They haven't run away. They haven't keeled over. They haven't gone to sleep. They haven't gone off duty. They haven't gone absent without leave.

They're standing. The Bible says how important it is in the conflict they were in to stand. These guys stand. And then the next person is Zebud, son of Nathan.

A priest, he's a priest, and he is personal advisor to the king. So have I got him in there? Yes, he's up at the top there near the king. That's him. Personal advisor to the king.

There was Hushai, and I think Ahithapel, Hushai definitely, who was this person to David. It's almost a, what's the word, an official position, friend of the king, personal advisor to the king.

[19:08] And again, I'll do what it says literally. The word literally comes from the word to pasture. Pasture, to feed grass to sheep.

And this person is the person who is close to the king, so think of it in this suggestive way, to sort of give him some grass to eat, and make him lie down when he's tired, and do all the things that shepherds do for sheep.

He's sort of the personal pastor to the king. And that's a rather lovely thought. One of the important officials is somebody who doesn't advise the king about economy or finance or international relations, but just says, how are you doing?

How are you doing? Getting enough sleep? Are you still reading the Bible? Let's pray together. what's on your mind? So a personal advisor to the king.

And we had Ahisha, who's in charge of the palace, who is over the house. And we have Adoniram, son of Abda, in charge of forced labor.

[20:27] labor. And I put a little something there, because I'm not sure about forced labor. Who's doing this forced labor then?

There would be, I think, a possibility if it was enemies, instead of killing them off, you say, well, you're going to have to work for us. But I suspect that the forced labor includes natural citizens who should not be under forced labor.

This is a weak point in Solomon's kingdom, and turns out to be a fracture point when his son takes over. The son says, oh, I'm going to be even more brutal with you.

And they say, no, we've had enough of brutality. So I think this is a fracture point where we say, no, this is not like the kingdom of Jesus.

Jesus is not the fulfillment of forced labor. But those other things, that's what the promises look like. That's what the kingdom looks like. Personally, I think it's a rather beautiful picture.

[21:38] And in the future, we're told, I don't think we're told an awful lot about this, but we are told that we will have jobs in the kingdom to come.

this tantalizing verse, don't you know you will judge angels. And the people who have been given some tasks and done well will be given greater tasks.

So I think there's a rather suggestive and somewhat beautiful picture of what the kingdom looks like in a sort of almost final form, but not quite.

Okay, you with me so far? Could we open a door or two? Because I'm getting a bit hot. I don't know about everybody else.

A little bit of air wouldn't come amiss, would it? Okay, let's look at the next bit.

[22:38] So from verse 7 down to verse 28. Solomon also had 12 district governors over all Israel who supplied provisions for the king and the royal household.

Each one had to provide supplies for one month in the year. And these are their names. And we go to that list of names which Chris was kind enough and brave enough and good-hearted enough to read.

So what happens here? So I'm going to say this is part A. and it has a twin, A with a little dash on it. But let's do the part A first.

So what you've got here is different parts of the country which are supposed to provide for the king's necessities, you know, the produce of the field and the livestock and so on.

These are brought in month by month from the 12 different regions. They're not quite the same as the 12 tribes.

[23:48] The regions appear to be slightly different because things have changed. Some areas have been conquered which weren't conquered originally so they're included. So there's been some innovation and flexibility here but it's 12 tribes updated, 12 tribes rebooted.

It's innovation and growth and flexibility. I don't know whether you noticed some of the leaders were Solomon's sons-in-law. So did you notice in verse 11 somebody Ben Abinadab, son of Abinadab in Naphoth Dor.

He was married to Taphath, daughter of Solomon. I did know what her name meant but I'm afraid I've forgotten. I think it might be Spice.

She would be one of the Spice girls then wouldn't she? Some of the leaders and verse 15, Ahimaaz in Naphtali, he had married Basimath, daughter of Solomon.

I started to go off a little bit on a tangent on this, thinking if he had so many wives and he had so many daughters, he must have had lots of children, mustn't he?

[25:08] And then I started thinking I wonder how many weddings that would involve per day. Anyway, this is a bit of a random thought that wasn't it? So some of the leaders were Solomon's sons-in-law and I thought is this a good thing or a bad thing?

So it's family business, is it, what's the word, nepotism, when you unfairly give jobs to your family to keep them occupied.

This is one of the standard methods of corruption in an oppressive regime, isn't it? So you make, the head of state makes his brother in charge of the armed forces and his brother-in-law in charge of the secret police and so on.

So I wondered whether there was a little bit of a snake cropping in there. Could be, might be, might not. But the plan of this is that they share the privilege of supporting Solomon's court and of course they share the burden of it.

I would imagine it would be both. I'd say we've been privileged to supply Weetabix to King Solomon during September and so they could put on the Weetabix packet suppliers of fine foods to His Majesty King Solomon, probably a little crest.

[26:27] So that would be a privilege but it would also be a burden because I think it would be somebody there saying, oh no, it's September, it's Weetabix time, oh goodness. That's sort of how it is, isn't it?

So I mention in this connection that King Jesus does not need our support. It isn't that we support him by what we bring in.

He supports us month by month, day by day, hour by hour, but he does give us the privilege of serving him. Please notice that we have that big section, verse 8 to verse 19, and it is matched by a twin section, verse 27.

The district officers each in his month supplied provisions for King Solomon and all who came to the king's table. They saw to it that nothing was lacking. So there's a big section and there's a twin, A and A with a little twiddle on it.

So that's one of the things. Oh, little snake there. Let's look next at the people. So verse 20, a rather beautiful picture of what the kingdom looks like when it's in pretty much a final form, but not quite.

[27:49] Verse 20, the people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They ate, they drank, and they rejoiced.

They were happy. I think that's a beautiful, beautiful picture. What does God have in store? What does his promises look like? Well, it looks like many people sand on the seashore.

That's as per Genesis, isn't it? what God said to Abraham, your offspring will be as many as the sand on the seashore. So this is fulfillment of promises. Many people eating, drinking, and being happy.

I think there ought to be a picture coming up. There we are. Yes. This is what the Bible says. This is how to think of what God's promises fulfilled look like.

Eating, drinking, and being happy. That's why I said to the boys and girls, a party is not a bad way of thinking about what God has in store.

[28:52] I think it is possible for us to get put off by not bothering to think about the world to come because we think we probably won't like it particularly much.

What will we do? But we like parties. God says, think about parties. Think about a nice party that you've enjoyed being at where you sat next to somebody nice and had a good conversation with them and the food was fantastic and you had nice things to drink and you were genuinely happy and you thought, I really don't want to go home.

Well, God says, I've got a party like that lined up and you won't have to go home because it will be home. Fantastic thought, isn't it? They eat and drink and they're happy. And in this life too, the Bible talks about if you like the simple pleasures, a family life, I'm thinking of Psalm 128, am I?

Yes, I am, where it says, blessed are those who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor. Blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house.

Your sons will be like olive shoots round your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord. And he goes on to say, may you live to see your children's children. Now, it's like a lot of things in the Bible.

[30:22] We don't have that perfectly. And if we did, there wouldn't be anything to look forward to. But we do have some of that. And it is a blessing from God. It's a blessing from God to have a table.

So if you've got a table, you might not have a granite marble topped table, but if you've got a table, that's enough. And if you've got somewhere to sit and eat your food, and it might not be like on Grand Designs or it might just be a room with a table, but if you've got somewhere to eat your food, and if God has blessed you with a husband or wife, and you've got your husband and wife, and if the Lord has blessed you with children, now I know children are a handful before they're a quiverful, but they, they, there's a, what a blessing to have a room, a table, a husband, a wife, child or children, and even another blessing, may you live to see your children's children, and some of us have lived to see our children's children, and it says, blessed, thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord, so that's a, that's a great picture, even in this life, but the, but the picture of, is really of what is yet to come, and this little verse about the people, verse 20, is matched by a twin verse, which is in, ooh, where is it, it's in verse 25, during Solomon's lifetime, Judah and Israel from Dan to Beersheba lived in safety, that's a Moses word, safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree, so let's put

the trees in there, remember when we first had trees?

Eden, we're getting sort of Eden-like, they sat under their own vine and fig tree, Maria's auntie in Cyprus had a fig tree, and Maria's uncle in Cyprus has a vine, we have neither in Shaftesbury Road, but you can get the picture, can't you, the idea of sitting, you know, this is, if you had a million dollars, you would not actually get anything better than to sit with your children, and perhaps your grandchildren, with your husband and wife, eating a nice meal under the trees, that's sort of Eden restored, yes, amen, and this idea of sitting under your own vine and fig tree, becomes sort of shorthand for the promises of God for the future, and hopefully

I put down a couple of correct references there, which I don't think will stop to, well, the Zechariah one says, I will remove the guilt of the land in a single day, and in that day, each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree, declares the Lord Almighty.

[33:53] It's sort of shorthand for saying this is what God has promised, it's humanness, all the best things of humanness, sort of encapsulated in that, so that's the people, so we did A, which was the provision, and B, we did the people, and then C, the geography, so verse 21 has got some geography in it, and I have got a map coming up, Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms, from the river to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt, these countries brought tribute, and were Solomon's subjects all his life, well there's Solomon, and there's the map, so it goes from Egypt to the river Euphrates, which I'd never realised goes almost like that, so from that end to that end, that's, his kingdom stretches from river to river, not quite from sea to sea, but well, sea to river, geography, geography, geography is important, isn't it,

Jesus reigns geographically, from one end to the other, and this is a statement of geography, that's how big his kingdom is, and it has a little twin, which is in verse 24, for he ruled over all the kingdoms, let me just see if I'm doing this, what I should say is that the people bring offerings, the country's brought tribute, and the word for offerings, the word for tribute is actually offerings, it's almost like a sacrifice, they bring sweet sacrifices to the king, I've enlarged on that to make it resonate with Christian thinking, because that's what we've been doing this morning, isn't it, we bring the sacrifice of praise to the king who's kingdom stretches from sea to sea and shore to shore, and that's what was happening here, they brought offerings to Solomon, and they served him, is literally what it says, and look at the twin, which is in verse 24, he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the river, from Tifsa to Gaza, and had peace on all sides, so it uses the word peace there, which is a very significant word, and tells us about the geography of it, and also the word for rule, verse 24, he had dominion, he had dominion, anybody know where that word dominion is first used in the Bible, to have dominion,

Genesis, Genesis, have dominion over the fish, the fish of the air, that can't be right, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the beasts of the field, dominion is an Adam word, and an Eden word, if you like, and here it is for the king, geographically, and as I say, there's a, it's there twice, with its twin, and I hope you've been noticing the twin things, because they seem to me to be quite, to say something which I really hadn't expected, peace on all sides, look at the arrangement, if you would, of these sections, it isn't always that, it always seems very clever to do the arrangement, it doesn't always cash in for very much cash, but this one does, so we have the twelve, okay, I'm going to go through the sections, and show you how they fit together, so this is the twelve, verses, verses eight to nineteen, okay,

I've done a little grid of twelve squares there, okay, with me on that, and then they're matched by twelve in verse 27, the district officers each in his month supplied provisions for King Solomon, it's the same thing, yeah, okay, right, don't get too puzzled, there's a reference to the twelve monthly provisions at the beginning, reference at the end, the next thing is the family reference, so we got that reference in verse 20, and we get the family reference in verse 25, so, got two of those, and then we get the geography, which is in verse 21, a little map there, and verse 24, so it's, these things match, and the question is what's the thing in the middle, because the thing, when you get this arrangement, and the

Bible does have this arrangement, somebody has planned this, you get the thing in the middle, which is the thing where our attention goes, what's the thing in the middle? The thing in the middle is the table of the king, the thing in the middle is the table of the king, let's look at the table of the

king, his hospitality, Verse 22, Solomon's daily provisions.

[39:15] And as it says in verse 27, they made sure that all who came to the king's table lacked nothing. So let's look at the center. This surprised me, but this is what the center of it is, is the table of the king.

There's the king inviting people to his table, and there's the many, many people who sit at the table. And there are many of them. Just look at this, verse 22.

Solomon's daily provisions were 30 cores of fine flour and 60 cores of meal. Now, I didn't do the homework to say what that would be like in sacks or in those great big bags that they deliver sand and aggregate materials off a crane.

But it's ever such a lot. It's ever such a lot. And whatever, however big a call was, 10 head of stored-fed cattle.

Now, how many people could you feed off one cow? If you give people four ounces each. Don't trouble to try and work it out in your head now.

[40:32] But just think about it. 10 head of stored-fed cattle, 20 head of pasture-fed cattle, 100 sheep and goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks, and choice fowl. So it clearly wasn't...

If there were vegetarians and vegans, then there would be even higher numbers than this. But I seemed to get a calculation from somewhere which said this is feeding 12,000 to 35,000 people a day.

So it makes a church lunch look insignificant, doesn't it? The scale of hospitality is amazing.

So Solomon, with all the people around him, if you like, his sort of royal household family, is huge.

And it includes visitors. Just look at verse 34.

Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom. Well, men and women, as we know, sent by the kings of the world. It was an open... There were visitors. Who have we got today?

[41:36] Oh, we've got those people from Ethiopia. Right. I don't know. Yeah, that's right. I don't know. Do they eat... Do they eat stall-fed cattle? I don't know.

I have to go and ask them. Choice fowl? I don't know. Is that anything I like eating? I don't know. So the table of the king is colossal in its extent.

Many guests and visitors. And this is where the focus of the chapter is. It surprises me. This is where the focus of the chapter is. What does the fulfillment of God's promises look like?

Well, the heart of it is this. A table. Richly supplied. Where people come and eat and drink and are made welcome from all nations.

That's what's at the heart of this chapter. And Jesus, of course, said the same sort of thing, didn't he? This is the text. Many will come from the east and the west and take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Moses, Mrs. Henderson, gentleman whose name's up there.

[42:57] I can't see it because it's behind the speaker. Many will come to this feast. Jesus doesn't have to say to them, oh, did you not realize there'll be a feast? They knew that because of passages like this.

And he says many will come. And they'll come from all over the world. There'll be some from Japan. And there'll be some from Italy. Italy. And there will be some from Singapore.

There'll be some from all different nations. And that's what's at the heart of this chapter. Even now, we have a table of the king, do we not?

It's not as big, geographically. It doesn't have the same sort of food. But I would say that our table, which is a sort of looking forward table, we have a table.

We meet round a table. But the food that is spread for us is even more rich and startling than the roebucks and the cause of meal and the ten head of stall-fed cattle.

[44:11] Because the meal that we have is spread by the king himself. And what is it? It is his broken body and his shed blood.

It is what he, the nourishment that he prepared for us by dying on the cross at Calvary. And he says, that's what it is. That's at the heart of my kingdom.

Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. And symbolically, he invites us to come round this table, which we did this morning.

The table of the king. That's why we sang that song. You know, Behold the Lamb who shed his, bears our sins away, slain for us, and we remember.

Round the table of the king. That's what is at the heart of this chapter, the table of the king. And as there was an invitation then, there is even more now.

[45:06] An invitation. From the king, come to my table. Come and eat and drink with me now. Come and eat, which means saying that you accept his body given for you, broken for you, impaled for you, and his blood shed for you.

If you say, yes, that's for me. Come and eat at his table. Because it's looking forward. The table that we sit at, as we did this morning, looks back to Calvary, and it looks forward to the great feast. There's an invitation there to you. I don't know whether you've been sitting thinking, all this Christian stuff is a bit strange to me, but I like the sound of it. Well, there's an invitation there for you to follow up.

Maybe you won't follow it all up at once, but do follow it up. There's an invitation to come and eat and drink something more nourishing, more delightful, more satisfying than anything that this world has to offer.

Let's look at the extent of the kingdom. So we now go to verse 29, which we'll do quite quickly. Solomon gave, sorry, God gave Solomon wisdom, so the wisdom theme comes up, and it's just amplified, very great insight, and breadth of heart, as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

[46:38] Sand on the seashore is an Abraham promise thing. So I'm surprised that it mentions there. So his great wisdom is matched only by God's people and the bigness of God's promises.

And then it just tells us the same thing again and again. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East. And apparently you could go to museums and find the wisdom of Egypt and the wisdom of the East, and they have lists of things.

They have acrostics. You know, acrostic is a clever word puzzle. They have riddles. They have sayings. They have proverbs. And you can see them all written down. And, well, perhaps not all of them, but many of them.

And Solomon's was greater. Not bypassing that sort of wisdom, but surpassing it.

Wiser than Ethan the Ezraite, Heman, Calcol, Dada, the sons of Mahal. We haven't heard of them, but we could definitely say he was wiser than Robert Peston or Simon Cowell.

[47:48] Anybody ever heard of Simon Cowell? Yes, well, he's wiser than Simon Cowell. Vince Cable. I don't know whether we think Vince Cable is wise. He used to be thought of as having got all the right answers.

But anyway, Solomon's wiser than any of them. And his collection on YouTube is of 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs, of which we have the Song of Solomon.

I don't think we've got very much more left to us. But it's a prodigious output of thought and wisdom. And look at what he does.

Last verse, verse 33, he described, NIV says, plant life. Anybody got a different there? Verse 33, I mean, he spoke of, anybody got anything different?

Plant life? Plant life? Everybody got plant life? Anthony? Plant life? Well, literally, it's trees. Big trees and little trees.

[48:58] Trees again. I like the way trees have been popping up all the way through here. It's a sort of Eden thing. He spoke of, he spoke, 3,000 proverbs, he spoke of trees.

He spoke about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish. I don't know, when I'm thinking, when you think trees, birds, reptiles, fish, I think, you think Eden, don't you?

The way, the whole, the way God created the world, that's what his wisdom encompassed. And it was international in its scope.

People of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom. So, it's all good, isn't it?

Well, hang on a minute. I think we've, just one little thing here. Deuteronomy 17, 16, says, so this is back in history.

[50:11] When you have a king, it says back in, back in the day, it says, when you have a king, he must not acquire great numbers of horses for

himself.

He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. So we think, hang on a minute. That's exactly what Solomon's doing. We haven't yet come across all the wives, but part of all that provision was for the huge number of horses. And he's got, he certainly has got large amounts of wealth.

So we have a little thing there which flags up, it isn't the end of the Bible. It looks like the end of the Bible, and the end of the world is going to look like this, but he's not perfect.

Nearly, but not quite. It's a very near miss. And we need, he's wise, but we need a wiser king still. And that wiser king, is Jesus himself.

[51:21] He's a king still.