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"An Understanding Heart"

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Abstract: Elder Hunter discusses the relevance to Church members of Solomon's plea to the Lord for an understanding heart and the critical need for that understanding in the world today, especially in our families.

I speak with comparable feelings concerning the work in Korea. There are now some 1,300 members of the Church there. For the most part they are well-educated. They are buoyant in their faith. The tears welled in our eyes as we stood with them in a cold hall and sang that great hymn from the pen of Brother William W. Phelps:

"Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation.

No longer as strangers on earth need we roam.

Good tidings are sounding to us and each nation,
And shortly the hour of redemption will come. . . ."

I have never met with the Saints in those lands and listened to their testimonies and partaken of their spirit without

thinking of Paul's statement to the Athenians concerning God, our Father, who . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him. . . ." (Acts 17:26-27.)

That which is going on has demonstrated that the gospel is for all of our Father's children, and that the good people of the Orient are as responsive to its teachings as are the people of any land when the Spirit of the Lord touches their hearts. Here is one of the great evidences of the divinity of this work. Wherever it is taught, the honest in heart respond, each in his own

tongue speaking the same testimony.

One sees there the same quiet kind of miracle that one sees everywhere when men and women bring the gospel into their lives. What a marvelous thing it is to witness a peddler of fish, a man from the ranks of poverty and superstition, take on a new grace and a new goodness when he accepts the gospel and is endowed with the Holy Priesthood. He appears almost to become a new man. He literally is born again as he sheds old ways of thought and living and rises from the very waters of baptism to positions of leadership in his native land.

But with all of the joy and the inspiration that come of witnessing this marvelous thing, there comes likewise an almost overwhelming sense of obliga-

"AN UNDERSTANDING HEART"

Howard W. Hunter

of the Council of the Twelve

For forty years David had reigned over Israel, and as his life was drawing to a close, he appointed his son Solomon as his successor to the throne. Solomon inherited the great kingdom which had been conquered by the military genius of his father. The empire extended from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates and from the Syrian desert to the Red Sea. It became the task of this young man, then less than twenty years of age, to weld this great empire into a unity.

As his last will and testament, King David called Solomon to his side, and knowing the great task which would fall on the shoulders of this youth, he said to him:

"I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

"And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself"; (1 Kings 2:2-3.)

After this, King David died and Solomon commenced the administration of the affairs of the kingdom, and the record makes this comment: "And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: . . ." (*Ibid.*, 3:3.)

Not long after he became king he went to a nearby city to offer sacrifices, and while there an event occurred which had a significant effect upon his life and reign.

"In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee." (*Ibid.*, 3:5.)

What a grave and serious question this would present to one, to have the Lord say, "Ask what I shall give thee."

If you could have one wish, what would it be? There are so many things we wish for as we go through life. I presume nearly every child who has read the story of the *Arabian Nights* has wished for a lamp like the one Aladdin had, which when rubbed would summon the genie who would do the bidding regardless of the request made of him. Wishing is not only the pastime of children. Most of us have made wishes. We have wished for health and wealth, success, happiness, wisdom, a better job, a new car, a diamond ring, a magic carpet, to be like someone else, to have that which is not within reach, to be given the easy way instead of the path of toil and hardship—and a thousand and one other things.

We might wonder what went through Solomon's mind when the Lord said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." No doubt his mind traveled the same course as ours would travel if the question had been asked of us. Solomon had just ascended the throne, and although he had ambitions for the future, he must have had some fears and anxieties. The fact that he was a king would give him the right to most things a person would want, yet a king has many of the problems and the desires of those who are not of royalty. The question would be no less difficult for a king than it would be to one of a more lowly station.

Solomon must have had many thoughts cross his mind. We might assume he thought of asking for a long life. Others have done so when the question was put to them. A long life would have given him the opportunity to complete the ambitions of his father

to build and extend the empire. We cling to life, we wish for more time to accomplish the many things opportunity places in our pathway. Time is usually all too short when we think of the things we want to do and the lessons we wish to learn before the time comes for us to return home. No doubt Solomon thought of these things as he viewed the extent of his great empire, yet this was not foremost in his mind.

He might have thought of riches and wealth. Another king before him had made such a wish. In mythology the Greek god Bacchus gave to King Midas any wish he could name because he had rescued one of his followers. King Midas asked that all he touched should be turned into gold, but he soon learned its utter uselessness when food and drink became gold at the touch of his lips. Most of the early sovereigns of the ancient world have been known for their great accumulation of the treasures of the earth. Wealth has always been associated with power. One might assume that a king would have a desire for wealth in order to spread his influence and prestige and to extend the borders of his kingdom. But Solomon did not ask for riches or wealth.

The history of the reign of his father over Israel was one of wars with the Philistines and with the Syrians and many other campaigns. These conquests gave Israel the foremost place among the nations between the Euphrates and Egypt. To maintain this superiority, Solomon was challenged at the beginning of his reign to maintain a large standing army to provide for the defense of the empire. He organized a cavalry force of 12,000. He equipped the royal stables with 4,000 stalls to maintain the 1,400 royal chariots. He

tion. There comes a new consciousness of the magnitude of our great responsibility. The harvest is so great, and the laborers are so few in those lands where dwell millions upon millions upon millions of people. In the city of Tokyo alone are more than ten million, with cities of three and four and five million not far removed.

Brigham Young, on the occasion of the departure of the first missionaries to China, declared: "The work urges, and is becoming very much enlarged and extended, and requires a commensurate accumulation of men and means, and expansion of mind and energy, ability and perseverance." (*Millennial Star*, Vol. 15, p. 107.)

If that were the case in 1852, how much more urgent is it today? My

brethren and sisters, the work is becoming very much enlarged. It does require a commensurate accumulation of men and means. It requires an expansion of mind and energy, ability and perseverance. Let us prepare ourselves more diligently for the great assignment which God has laid upon us to carry this work to the children of the earth wherever we may be permitted to go.

To our young men I would like to say, prepare yourselves, not only financially as you have been urged to do, but also intellectually and morally and spiritually. Study languages. This gospel is not for the people of America only. This gospel is for the people of the earth, and we have incumbent upon us the obligation to learn to speak their tongues. If you be called to a foreign

language mission, you will be better equipped if you have studied the language. If called to an English-speaking mission, you will understand your own language better.

Live for the opportunity when you may go out as a servant of the Lord and an ambassador of eternal truth to the people of the world. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. 24:14.) This is our commission, and this is our obligation spoken anciently and reaffirmed in modern revelation.

God give us the faith and the wisdom and the foresight and the breadth of vision to go forward and fulfill it, I pray, as I leave you my testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

fortified Jerusalem and other cities for protection against invasion and to preserve the trade routes for commerce. Israel's fighting strength consisted of about 300,000 men. With all of these problems facing him, Solomon might have asked the Lord to give him power over his enemies, for he had enemies from without the empire, and he had personal enemies within.

The young king asked for none of these things. His answer to the Lord was simple and direct:

"And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

"And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

"And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (*Ibid.*, 3:6-9.)

"Give therefore thy servant," said the young king, "an understanding heart." He did not ask for material things of the world, but a spiritual gift—an understanding heart.

"And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

"And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked

the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

"Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

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OCEAN MIDNIGHT BY AGNES K. MORGAN

*The quiet of the night leans low
On satin swells within the sea;
Moonlight splinters rippled jewels
That dance an unsung melody.*

*Waves, upturned to towering crest,
Drive upon the sandy beach,
And crisp, quick bubbles breaking
there
Make silence seem just out of reach.*

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"And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days." (*Ibid.*, 3:10-13.)

If the Lord was pleased because of that which Solomon had asked of him, surely he would be pleased with each of us if we had the desire to acquire an understanding heart. This must come from conscious effort coupled with faith and firm determination. An understanding heart results from the experiences we have in life if we keep the commandments of God. Jesus said: ". . .

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:37-39.)

To love one's neighbor is noble and inspiring, whether the neighbor is one who lives close by, or in a broader sense, a fellow being of the human race. It stimulates the desire to promote happiness, comfort, interest, and the welfare of others. It creates understanding. The ills of the world would be cured by understanding. Wars would cease and crime disappear. The scientific knowledge now being wasted in the world because of the distrust of men and nations could be diverted to bless mankind. Atomic energy will destroy unless used for peaceful purposes by understanding hearts.

We need more understanding in our relationships with one another, in business and in industry, between management and labor, between government and the governed. We need understanding in that most important of all social units, the family; understanding between children and parents and between husband and wife. Marriage would bring happiness, and divorce would be unknown if there were understanding hearts. Hatred tears down, but understanding builds up.

Our prayer could well be as was Solomon's, "Lord, give me an understanding heart."

Surely God lives. I know he does. It is my witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of mankind. May his blessings continue to be with us, I pray in his name. Amen.