

ADONIRAM

Short Talk #3

Adoniram is mentioned twice in the Bible that is of interest to us, and they are as follows:

1. "Adoniram, the son of Abda, was over the tribute."

30

2. "And King Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel, and the levy was 30 thousand men . . . and Adoniram was over the levy."

In other words, this important officer in the Kingdom of Israel had a position corresponding to the Secretary of the Treasury in our government. His job was to collect all the money, and also to pay those who worked for the government. We have been told through history about the 70,000 bearers of burdens, the 80,000 hewers in the mountains and the quarries, and the 3,300 overseers of the work.

We are also told of Solomon's navy which was sent to Ophir to "fetch from thence gold" for the building program of Israel. The scriptures also tell of the 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen who were in Solomon's army. Also there was the King's harem -- with 700 wives and 300 concubines and these women also had maidservants and other servants to supply their needs.

In addition, Adoniram had to pay all the officers of the kingdom, which was reputed at that time to be the richest on earth.

Saul and David, the two King's of Israel, had conquered all the countries around Palestine. Tribute had to be collected from the nations and tribes subject to Solomon from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates and from Syria to the Red Sea. Yearly, the tribute amounted to 666 talents of gold -- 35 million dollars -- there were the taxes on merchants and travelers, and the vast gifts which flowed from kings and princes, to say nothing of the taxes which were levied on the five million inhabitants of the country.

In fact the taxes were so heavy, that on the death of Solomon, the leaders of the people came to his successor, Rehoboam, and asked him to do what every new administration is asked to do "please reduce taxes".

In charge of this great financial department of government, collecting all the income and paying all the bills was Adoniram.

It is hard to realize the many details and difficult problems which must have been brought to him for decision. That he was most successful in his undertaking may be implied from the fact that we do not hear that Solomon ever replaced him. To the end he was the faithful and trusted friend of the King, keeping track of the money flowing into the treasury, and making an accurate

accounting of all money flowing out.

To him was assigned the task of "paying wages if aught be due - see that none go away dissatisfied" . We do not know whether he succeeded in handling the vast responsibilities which devolved upon him so that "none went away dissatisfied" but at any rate, that was supposed to be his job.

As a result of the vast cost of the regal splendor of Solomon's household, in addition to the money expended to dig canals and construct gigantic reservations for parks and gardens, to erect strong fortresses wherever caravans were in danger of pillage, to found cities in the wilderness, to level mountains and fill valleys, it was finally discovered that the treasury was well-nigh depleted.

Then, under the supervision of Adoniram, the country was divided into twelve revenue districts, and heavy tribute was levied on the Israelites, from Dan to Beersheba, and all the people left of the Amorites, Hittites, Penzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, were made bond servants. A poll tax, which had not been assessed for many years, was again restored on the Israelites and Canaanites alike. And all these taxes were administered by Adoniram.

31

Of course, like all tax gathers, he was without doubt a very unpopular man -- just as Matthew, one of the Disciples, was looked down on because he was a tax collector. From the days of our first Secretary of the Treasury, until the present time, no Secretary of the Treasury has ever been elected President of the United States. Tax collectors are just not popular. It may be that the people dislike a collector of taxes so much that they were content to let Adoniram die "Unwept, unhonored, and unsung."