

1 Kings 10 - Queen of Sheba visits Solomon; Solomon's Great Wealth

I. United kingdom under Solomon (1 Kings 1:1—11:43)

(4) God's continual blessing upon Solomon's Kingdom (1 Kings 9:1—10:29)

(C) Solomon's international reputation (10:1-29)

(a) Solomon's visit from the Queen of Sheba (10:1-13)

(b) Solomon exceeds other Kings in gold and horses (10:14-29)

1 Kings 10

(C) Solomon's international reputation (10:1-29)

(a) Solomon's visit from the Queen of Sheba (10:1-13) (Cf. 2 Chr 9:1-12)

1 Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon *in relation* to the name of the LORD, she came to test him with riddles.

1 Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with difficult questions.

1 When the queen of Sheba heard about Solomon's reputation with the LORD, she came to test him with difficult questions.

1 And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.

- Sheba is modern Yemen or Oman (not Ethiopia), in Arabia, about 1,200 miles from Jerusalem

— Sheba may be the land of the Sabeans (Cf. Job 1:15; Ezek 23:42; Joel 3:8)

— The Sabean people over whom the queen ruled were governed by priest-kings (Ps 72:10)

— Solomon's expeditions to the east by sea (Cf. 9:26-28) would have brought him news of this prosperous and important Arabian kingdom

— The queen's primary purpose in visiting Solomon seems to have been to see if he was really as wise and wealthy as his reputation

2 So she came to Jerusalem with a very large entourage, with camels carrying balsam oil and a very large *quantity of* gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she spoke to him about everything that was in her heart.

2 So she came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him

about all that was in her heart.

2 She brought along a large retinue, camels laden with spices, and lots of gold and precious stones. Upon her arrival, she spoke with Solomon about everything that was on her mind.

2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bore spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

- Jesus used the queen's visit to Solomon to challenge His audience to listen to God's wisdom through someone greater than Solomon, namely Himself (Matt 12:42)

- The queen's primary purpose in visiting Solomon seems to have been to make a treaty with him; but before she did so, she wanted to make sure he was as wise and rich as she had heard

3 And Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was concealed from the king which he did not explain to her.

3 Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her.

3 Solomon answered all of her questions. Nothing was hidden from Solomon that he did not explain to her.

3 And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not.

4 When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built,

4 When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built,

4 When the queen of Sheba had seen all of Solomon's wisdom for herself, the palace that he had built,

4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

5 and the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings which he offered at the house of the LORD, she was breathless.

5 the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.

5 the food set at his table, his servants who sat with him, his ministers in attendance and how they were dressed, his personal staff and how they were dressed, and even his personal stairway by which he went up to the LORD's Temple, she was breathless!

5 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.

6 Then she said to the king, "It was a true story that I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom.

6 Then she said to the king, "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom.

6 "Everything I heard about your wisdom and what you have to say is true!" she gasped,

6 And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

7 But I did not believe the stories until I came and my *own* eyes saw *it all*. And behold, the half *of it* was not reported to me. You have exceeded *in* wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard.

7 Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed *in* wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard.

7 "but I didn't believe it at first! But then I came here and I've seen it for myself! It's amazing! I wasn't told half of what's really great about your wisdom. You're far better in person than what the reports have said about you!

7 Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

8 Blessed are your men, *and* blessed are these servants of yours who stand before you continually *and* hear your wisdom!

8 How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually *and* hear your wisdom.

8 How blessed are your staff! And how blessed are your employees, who serve you continuously and get to listen to your wisdom!

8 Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.

- The queen noted that God had made Solomon a blessing to those around him, as God had promised He would do for those who obeyed His covenant

9 Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to put you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loves Israel forever, He made you king, to do justice and righteousness."

9 Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness."

9 And blessed be the LORD your God, who is delighted with you! He set you in place on the throne of Israel because the LORD loved Israel forever. That's why he made you to be king, so you could carry out justice and implement righteousness."

9 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

The Queen had none of Israel's spiritual advantages, yet she recognized the Lord's:

- Sovereign power, purpose and personal nature
- Loving interest in and design for Solomon
- Eternal, loyal love for Israel
- Commitment to justice and righteousness

10 Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, and a very large *amount* of balsam oil and precious stones. Never again did such a large quantity of balsam oil come in as that which the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon.

10 She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a very great *amount* of spices and precious stones. Never again did such abundance of spices come in as that which the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon.

10 Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, a vast quantity of spices, and precious stones. No spices ever came again that were comparable to those that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

10 And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

- The queen was quite wealthy herself: she gave Solomon 120 talents of gold (ca. 4-1/2 tons, 5,000 pounds), great quantities of spices, and precious stones (Cf. v2)

— These gifts seem to be part of a treaty she negotiated with Solomon for her country (Cf. v13)

— In her visit, we see Israel fulfilling its God-given purpose of bringing Gentiles to Yahweh

11 And the ships of Hiram as well, which brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir a very great *number of* almug trees and precious stones.

11 Also the ships of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir a very great *number of* almug trees and precious stones.

11 Hiram's ships that brought gold from Ophir, also brought from Ophir lots of algum wood and precious stones.

11 And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones.

12 The king made from the almug trees supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, and lyres and harps for the singers; such almug trees have not come in *again*, nor have they been seen to this day.

12 The king made of the almug trees supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, also lyres and harps for the singers; such almug trees have not come in *again* nor have they been seen to this day.

12 The king used the algum wood to have supports made for the LORD's Temple and for the royal palace, as well as lyres and harps for the choir, and nothing like that wood has ever come again or even been seen since right to this day.

12 And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.

- Ophir may have been close to or part of the queen's kingdom of Sheba (Cf. 9:28)

- Almug wood is strong, beautiful (black outside, ruby red inside), and long-lasting

— Solomon used it in the temple steps (Cf. 2 Chr 9:11) as well as for the other purposes mentioned here

13 And King Solomon granted the queen of Sheba everything she desired, whatever she requested, besides what he gave her in proportion to his royal bounty. Then she departed and went to her own land together with her servants.

13 King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire which she requested, besides what he gave her according to his royal bounty. Then she turned and went to her own land together with her servants.

13 In return, King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba everything she wanted and had requested in addition to what he had given her consistent with his generosity. Afterward, she returned to her own land with her servants.

13 And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.

(b) Solomon exceeds other Kings in gold and horses (10:14-29) (Cf. 2 Chr 1:14-17; 9:13-28; 10:13-28)

14 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold,

14 Now the weight of gold which came in to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold,

14 Solomon's annual revenue was 666 talents of gold,

14 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold,

- 666 talents = 25 tons (50,000 pounds)

- God had told His kings not to multiply gold (Deut 17:17), but Solomon disobeyed

15 besides *that* from the **traders**, and the wares of the merchants and all the kings of the Arabs and the governors of the country.

15 besides *that* from the traders and the wares of the merchants and all the kings of the Arabs and the governors of the country.

15 not including revenue from traders, merchants, and from all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land.

15 Beside that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffick of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.

- "...traders" - Solomon served as an international broker, capitalizing on Israel's strategic geographical position as the land bridge that connected Europe, Asia and Africa

— Solomon made Israel a clearinghouse through which merchandise passed and charged customs taxes as goods entered and left the country

We should not criticize Solomon simply for being wealthy, since God promised to make him rich (3:13). Neither should we blame a person, who receives a fortune as an outright gift, for having money. It was the accumulation of riches and ornaments to become materially secure and independent that God forbade. To the extent that Solomon did this—and he evidently did it somewhat—he was guilty of violating God's Law.

God blesses His people for His glory, but like the unbelieving kings of the nations around Israel, Solomon began to use his wealth for his own glory. He surrounded his massive throne of gold and ivory with hundreds of shields of hammered gold. God intends His kindness to lead us to repent (Rom 2:4), but Solomon used God's blessings to indulge in every sinful desire.

16 King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold, using six hundred *shekels of* gold on each large shield.

16 King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold, using 600 *shekels of* gold on each large shield.

16 King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold, overlaying each large shield with the gold from 600 gold pieces,

16 And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred shekels of gold went to one target.

17 And *he made* three hundred *small* shields of beaten gold, using three minas of gold on each shield; and the king put them in **the house of the timber of Lebanon**.

17 *He made* 300 shields of beaten gold, using three minas of gold on each shield, and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

17 and 300 shields from beaten gold, overlaying each shield with the gold from 300 gold pieces. The king put them in his palace in the Lebanon forest.

17 And he made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three pound of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

- "...the house of the timber of Lebanon" - must have served as an armory, among other things

- Each large shield was made of 600 bekas (7-1/2 pounds) of gold and each small shield had three minas (3-3/4 pounds) of gold

— In 2 Chr 9:16 the small shields are said to be made of 300 bekas of gold; that is the same amount expressed in a different unit of measure

— Evidently these 500 shields were intended for parade use rather than for battle as gold is a soft metal, inappropriate for defense purposes

18 Moreover, the king made a large throne of ivory and overlaid it with fine gold.

18 Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with refined gold.

18 The king also made a great ivory throne and overlaid it with pure gold.

18 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold.

19 *There were* six steps to the throne and a round top to the throne at its back, and armrests on each side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the armrests.

19 *There were* six steps to the throne and a round top to the throne at its rear, and arms on each side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the arms.

19 Six steps led up to the throne, which had a round canopy fastened to the rear of the throne and armrests on each side of the seat and two lions standing on either side of each armrest.

19 The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.

20 Twelve lions were standing there on the six steps on the one side and on the other; nothing like *it* was made for any other kingdom.

20 Twelve lions were standing there on the six steps on the one side and on the other; nothing like *it* was made for any other kingdom.

20 Twelve lions were placed on both sides of the six steps leading to the throne, and nothing comparable was made for any other kingdoms.

20 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom.

- The 12 lions, one on each end of the six steps to the throne, may have been intended to represent the 12 tribes of Israel

21 Now all King Solomon's drinking utensils *were* of gold, and all the utensils of the house of the timber of Lebanon *were* of pure gold. None was of silver; it was not considered as *amounting to* anything in the days of Solomon.

21 All King Solomon's drinking vessels *were* of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon *were* of pure gold. None was of silver; it was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon.

21 All of King Solomon's drinking vessels were made of gold, and all the vessels in his palace in the Lebanon forest were made of pure gold. None were of silver, because silver was never considered to be valuable during Solomon's lifetime,

21 And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

22 For the king had the ships of Tarshish at sea with Hiram's ships; once every three years the ships of Tarshish would come carrying gold and silver, ivory, monkeys, and peacocks.

22 For the king had at sea the ships of Tarshish with the ships of Hiram; once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks.

22 because the king had ships that sailed to Tarshish accompanied by Hiram's ships. Once every three years ships from Tarshish returned, bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

22 For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

- Solomon's fleet of traders brought riches from distant lands

- The apes and baboons ("peacocks?") may have been pets in vogue at the time

- Tarshish ("Tharshish") is a mystery: a Sanscrit or Aryan word, meaning "the sea coast"; it was evidently a sea coast or island (Is 23:6; Jer 10:9; Ezek 27:12; Jonah 1:3; 4:2), west of

Palestine (Cf. Gen 10:4; 1 Chr 1:7), but mistakenly located in 2 Chr 9:21 on the coast of the Red Sea

— Tarshish is associated with an island (Is 23:6; 66:19); Jonah attempted to go there by ship (Jonah 1:3). Solomon also sent ships there (2 Chr 9:21), but the identification is not at all clear.

— Some scholars put forward Tartarus in southern Spain, to which, according to the classical authorities, the Phoenicians sailed with their ships to obtain silver, iron and tin

— Josephus' identification with Tarsus in Cilicia [Antiq. I, 127; IX, 208] is accepted by many scholars today

— Some associate it with Britannia (as a source of tin, Ezek 27:12); others with India

— It is the subject of many conjectures because of its prophetic allusion in Ezek 38:13

- Beaten silver (Jer 10:9), silver, iron tin, and lead were brought from there by the people of Tyre (Ezek 27:12)

23 So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in wealth and wisdom.

23 So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.

23 As a result, King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in regards to wealth and wisdom.

23 So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.

24 And all the earth was seeking the attention of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.

24 All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.

24 All the earth continued to seek audiences with Solomon so they could hear the wise things that God had put in his heart.

24 And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.

25 And they were bringing, everyone, a gift: articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, balsam oil, horses, and mules, so much year by year.

25 They brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.

25 Everyone kept on bringing gifts on an annual basis, including items made of silver and gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules.

25 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

26 Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.

26 Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.

26 Solomon accumulated chariots and cavalry. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 cavalry soldiers. He stationed them in various chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.

26 And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem.

- Chariots were the most effective and dreaded military machines of that day

— Their mobility and versatility gave Israel a great military advantage and discouraged enemies from invading the wealthy nation

— Solomon's chariot cities, some have suggested, were Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo

It has been said that little things portray the true character of a man more certainly than great ones. A casual reader might see little significance in the king's assembling horses. However, the Mosaic law, in anticipation of the monarchy, particularly forbade the king of Israel to amass horses from Egypt (Deut 17:16). The fact that Egypt has not been known for breeding horses presents some difficulty here. He purchased horses from Egypt; (some take the Hebrew word translated "Egypt" as, in reality, a place in Cilicia—Musr) and from Kue (probably Cilicia in modern-day Turkey). The horses may have been bred in Cilicia, and Egypt may have been the trader. The Hittites and Syrians also supplied the market.

27 And the king made silver *as common* as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland.

27 The king made silver *as common* as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland.

27 The king made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem, and made cedar trees as abundant as sycamore trees in the Shephelah.

27 And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale, for abundance.

28 Also Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, *and* the king's merchants acquired *them* from Kue for a price.

28 Also Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, *and* the king's merchants procured *them* from Kue for a price.

28 Solomon imported horses from Egypt and Kue, and the king's buyers procured them at market price from Kue.

28 And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price.

29 A chariot was imported from Egypt for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and a horse for 150; and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans.

29 A chariot was imported from Egypt for 600 *shekels* of silver, and a horse for 150; and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans.

29 A chariot from Egypt cost 600 pieces of silver, and a horse 150 pieces of silver, but then they were exported to all the Hittite kings and to the Aramean kings.

29 And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means.

- He bought a chariot for 600 silver shekels (ca. 15 pounds) and a horse cost 150 silver shekels (ca. 3-3/4 pounds)

- In exporting some of them to the Hittites and the Arameans he presumably made a significant profit on them

- Though Solomon's wealth enabled him to purchase large quantities of horses and chariots, this practice was specifically prohibited in the Mosaic Law (Deut 17:16)

- David did not rely on horses (Cf. 2 Sam 8:4)

- The reason for this prohibition was that the Lord wanted His people to depend on Him for their protection

- The presence of strong physical defenses in Israel turned the hearts of Solomon and the people away from the Lord with a false sense of security

- As is often the case, an abundance of material benefits leads people to think they have no needs when in reality their need for God never diminishes

Application

(1) The Queen of Sheba brought all her questions to Solomon, an imperfect king. The Perfect King invites your questions, and like Solomon, will answer every one. His perfect Word can stand up to any doubts.