

The Queen of Shebas Visit to Solomon

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back then for a few moments to the chapter that we read, 1 Kings chapter 10. You'll have gathered that we're going to be returning to the study of the life and the kingship and the reign of King Solomon.

We haven't finished that. We took a break over the period, the beginning of the year. But now there are just two issues, two chapters that are left.

And these two chapters describe what we might regard as the very best and the very worst of King Solomon.

In chapter 10, you have Solomon at his height, at his most majestic, at his most impressive. And chapter 11, there is a catastrophic fall.

And next week, God willing, I'd like us to try and understand the perplexing question of how is it that someone who's so good and so wise and so obedient through most of his life can end up with this great question mark over his head, which leaves us with such a disappointment.

[1 : 29] I think if I had, and I say this with all reverence, I don't mean you to understand this the wrong way, but if I had written the Bible, and I'm glad I didn't, I think I would have left the last part of Solomon's life out.

I would have been too embarrassed about it. I would have tried to sort of leave you with a good impression of King Solomon. But that's not what the Bible's all about.

It's not about leaving us with an impression and pulling the wool over your eyes. The Bible is truth, God's truth. And God tells us the truth. He tells us the good and the bad.

He tells us that about Solomon, and he tells us that about ourselves. And next week, we'll go to chapter 11, even with all the disappointment, and we'll try and understand why it is, what it was that led to this man's great downfall as King of Israel.

But for the moment, let's make the most of Solomon, shall we? And the best years of his life, before we look at the last, the latter part in 1 Kings chapter 11.

[2 : 46] And we're looking at it in the first part of this chapter through the eyes of the Queen of Sheba. In a few moments, I'm going to ask what I think is the most interesting question. Why is it that when God wants to describe Solomon at his greatness, that it's not an Israelite that writes it.

It's not an Israelite that describes Solomon. It's someone from the outside. That's a very interesting question. And I hope one which we can apply to ourselves this evening.

But here we have the Queen of Sheba, who is a mysterious figure in history. If you look up the history books, you'll find her whole life is surrounded by intrigue.

Most people think that she came from the region that we now know as Yemen, southwest coast of the Arabian Peninsula. And the city was Aksan.

Her name, apparently, legend as it, was Makeda or Makeda. I don't know how you pronounce it. M-A-K-E-D-A. And from there, she set out on her visit to Solomon.

[3 : 57] Legend has it. And I emphasize legend. Legend and the history, of course, of Ethiopia would have her having a relationship which was more than a diplomatic relationship with Solomon.

And the first semi-king of Ethiopia, Menelik, was born as a result of that relationship. And he returned at a later date to seek out Solomon.

So legend has it. But we're not here to speculate as to any of these things. We're here to look at the, not the history of Ethiopia as they would have us believe, but we're here to look at the truth as it's brought to us in the first Kings chapter 10.

And I don't believe that there was any relationship between Solomon and this Queen of Sheba other than what we have here, which is that she came to know him as someone who represented and who revealed to her the truth of the living God.

And in so doing, was able to open her eyes to the greatest and the most important questions that she had in her heart.

[5 : 14] The Bible is not concerned with the kind of stories that people make up sometimes in history. But the Bible is concerned to describe for us what happened when the Queen of Sheba came and when she saw, and particularly her reaction to what she saw of Solomon's kingdom.

And I'm going to do this, I'm going to look at this chapter by asking, or making three very simple observations. Three very simple observations.

The first one is this. Sometimes it takes someone from the outside to really appreciate something. Let's take, for example, you find that in Scottish scenery. Most of us have grown up in Scotland. We're used enough, we're accustomed enough to the kind of scenery of the Cairngorms and Loch Ness and Loch Lomond and the mountains of Scotland, the West Coast, the Isle of Skye and all of these things.

And whilst we would, you know, there are some people who live in these areas, and whilst they would admit that these are majestic and beautiful and impressive areas, you know, they open their windows every, they open their curtains every morning, they see the same scene, and with the best will in the world, you get used to it.

[6 : 39] And sometimes it is the visitor, the person who comes in for the very first time, who is absolutely gobsmacked by something that should have impressed us for our whole lives.

I guess it's true for even the road between here and Harris. It's such an absolutely fantastic road that takes you over the Clisham, and especially when the weather is good, it's absolutely beautiful. And yet, if you're doing it every day, you just get used to it, and it becomes just a road. It becomes something that is just second to none. But then visitors come from Germany and France and America, and they just, they're absolutely full of what they see.

They want to come back again. They want to spend six months here. I'm going to come back here and work. I think this place is so, you hear it all the time. And quite rightly so, because they're so impressed. But isn't it surprising that there's something about us getting used to something, that becomes a bit complacent about it.

And so, if you really want to, if you really want a description of the place in its majesty, then it sometimes takes someone from the outside.

[7 : 54] And here is God coming in his word in this chapter. And when he wants to describe the majesty of Solomon, and the impression that it makes on someone's heart, there were hundreds of people who worked for Solomon in building his palace and his temple, and yet they're not the ones to describe it.

Because when God chooses someone to describe, and remember, the end of the chapter tells us that there were hundreds of people who saw, and yet here is the only one that God chooses to describe what she saw.

And she's the one who's the most impressed, is so impressed that her breath is taken away from her. She's left utterly astonished and speechless.

And you know, there's a tremendous challenge in that. There's a tremendous challenge in that. Because for those of us who have been Christians for years, there's always the danger of becoming so accustomed to our Bibles, and to even the Gospel itself, that we lose sight of the utter astonishment that we ought to feel every single day, and the sense of awe and thankfulness. It's the same as coming into church. We are so used to it. I've been coming to church. I can't remember a time when I didn't come to church. And there's always that danger, isn't it, for those of us, and very often there's a difference between someone who's got no church background, and who's lived a life where they knew nothing of the Gospel.

[9 : 31] Very often when that person is converted, they are left with a lifetime of utter thankfulness. God has made such an impression on that person's life, that they never, that person is such a lively, and they put us to shame, don't they?

Well, there's no reason for that. We ought to be just as passionate about the Gospel, and we ought never, ever to lose sight of what God did for us in the person of Jesus Christ, when He laid down His life on the cross.

And if we've begun to get accustomed to that, if we've begun to get used to it, can I ask that we go home and ask the Lord to recreate that sense of wonder and speechlessness in our lives?

Because really when you think about it, there is nothing greater, there's nothing more wonderful in all the world than the Gospel, is there?

There really isn't anything more wonderful. When you think of all the wondrous things that are the marvellous things in the universe and creation, and all the great things we can think about, and yet this Gospel stands out that God Himself should become a man, and for our sakes, out of love, for you and I, should go through the awful suffering on the cross, the wrath of God, and death itself, and the grave itself, and rise again, so that our lives could be changed, and so that we could find Him, and so that we could come to know Him, and come to everlasting life.

[11:12] And you know, I think that on the last day, that will come home to us, it will come rushing home to us. But why does it not come home to us tonight? Why does it not?

I think it would change our lives so much, if only we were driven by what drove the Queen of Sheba. She was utterly amazed at what she saw.

But there's something more to it than that. And that is that in the day that Jesus lived, the people had become so accustomed to seeing miracle after miracle, they'd become so accustomed to Himself, that they lost sight of who He could possibly be.

And the fact that He was, this was none other than the Messiah, whom they all had been waiting for as faithful Jews. And He said, the Queen of the South will rise up in the judgment, and condemn this nation, because she came to see Solomon.

And what He meant by that, of course, was the unbelief, the awfulness of the unbelief of the people. Perhaps there's someone here tonight, tonight, and you're in that very same category.

[12:23] You know who Jesus is. You know the wonder of the incarnation. God became man. You've read about it. You've grown up with it. You've heard it, time and time and time.

And because you've never done what the Queen of Sheba, and come personally to Jesus. And we'll see that in a moment, how there's a difference between hearing about Jesus, and coming personally to faith in Him.

And that's what you need to do. You need to come personally. Nothing can substitute. Knowing about Jesus is no substitute for coming to faith, and to trust in Him.

And the danger, of course, is that you'll become like those who listened to Jesus, and heard Jesus at the time when He walked the streets of the earth, and you'll end up never, ever coming to faith in Him.

And that's the most frightening situation. That's the most frightening prospect, I can imagine, for any one person. Because it's one thing to die outside of Jesus, not having heard the gospel.

[13:32] And I'm going to leave that. There's a question about how God will deal. That's up to God to deal with people who have never heard the gospel. But it's an entirely different matter when you've had the opportunity, and you've heard the gospel, and you've refused Jesus.

There is no more solemn prospect in all the world. Depart from me, said Jesus. I never knew you. So, that's the first basic statement I want us to look at this evening.

The second one is this. If something or someone was important enough to you, you would do anything to see that thing or to see that person.

See this, for example, at the World Cup in football. Every four years, the excitement arises, the excitement mounts up and builds up, and those who are particularly interested in football, and even those who aren't particularly interested in football, they'll become interested in football in order.

And yet, if you really are, but there are those who are apart from the masses, and they are the ones who will actually, the World Cup is so important to them that they will pull out all the stops, use all their savings, take out a loan, use their credit card to the credit limit.

[15:05] They'll do anything within their power to get wherever it is. It could be anywhere in the world, and they will go there because the tournament is so meaningful and so important to us.

We'll do anything at all to go to that place. I mean, I wouldn't go because it's not very important to me, but if it's important enough to you, if it's important enough to you, and if you have the means, and the same is true for a whole variety of different things in life, if it's important enough to you, you'll travel the world in order to see that person or in order to see that event.

And it's the same way, that's what we find in this chapter, that here is the queen of Sheba, and she had the means, she was the queen, she had everything at her disposal, as queens do have.

And yet, it must have been hugely difficult for someone like that to travel the hundreds of miles she would have had to travel from Sheba, and if it's south of Yemen, that would be a long, long journey.

And we'd even think that because she was the queen, somehow or other, it made it easy for her, it would have made it easier than a normal person, but she would have had to prepare and she would have had to have servants, and this chapter tells us some of the goods that she had with her, camels and spices and gold and precious stones.

[16:32] She must have had a retinue of many, a very great retinue with camels and so on and so forth. And that must have taken a huge, massive amount of effort, but it was important to her.

It was the one thing on her mind. Now, why was it so important to her? You say, well, because she had heard of the fame of Solomon.

Solomon had become something of a worldwide celebrity in those days. Everybody had heard of his majestic fame and his riches and his splendor and his palace and everything else.

He had become something of a legend in that day. But that's not what the chapter tells us. Did you read carefully with me those first opening words which give us the key as to why it was so essential for the Queen of Sheba to make the journey to see Solomon?

It tells us when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, but it didn't stop there. The rest of those, all those other visitors that stopped at his fame, but with her it didn't.

[17:43] Concerning, listen, concerning the name of the Lord. That's what was so important to the Queen of Sheba.

Because she saw somehow or other, she saw that his riches, and the more she heard, the more intrigued she became as to who could this man be and what it was that made him so outstandingly, magnificently great amongst all the kings and realms and countries and kingdoms in the world.

And she had to see for herself, and it didn't matter what kind of effort that that would make, she absolutely had to see for herself because what lay behind her interest was not simply curiosity.

this wasn't simply a diplomatic visit. But she saw that there could only be one explanation, and that's what she discovered as to why it was Solomon was so magnificently prosperous and rich.

She somehow or other saw the hand of God, that behind his magnificence and splendor was God himself. herself. And that meant that her interest was a far deeper one than simply a kind of a diplomatic less be nice to her neighbor's interest which would send her on a visit like this.

[19:19] This was a spiritual inquiry in which she obviously had questions in the very heart of her being, questions that she could find no answers for anywhere else in the world.

Questions about where she had come from. Questions about who really and truly was God.

Questions about what was going to happen after she died.

Questions about how she could be right with God and how she could know the reality of God for herself. These are the most important questions of all.

And these are the questions that can only be answered by someone who knows God and who reflects God in all his glory and his majesty. And she was able to see as we are.

You see, there's two senses in which we can understand this chapter. We could understand this chapter simply on the basis of the information given on the gold and the silver and the peacocks and the baboons and all the riches that Solomon was able to amass and so on just as a historical record.

[20:37] Sure, you can read it like that if you want to. But remember this is the Bible. And the Bible is not simply a history book and it's not simply a record book.

It is God speaking to us and telling us something of how we can be right with him. The Bible is not concerned with meaningless historical details of kings that lived from time to time in the world.

The Bible is God telling us how we can be right with him. And here in the Old Testament, we said this before, Solomon's splendor was a reflection of the reality and the glory and the splendor and the majesty of God.

And so anyone entering into the presence of Solomon and witnessing the magnificence of him and his palace and in his temple, would, if they were asking the right questions, they would discover the reality and the majesty of the living and the true God.

That's what brought her. That's what was so important to her. And I need to ask you this question tonight, is being right with God important enough for you to put everything else, all your other goals and objectives and dreams and distractions, out of your head for the moment and focus.

[22:19] on the person of Jesus Christ. Because you remember what we said before, that Solomon, the message of Solomon in the scriptures is a message that points us in the direction of Jesus Christ the anointed.

Remember one of the titles for Jesus was the anointed one, the Messiah, anointed by God. And we saw that this was true with respect to Solomon, that he was God's anointed.

And in his majesty and in his splendor, he reveals to us, God's anointed, but someone who is in glory and majesty. And that's the same, the same is true for Jesus Christ.

Now here's my question. Is being right, how important is being right with God to you this evening? There is an answer to that question.

But you have to come to God with that question. God's question. It's no use just kind of harboring that question as an interesting question in your mind. That will never get you anywhere.

[23 : 22] But the answer to that question lies by coming to Jesus Christ and seeing him and what he came to do for us and what he came to give us.

Everlasting life and forgiveness and cleansing and washing and to make us into new people by being born again. And that brings me on to the third, the third just very, very basic statement. There's a world of difference between hearing about something and seeing it for yourself. There's a world of difference tonight between you hearing about Jesus, even if you know Jesus to be the truth.

and actually coming to Jesus. It was only by coming to Jesus that it was only by coming to Solomon that she really, truly, personally discovered what she had heard about.

I hope you know what I mean by that. Look at verse six because verse six puts it so clearly. This is what she said to the king. The report, what I heard was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom.

[24 : 46] But, and here's the but, and here's the but that's true for you as well, if you're content with just hearing about Jesus. But, I did not believe the reports until I came.

that's what faith is. Faith is when we when we say I have to take the next step. I'm not content with just hearing about Jesus.

I've heard enough to convince me that Jesus is not only an outstanding figure of history but that Jesus truly is the way to God.

but having discovered that I've got to take the next step and personally come to him because if having died on the cross at Calvary and risen again and if having gone into heaven he lives today as the God and saviour then that means I can personally come to him in faith and put my trust and bring my all and leave behind all my sinfulness and filth and come to him and bow to him for the first time in my life and surrender to what he is and who he is and what he has done for me.

That's what faith is. Is our coming personally to Jesus Christ and accepting him receiving what he has done for us as our saviour.

[26 : 33] It is as simple as that. Don't let anybody convince you that becoming a Christian involves some kind of rigorous procedure in which you have to take ten steps and when you've taken those ten steps you don't know what you've done.

Don't ever listen to anybody that tries to convince you that becoming a Christian is some kind of convoluted procedure that you have to go through. Coming to Christ is doing what the queen did here.

Hearing the gospel, believing the gospel and coming personally to Jesus. You may not have any other prayer but the prayer of the tax collector.

Lord, have mercy on me a sinner. And yet Jesus said that that tax collector went home justified. That meant he went home forgiven.

It meant he went home changed. He went home transformed. Why? Because God had transformed him. God had changed him. He had accepted the mercy and the grace of God in his own life.

[27 : 53] Now I want to ask you one further question tonight. Jesus tells us about Solomon. And this is what he says.

He says talking, describing himself a greater than Solomon is here. He's talking about himself. And I want to ask this.

In what sense is Jesus greater than Solomon? That's what Jesus says about himself. One of the things he says about a greater than Solomon in here.

Let me just put it in other words. I am a greater than Solomon or the greater than Solomon. Now I want to ask this. In what sense if you're going to be greater than someone else you have to do something that that other person hasn't done.

you have to take one step forward one step ahead of what that other person has done. In what sense has Jesus taken that one further step so that he can be described as a greater than Solomon?

[29 : 05] You ever thought of that? A greater than Solomon is here. Well you might say Jesus being God is full of splendor and majesty and glory.

His riches are endless. He holds the universe in his hand. He knows the end from the beginning. It's not just even Solomon in all his wisdom he only knew a tiny amount.

God knows everything. Solomon in all his riches although his riches seemed endless they weren't endless. They were limited. God has limited riches. God has limitless authority and limitless power and limitless knowledge.

God is infinite without beginning and without end. That's how Jesus is greater than Solomon. Is that what Jesus meant though?

No doubt it's true. I have no doubt whatsoever but that as God that is absolutely true. His riches and his splendor are endless.

[30 : 07] But I don't believe that's what Jesus meant when he said a greater than Solomon. I believe the answer to that question is answered by the apostle Paul in 2nd Corinthians 8 and verse 9 when he says this you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ Christ in that he being rich though he was rich yet he became poor for our sake so that we by his poverty might become rich.

You see whilst there was so much in Solomon's glory and Solomon's majesty to reflect the glory of God you know in a sense there was nothing about Solomon that could save this poor woman because at the end of the day whoever she was and whatever importance she had as queen in her own country she was only a human being that needed at the end of the day to be saved to be right with God to be washed and forgiven at the end of nothing about Solomon's riches that was going to save her at all they could do anything for her but the greater than Solomon the Lord Jesus Christ went that one step further in setting aside his riches and becoming poor coming into this world as a servant that's what

Paul tells us he set aside his riches and he came as a servant to lay down his life to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief to weep and to feel and to know the pain that was associated with being a human being so that by coming alongside us and coming into our world and to suffering not just along with us but for us on the cross at Calvary we could be brought to know God for ourselves a greater than Solomon is here have you come to Jesus at the cross have you come to the place called Calvary where the son of God himself became sin for us he identified himself with our sin so that our sin could be removed and we could be so that we could be cleansed and washed and purified and changed and so that we could know him as our savior that's where you need to come today if you want to be right with

God whilst I can take you to Jerusalem and to show you all the splendor as we've read here a splendor that God gave Solomon yet it points us in the direction of Jesus who laid aside his riches and who became poor so that by his poverty you could find him and so that you could have what no one else can give you everlasting life in heaven come to him then come whatever it takes you remember that if it's important enough for you you will come let's pray my father in heaven we we pray once again lord to be to be silenced by your word the majesty and the splendor of Solomon silenced the queen of Sheba she was left without breath and we ask lord tonight that we might be silenced by the god who came into this world and who became poor so that by his poverty we could be made rich bless lord your word to us bring it to us in power and change us by it for we ask in Jesus name amen for