

## **A GREATER THAN SOLOMON.**

– 1 KINGS 10:1-10. – *DECEMBER 20.* –

**Golden Text: "When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice." – Prov. 29:2.**

BY THE TIME Solomon had reached his fortieth year, under the blessing of wisdom which he craved of the Lord, he had made the kingdom of Israel famous throughout the then civilized world. His kingdom connected with Egypt on the south, with the desert on the east and the Mediterranean Sea on the north and west, except that small portion known as Phoenicia, whose king, Hiram, had made a league with Solomon and assisted him greatly in the materials and workmen for the temple. Solomon's ships and those of Hiram were known to all the nations of that time as far east as Judea and as far northwest as Britain. The account of the wealth which flowed to him is astounding. His table dishes were made of gold, a thousand shields for his mighty men were of gold, and other things in proportion were magnificent in the largest degree. The brilliancy of his mind found expression not only in financial channels, but his army was equipped on a scale of equal magnificence. Fourteen hundred chariots were imported, and thousands of horses for these and for a cavalry detachment for his army. Literary matters were not neglected; he wrote many sonnets and spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his fame in respect to these matters had extended to all parts of the world.

Our lesson deals specially with the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon's court. She herself declares that she had heard of his fame and had come to see him with her own eyes, and that notwithstanding her great expectations she found that not one-half of his greatness had been told her. The distance she came is estimated at 1,500 miles, and as the means for traveling was by camels, and their average speed twenty miles per day, it is estimated that the journey to Jerusalem and back to her home consumed five months; besides whatever time she

spent at Solomon's court. Unquestionably it would be much less inconvenient to-day to journey around the earth than it was for the Queen of Sheba to visit Solomon.

Tradition tells us that the Queen sent her ambassadors with a letter to King Solomon before she went herself. With them she sent 500 youths dressed as maidens, with instructions that they were to behave accordingly in the presence of Solomon. She sent also a thousand costly rugs inwrought with gold and silver, and a crown composed of finest pearls and gold hyacinths; also camel-loads of musk, amber, aloes and other precious products of South Arabia. She added a closed casket containing an unperforated pearl, a diamond intricately pierced and a crystal goblet. A letter accompanied these gifts as follows: "As a true prophet thou wilt no doubt be able to distinguish the youths from the maidens and divine the contents of the enclosed casket, to pierce the pearl and thread the diamond and to fill the goblet with water that has not dropped from the clouds nor gushed forth from the earth."

The legend declares that when this embassy reached Jerusalem King Solomon told the bearers the contents of the letter before they presented it, and made light of their mighty problems. He caused the thousand slaves to wash their hands and faces and from the manner in which they applied the water detected their sex. He directed a fiery young horse to be ridden through the camp at the top of speed, and on its return caused its copious perspiration to be collected in a goblet. The pearl he pierced by some process known to him. The threading of the diamond with its crooked perforation puzzled him for a moment, but at length he inserted a small worm, which wound its way through, leaving a silken thread behind it. He dismissed the ambassadors without receiving their presents. When the emissaries reached the Queen of Sheba, their reports of these matters determined her to visit King Solomon in person. The account of her visit and her astonishment are recorded in this lesson.

We are not informed as to the character of her questions, many of which quite probably were in the nature of conundrums, after the custom of that time. Everything connected with this story, however, assures us that Solomon was truly a wonderful man, that his mental powers were great and active. Nothing illustrates this better than the useful and expensive water works and arrangements which he provided for the capital city. So far as is known these were the first of the kind in the world and very much resembled the superior arrangements of our day. The fact that, although constructed 2,500 years ago, they have recently been partially put into operation again, indicates clearly the solidity of their construction. Truly we see that the Lord's promise to the King was abundantly fulfilled, that he was wiser and richer than all others of his day and subsequently. The Queen was attracted specially by the sumptuous and methodical arrangements of the King's palace, his provision for the ministers of the realm, their uniform, etc., and the grand stairway which led up to the Temple. The expression "There was no more spirit in her," corresponds very **[R3284 : page 445]** closely to an expression of our day – it took her breath away.

Our Lord indicated what otherwise would not have been quite apparent – namely, that Solomon's wisdom and glory, prosperity and peace, were typical; that the antitype of the Solomon is the Christ. Our Lord spoke as never man spoke, the people marveled at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, and his fame during the three and one-half years of his ministry spread abroad; – yet so far from being recognized by his own people he was crucified as an enemy of their nation and an enemy of God. Referring to the matter he says, "The Queen of Sheba shall rise up in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here." – Matt. 12:42.

By these words the Lord indicated his approval of the desire for wisdom evinced by the Queen. Indeed this is the spirit of the Scriptures – growth in knowledge, grace and love, knowledge being essential to

the development of character. Here we have set before us a lesson which our Lord taught in the words, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" – blessed are they who hunger and thirst for wisdom, for knowledge, for understanding of the good and true, knowing that they shall be blessed of the Lord and shall find that which they seek. The Lord's words were a reproof for his own nation and indicated that they were careless, indifferent respecting the Truth. It is still more important for us of to-day to notice that the same spirit of **[R3285 : page 445]** indifference prevails in nominal spiritual Israel. As the slightest suggestion of the heavenly wisdom manifested in our Lord's words and deeds should have kindled enthusiasm and zeal in nominal Israel, which would have hungered and thirsted for the Truth and by seeking would have found the Truth, so likewise to-day what confidence we have respecting the Lord and his character and plan should awaken every spiritual Israelite and lead him to seek the great fountain of wisdom.

And as at the first advent the "Israelites indeed" were attracted to the Lord and learned of him, so in spiritual Israel those who are Israelites indeed are attracted to the Lord and are taught of him to-day; but as the Israelites at the Lord's first advent were few in number as compared with the professing nation, so the Spiritual Israelites of to-day are few in number compared to the millions of nominal Christendom. But as it was not until after Solomon had built the great Temple of God at Jerusalem that his fame was spread abroad and his greatness manifested, so with the antitype Christ; not until he, the antitypical Solomon, has erected the great Temple of God, which is the Church – not until it shall have been filled with the divine glory as the New Creation – not until the new Jerusalem shall shine resplendently with the riches of divine grace and the brilliancy of the Lord's polished jewels, will the fame of Emmanuel reach to the uttermost parts of the earth. Then, as the Scriptures declare, "Many peoples shall go and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Israel; he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths; for

the law shall go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." – Isa. 2:2,3.

All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. The whole world shall have its eyes opened to behold the riches of divine grace and wisdom embodied in Christ, head and body, reigning in the New Jerusalem for the blessing and uplifting of the entire race of Adam – whosoever wills. The knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the face of the great deep, and there shall be no need to say every man to his neighbor and every man to his brother, Know thou the Lord, because all shall know him from the least even unto the greatest. (Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:34.) The wisdom of the great King, the antitype of Solomon, will be exercised on behalf of not merely the one nation of Israel but on behalf of all those who shall come into covenant relationship with the heavenly Father, typified by this people which entered into a covenant with the Lord, and which because of that covenant was the object of his mercy and care. In Revelation a little glimpse of the New Jerusalem is given and of the greater than Solomon who will be the light of it, and we are told that the nations shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. – Rev. 21:22,24.

The Queen's astonishment at what she found, and her declaration that the half had not been told her, reminds us of the Scriptural declaration respecting the greater than Solomon and the wonderful kingdom glories in reservation for his faithful. We read: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath in reservation for them that love him." Now we know in part and see as through an obscure glass, but then we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known, and be like our Lord and share his glories. – 1 Cor. 2:9; 13:12.

The Queen's exulting remarks at the conclusion of her visit were, "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy

God which delighteth in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee King to do judgment and justice."

The greater than Solomon, in harmony with the divine arrangement, has prepared to have his faithful servants of the present time with him to share his glory and his Kingdom, and the blessings of that time will be specially theirs. Happy those men who will be in his presence, who will see him as he is and be like him, and be the recipients of his favors. O blessed thought! O words with heavenly wisdom fraught!

And although the blessings of the Millennial [R3285 : page 446] kingdom will come first and chiefly to the Church of this Gospel age, which will be associated with the Lord in the kingdom glory and sit at meat with him and participate in his honors and be blessed by his presence and wisdom, yet indeed a great blessing will remain for the world. As the Queen expressed it of the typical King, that God's blessing upon Israel was manifested in choosing him for King, so God's blessing to the world of mankind will be manifested in the establishment of Messiah's kingdom, which is to bless all the families of the earth and to grant them an opportunity of coming back to covenant relationship with God, and thus eventually, if they will be obedient to his judgments and justice, back to all that was lost in Adam, with superadded favors and mercies.

By faith some of us have heard of the Lord's fame in advance of the establishment of his Kingdom; by faith some of us have come from afar and offered him our treasures, laying our all at his feet; by faith these have been accepted of him, and instead he has given us exceeding great and precious promises and hopes far outweighing and outvaluing the little all that we gave to him.

Although Solomon's wisdom and greatness and riches and honor as the king typified the greatness of the Christ in the Millennial kingdom, his subsequent manifestation of weakness, causing the decay

of his greatness, is not to be esteemed as typical, for of the antitype it is declared that of the greatness of his kingdom there shall be no end. Nor is this type alone in this particular. Similarly David was a type in some particulars; so was Moses a type in some particulars and not in others; so was Adam a figure of him who was to come, yet not a figure in his transgression and condemnation. Our Golden Text can only have a partial application to any kingdom of man during "this present evil world," of which Satan has attempted control as the prince thereof. Owing to the inherent weakness of our race even its best specimens are far from absolute righteousness, and consequently no government of the present time, no government under imperfect men, can fulfill the predictions of our Golden Text. This is implied throughout the entire Scripture, in which the Lord promises that he will establish his kingdom amongst men, and that under Emmanuel's government all the families of the earth shall be blessed. It is for this reason that the Lord's people still pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven;" it is for this reason that the Apostle declares that the "whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now" – waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The sons of God, the little flock with their Head the Lord Jesus, will by and by constitute the righteous who will be in authority, in power, in governmental control of the world by divine arrangement, based upon the great atonement sacrifice. Of that time and of that great ruler, head and body, it is written, "In his day shall the righteous flourish." In his day Satan shall be bound a thousand years to deceive people no more, and all the influences of righteousness and truth shall be let loose, that the world may be flooded with the light and knowledge of the glory of God. Under those blessed conditions whosoever will may take of the water of life freely and live forever.

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