

**1 Kings 10**  
**December 8, 2024**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: In what ways do you seek wisdom in your life? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** Solomon is flying high, living wholeheartedly for Yahweh, walking in His commandments, His statutes, and His ways. People around the world knew who he was (1 Kings 4:31-34) and he was known near and far to be a man of great wisdom. He was impressive in many ways, and he had an immense amount of wealth. The hand of God is upon Him. This is why Queen Sheba pays him a visit. She has heard of his wisdom and wealth, and just needed to see this for herself. Let's read the story, and then we'll process it.

**BOOK:**

***The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon***

**10** When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. <sup>2</sup> Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind. <sup>3</sup> Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her. <sup>4</sup> When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, <sup>5</sup> the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed.

<sup>6</sup> She said to the king, “The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. <sup>7</sup> But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard. <sup>8</sup> How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! <sup>9</sup> Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness.”

<sup>10</sup> And she gave the king 120 talents (4.5 tons) of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

<sup>11</sup> (Hiram's ships brought gold from Ophir; and from there they brought great cargoes of almugwood and precious stones. <sup>12</sup> The king used the almugwood to make supports for the temple of the LORD and for the royal palace, and to make harps and lyres for the musicians. So much almugwood has never been imported or seen since that day.)

<sup>13</sup> King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for, besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country.

*Solomon's Splendor*

<sup>14</sup> The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, (about 25 tons) <sup>15</sup> not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all the Arabian kings and the governors of the land.

<sup>16</sup> King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred bekas (7.5 lbs) of gold went into each shield. <sup>17</sup> He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold, with three minas (3.75 lbs) of gold in each shield. The king put them in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.

<sup>18</sup> Then the king made a great throne inlaid with ivory and overlaid with fine gold. <sup>19</sup> The throne had six steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them. <sup>20</sup> Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom. <sup>21</sup> All King Solomon's goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's days. <sup>22</sup> The king had a fleet of trading ships (at Tarshish) at sea along with the ships of Hiram. Once every three years it returned, carrying gold, silver and ivory, and apes and baboons.

<sup>23</sup> King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. <sup>24</sup> The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. <sup>25</sup> Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift—articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules.

<sup>26</sup> Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, (or charioteers) which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills. <sup>28</sup> Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue (probably Cilicia)—the royal merchants purchased them from Kue. <sup>29</sup> They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels (15 lbs) of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty (3.75 lbs). They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

We may not be as wise as Solomon, but the call for us to pursue and depend on God is no less important. The Lord is the source of all truth, beauty, and goodness. We are meant for better than the wealth and fame of the world. We remember who we are as God's child, who has everything we need. The Lord is our provision, meaning, and hope, not the things of the world.

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Kings 9:10-10:29)*. Victor Books.**

#### *C. With other nations (9:25–10:13).*

Solomon's navy must have sailed as far away as India to secure the luxuries his kingdom demanded. The visit of the Queen of Sheba too was more than a personal visit; it involved setting up trade agreements and other alliances with her country. Solomon and the Queen exchanged expensive gifts, and she went home completely overwhelmed with his wisdom and wealth. Jesus mentions her in Matt. 12:42, using her visit to warn the Jews of His day. If the Queen of Sheba expended all that effort to go hear the wisdom of Solomon, how much greater judgment will fall on the Jews who had a "greater than Solomon" in their very midst, yet rejected Him!

These accounts show the peril of fame and fortune. Note that in 10:7 we have "wisdom and prosperity," but in 10:23 it is "riches and wisdom"—riches come first. No doubt Solomon gradually declined in spiritual things as the material became more important.

### **III. Destructive Ambitions (10:12–29)**

"Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare," warns 1 Tim. 6:9 (NKJV); and this came true in Solomon's life. He was not content with the abundance of blessings God had given him; he had to send away for even greater luxuries to satisfy his heart. No doubt the latter years of Solomon's life are revealed in Ecclesiastes, a book that reveals the emptiness of living for material pleasures. Perhaps it is not without significance that Solomon received 666 talents of gold a year (see Rev. 13:18). He would use only vessels of gold (v. 21), unlike our Lord who will use *any* vessel that is sanctified (2 Tim. 2:20–21). Yes, Solomon lived in glory and luxury, but Jesus said that even Solomon in all his glory was not as beautiful as one of God's simple lilies (Matt. 6:28–29).

Read Deut. 17:16–20 for God's instructions to the king, and note how Solomon disobeyed these instructions. He multiplied horses and chariots, he multiplied money, and he multiplied wives. Perhaps Solomon thought that his building of the temple was sufficient for his spiritual life; now he could afford to "coast" on past blessings. Read Ecc. 2 to see Solomon's interest in material gain.

**Constable, C.L. (1985). *1 Kings*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 507-508) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

#### 3. SOLOMON'S GLORY (CHAP. 10)

##### *a. The queen of Sheba's visit (10:1–13)*

This incident seems to have been included here to support the statements made previously that Solomon's reign was so glorious that rulers from all over the world came to see his kingdom and observe his wisdom (4:34). Its function is similar to the story of the two prostitutes (3:16–28) which also illustrated Solomon's wisdom. Interestingly both stories pertain to women, though of different social strata.

10:1–5. **Sheba** is modern Yemen (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). Solomon's expeditions to the east by sea (cf. 1 Kings 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 she had heard (**she came to test him**). Such testing was a sport among ancient Near Eastern monarchs. Probably **the queen** was interested in discussing trade and perhaps defense arrangements as well. Her **very great caravan** reflected her own prestige and also carried her money and expensive gifts for **Solomon**. Visiting heads of state still commonly bring costly gifts to their hosts. **The queen** was especially impressed with Solomon's **wisdom ... palace ... food ... officials ... servants**, and **burnt offerings** to Yahweh.

10:6–9. Originally skeptical, the queen admitted that Solomon's **wisdom and wealth ... far exceeded** what she had been told. Though probably a pagan, she was willing to credit **the LORD** with giving Israel a wise **king** in whom He **delighted**.

10:10. The queen was quite wealthy herself. **She gave Solomon 120 talents of gold** (about 4 1/2 tons), great **quantities of spices, and precious stones** (cf. v. 2).

10:11–12. These verses, which seem out of place here, may reflect a trade arrangement that resulted from the queen's visit. **Ophir** may have been close to or a part of the queen's kingdom of Sheba (cf. 9:28). **Almugwood** is strong, beautiful (black outside, ruby red inside), and long-lasting. Solomon used it in the **temple** steps (cf. 2 Chron. 9:11) as well as for the other purposes mentioned here.

10:13. **Solomon gave the queen gifts, all she desired and asked for** from him. She **then** began the long trip back home **to her** people.

#### *b. Solomon's riches (10:14–29)*

This section summarizes Solomon's wealth.

10:14–15. The revenue of **gold** recorded as being **received** annually (almost 25 tons, or 50,000 pounds) did not include what must have been vast quantities required from trading with **all the Arabian kings** and taxes brought in by **the governors** of Israel. God had told His kings not to multiply gold (Deut. 17:17), but Solomon disobeyed.

10:16–17. **The Palace of the Forest of Lebanon** (cf. 7:2–5; 10:21) 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 Chron. 9:16 the small shields are said to be made of 300 bekas of gold. But 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.

10:18–22. Solomon's **throne ... overlaid with gold** reflected the king's glory. 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. The wealth of Solomon's kingdom could be seen in the abundance of **gold** which made **silver** of comparatively **little value** even though it was a precious metal. Solomon's **fleet** of traders brought riches from distant lands. The **apes and baboons** may have been pets in vogue at the time.

10:23–25. God's promise to make **Solomon** the richest and wisest king of his time was fulfilled. His wealth continued to increase as people (**the whole world** is a hyperbole) who came **to hear his wisdom** brought him **gold** and silver **articles ... spices**, and animals.

10:26–29. **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. He purchased **horses ... from Egypt** (or perhaps Musri, in Asia Minor) **and from Kue** (probably Cilicia in modern-day Turkey). He bought **a chariot** for **600 silver shekels** (about 15 pounds) and **a horse** cost **150 silver shekels** (about 3 3/4 pounds). In exporting some of them to **the Hittites** and **the Arameans** he presumably made a 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). 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.

**Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 138). Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

**Queen of Sheba (10:1–29)**. Just as Hiram of Phoenicia praised God (5:7), the Queen of Sheba extolled the Lord because of Solomon's international fame. Sheba has been traditionally associated with South Arabia, which controlled the sea lanes between India and the East. God used Solomon's prestige to bring glory to Himself throughout the world.

Solomon's possession of gold, the extent of his shipping enterprises, and his military armament made him the most powerful king among the nations. He controlled the merchandising of horses from Kue (Cilicia) and of chariots from Egypt. The author attributed all of Solomon's splendor to the divine wisdom God gave him.

**Tatum, S. L. (1972). *1 Kings*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (pp. 197-198). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

### **The Glory of Solomon (1 Kings 9:10–10:29)**

*The passage*—After Solomon's major building program was complete, he gave Hiram, king of Tyre, twenty cities in Galilee as payment for the gold, cedar, and cypress timber which he had supplied. Hiram was not well pleased with the bargain. We are not told how Hiram was eventually made satisfied.

The glory of Solomon's building was accomplished by forced labor. The people were compelled to spend a certain amount of time in the labor of building. The burden of this fell principally on the ten Northern tribes, and was a part of the difficulty that later arose between the two parts of Israel.

Solomon had regular times for offering sacrifices to God. The three times a year mentioned in verse 25 perhaps corresponded to the main feasts of the Hebrews throughout their history.

The visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon is indicative of his reputation all over the world. His glory was the talk of the royal palaces everywhere. The queen came bringing spices, gold, and jewelry as gifts to the famous king. She asked him very difficult questions, and he had the answers for her. There was nothing she asked about that he couldn't explain. After she had seen

his glory and experienced his wisdom, she uttered the famous lines, “The half has never been told.”

The amount of gold mentioned in 10:14 would amount to more than sixteen million dollars. While this may not seem to be so much in these days of astronomical figures, it was tremendous in those days. This was typical of the other riches Solomon accumulated. His throne must have been one of the wonders of the world in his day. It was solid ivory overlaid with finest gold. It sat on an exalted platform surrounded by statues of lions. His drinking cups were of gold.

From all over the world people came to see Solomon’s wealth and to hear his wisdom. As they came they brought additional wealth. The commerce of the world and the wealth of the world seemed to center in Jerusalem. It was said that silver became as common as stone.

*Truth for today*—It is unfortunate that the Queen of Sheba was impressed only by the splendor and wisdom of Solomon. She went back to her land without knowing the God of Israel who had so blessed Solomon.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Kings 10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**

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