

1 Kings 10:1-9

January 6, 2013 – THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

One Wise Queen Came

‡ Testing the fame of the Name (vv.1-5)

‡ Praising the LORD for justice and righteousness (vv.6-9)

In the name of Jesus, Epiphany light from the Lord, dear children of light:

The narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Desert was strategically vital for the salvation of souls. As always, sinful man thought these were only trade routes between the vast northern empires to reach great Egypt and Africa to the south. But the Savior-God, the LORD Yahweh, planted His Name-Reputation directly in the path of the ancient peoples and their commercial communication. The lesson was not lost on David and Solomon in his early years. The long reach of his explorers and tradesmen carried his fame and his connection to the LORD's saving Name far beyond the borders of Israel. The Queen of Sheba came to investigate more than a mighty monarch. She had spiritual questions for her own fears and feelings of guilt. She wanted to know about Solomon's Savior-God. In this quest no one will be disappointed. The same eternal LORD God still invites us all, "*Seek me and live!*" (Amos 5:4) He promises: "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*" (Jeremiah 29:13 NIV84) That's what happened when **One Wise Queen Came...**

‡ Testing the fame of the Name (vv.1-5)

"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." Sheba may have been southern Arabia, now known as Yemen. Hollywood wants love stories. Scholars want cold science. But God had warned the heart of this queen with what she heard about the God called Yahweh. He had revealed much about Himself to Moses centuries earlier. The ancient world knew about Egypt and how the LORD delivered Israel from bondage. Israel's God spoke from heaven to Moses. He created all things in six days. The LORD protects His saving Name, gives Sabbath-rest for bodies and souls. He promises long life for honoring His representatives in home and government. The LORD was different than all the idols worshiped throughout the world. And His people were different too. Now they had a king supposedly wiser than anyone in the world and wealthy beyond belief. **One Wise Queen Came** to find out why.

The queen's "*hard questions*" were riddles to her. What did He mean by His Name? "*The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.*" (Exodus 34:6f NIV84) Who is this great I AM? Where is there a more compelling riddle than the LORD Himself? How can He both punish sins and forgive sins at the same time? Or as Isaiah asked the question: "*Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire?*" (Isaiah 33:14; See also Hebrews 12:29 NIV84.) If scholars and Bible critics could leave off their doubting theories long enough to investigate this, they too could find salvation in the Savior God provided. We all need to know who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? We still have time to learn – before it's too late.

One Wise Queen Came – Testing the fame of the Name. In honor of King Solomon she arrived "*at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones....*" And then she sat down with "*Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind.*" She came to the right man. For "*God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man.... And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedar of*

Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish.” (4:29–33 NIV84) But more importantly, Solomon taught what his father King David had taught him about the one true God of grace and glory. **One Wise Queen Came** and was not disappointed. *“Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her.”*

If only you and I would keep coming. The blessing of modern communication means more voices clamoring for our ears and hearts. All want you for power and money. God wants your attention because He wants to bless you with the comfort and peace of knowing He is on your side. Where did you come from? God created you. Why are you here? To come into a right relationship with God. Where are you going? God gave His Son into death for us all, so that we can go to heaven. He gives us this time of grace to believe and spread His Word. He wants everyone to spend eternity with Him in heaven, not cast into outer darkness. In Christ’s Epiphany light God promises, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”* (James 1:5 NIV84) **One Wise Queen Came** to see God’s blessings on His people. It took her breath away. The organization and especially Solomon’s worship at the temple impressed her. She went on...

✠ Praising the LORD for justice and righteousness (vv.6-9)

She said to the king, “The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. 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. How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!” That Hebrew word is usually translated “blessed,” as in *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.” “Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law.”* (Psalm 1:1; 94:12 NIV84) “Blessed” with God is often experienced through tears. God’s people learn by experience how little we deserve God’s gracious blessings especially the peace of believing in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. *Happy* is like a flash flood in the desert; *blessed* is like the gentle rain soaking deep into the soil of your life.

This woman was gushing, but not about Solomon. This was all about God. *“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.”* That’s what made Solomon different and what made this **One Wise Queen** so different. She was **Praising the LORD for justice and righteousness**. After speaking with Solomon she could understand how God’s mercy triumphs over His judgment. She could see how Solomon’s impressive sacrifices all pointed to the salvation the God of Israel would give to Jews and Gentiles like her in the coming Messiah. She could understand a favorite Psalm of Solomon’s father, King David: *“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.”* (Psalm 32:1f NIV84) She could see what all the prophets from Moses to John the Baptist proclaimed. God’s **righteousness** is the gift He gives by faith in Jesus as our Savior.

Some might think we’re giving too much credit to the Queen of Sheba. But our Lord Jesus shows us what she was thinking about Him. Ten centuries later Jesus’ fellow Jews were stuck in their own righteousness, insisting Jesus was not the Son of God, that He had an evil spirit. Jesus put them in their place when He said: *“The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.”* (Matthew 12:42 NIV84) She praised *“the eternal love”* of God in Christ.

Isn’t it encouraging to see how the LORD blessed this **One Wise Queen** when she **Came**? And isn’t it sobering to think what happened to Solomon after this? As long as he focused on God’s Word, he was fine. But when his wealth and wisdom went to his head, when he forgot to praise God from whom all blessings flow, he fell into gross polygamy and grotesque idolatry. He may have repented before it was too late, but great grief came to Israel because of him. Remember how **One Wise Queen Came**, dear Epiphany believers. And don’t give up. Keep **Praising the LORD for justice and righteousness**. Amen.

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