

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Prophetic Majesty I Kings 10:1-29

Intro: When I was a youngster, I had the opportunity to visit the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. In the Museum of Natural History, at the forefront of the gem exhibit is displayed, in all of its glory, the Hope Diamond. This diamond is over 45 carats, in a setting surrounded by white diamonds, attached to a necklace of white diamonds. The Hope is the largest blue diamond known to exist in the world. It is about the size of a walnut and it is amazing. Now, the Hope also has a tragic and sordid history. Some claim it's cursed while most see it all as legend and myth. Over time, with any large pool of people, it's not too hard to find enough tragedy and pain to see that the human race itself is cursed. But the point I want to make is that none of this is included in the display. All you see is the amazing size and glorious beauty of a fantastic collection of precious jewels. It's on display simply for us to be amazed.

I would guess it is the same with any exhibit of royal life whether it's the treasures of King Tut or the opulence of Russian Czars. No doubt, there was plenty of scandal and intrigue in each of those royal courts but none of that is of the concern of the museum or those that come to stand there and gape in awe at all the magnificence monarchs produced. This is what we have in **ch10**. The author takes us on a guided tour of Solomon's kingdom at its zenith of opulence and grandeur. Now, we know Solomon's reign doesn't end on a high theological note; we know there are already hints to his eventual spiritual downfall in his life but none of that is touched on by the author, at least not in this chapter. He will eventually deal with it openly and honestly but we don't see a hint of it here.

So, let's allow him to give us the guided tour and then we can talk about the significance of it afterwards.

1-13 – Sheba in Solomon's day was where modern Yemen is today. History tells us it was a wealthy kingdom with much gold, spices and precious wood. It also tells us this kingdom was known to have queens as well as kings. The journey to Israel was a long one – about 1500 miles. It's possible she came as part of a trade delegation but it's also obvious that she was

very much interested in meeting Solomon and seeing his kingdom. And, she just happened to arrive at the apex of Israel's material wealth, her Golden Age. By now the great prosperity, splendor and wisdom of Solomon's kingdom were internationally known.

Also, the Queen was no stranger to opulence herself. Look at inventory of her luggage! She traveled like a queen – with a royal procession, heavily laden with wonderful gifts and goods for trade. She also showed up with a list of questions that had been bugging her for some time, some great and seemingly difficult questions. She came with both barrels loaded because Solomon's kingdom wasn't just known for its wealth but for its wisdom too. Of course, she learned that Solomon was able to more than live up to his reputation in knowledge and wisdom. These hard questions wouldn't have just been riddles but also difficult diplomatic and ethical questions. She likely needed to determine if Solomon was trustworthy in business and a reliable ally capable of giving her assistance.

Over all, she found the style of Solomon's kingdom to literally be breathtaking (5b)! She was obviously familiar with the world of royal splendor and luxury and yet, she was completely overwhelmed by Solomon's wisdom and the glory of his kingdom. What she had heard about Solomon was impressive enough to make her travel 1500 miles to visit him but what she saw with her own eyes was beyond the pale. She had never seen such style and class in a king.

But, the grand tour is not over, the narrator pushes us on...

14-29 – The operative word here is “gold.” Our tour guide mentions it 10 times. Before we even get to the shield exhibit, he tells us the Solomon took in up to 20 tons of gold a year and that figure doesn't include everything. And take a look at the shields on display in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. There are 200 full body shields, each with about 7.5 lbs of gold in them; and 300 smaller, hand held shields with over 3.5 lbs of gold in each. These had to look pretty impressive at all the state functions. What about that snazzy throne: ivory inlay, gold overlay, the steps, the lions – nothing like it anywhere else. As we pass the kitchen, our guide informs us that all the drinking vessels are made of gold – not a hint of silver anywhere. This statement of wealth shows the tremendous abundance of this kingdom, a direct fulfillment of the promise of Yahweh in **Deut 28:12**.

The tour concludes with a few blurbs concerning a few of Solomon's commercial ventures. We see his relationship with Hiram again, his Phoenician merchant mariners returning periodically with gold, silver, ivory and even animals. Plus, his merchants played the part of middle-men in the lucrative import-export trade of horses and chariots. They would buy products from Egypt to the south and Keveh (Cilicia) to the northwest and sell to the Hittites and Syrians. Solomon wasn't operating as an arms dealer. Judging from their high price, these chariots were most likely deluxe, high-end models for royal or ceremonial use, not military. Basically, Solomon was a Mercedes Benz or Audi dealer.

The tour is over and we can't help but be duly impressed. No there aren't any modern conveniences but that doesn't really matter. We walk away from this tour just as gob-smacked as the Queen of Sheba! But, what are we to do with all of this opulent grandeur and luxury? Rather, what does the author want us to think about all of this? Does he describe this royal splendor with an air of cautious hesitancy or unbounded enthusiasm? I'd have to say the latter.

Ch10 is divided into 2 sections, v1-13 – where the Queen of Sheba says, "You've got to be kidding me!" and v14-29 – where the author says, "Can you believe this!" Notice that in both sections, the author provides a testimonial break. In 6-9 we have the testimony of the Queen of Sheba and 23-25 is that of the author. Both are key to communicating the author's perspective. The Queen is clearly blown away and her praise of Solomon turns into a note of praise for Yahweh (9). Some may argue that the writer is simply recording the words of the Queen here. How do we know he agrees with her glowing assessment? Maybe she felt pressured into making a politically correct press release.

Well, the author shows that he unequivocally agrees with the Queen's assessment when he practically seconds her comments in his own testimony (23-25). In v23, he insists that Yahweh had graciously and completely fulfilled His promise to Solomon in 3:12-13 concerning wisdom and wealth. In fact, the writer emphasizes that Solomon's wealth and wisdom flowed directly from Yahweh's reputation (1), Yahweh's love (9) and Yahweh's giving (24). Clearly, he is inspired with the same kind of enthusiasm as the Queen of Sheba. Obviously, he is properly impressed. At the same time, he is recording the facts of history and the roots of

Solomon's eventual downfall must be beginning to show and yet, they are kept out of sight for the time being because he wants us to fix our gaze on the impressive picture that is the climax of Solomon's reign. If this is the author's intent, then what is he trying to teach us here?

First, we should recognize that **ch10** speaks a word of testimony to us. The one principle we can take from our text is simply that the prosperity of God's people is always a gift from God and, as such, demands from us both gratitude and joy. Our gratitude for God's blessings on our lives is required to prevent us from idolizing the gifts in place of the Giver. Joy, on the other hand, is necessary to avoid despising God's gifts as though they were sinful. The need for gratitude is obvious. How often have we seen believers receive specific gifts from God only to stumble over them later? It happened with Israel and it happens over and over in the church today.

The need for joy however, may seem ridiculous to us but all you need to do is peruse through a few commentaries and you will soon see just how many theologians are convinced that all that gold can't really be good for Solomon or Israel. They feel compelled to emphasize all the dark clouds that are looming just over the horizon for Solomon's kingdom. It almost seems as if they feel obligated to moan over such crass materialism and all that could possibly go wrong with such abundance instead of just recognizing that it is the blessing of the Lord that makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it (**Prov 10:22**). If this is true, should we not endeavor to be content to enjoy whatever the Lord blesses us with? Yes, it possible for the prosperity gospel crowd to jump on this text as evidence of their teaching but where they're wrong is they believe God owes them blessings, instead of seeing them as gifts. Don't allow their false doctrine to force you to ruin the Lord's gifts before you can enjoy them.

The next thing we should see in **ch10** is that it's also a word of prophecy. The attraction that Solomon's kingdom held for the nations of his day is merely a snapshot of what it will be like when of the kingdom of God is eventually established on earth. We can look at this entire chapter as a preview of things to come! The Queen of Sheba is just a sample of the future honor and respect the nations will bring to Yahweh's covenant King. In fact, Solomon himself seems to understand that his kingdom, as glorious as it was, was just a weak foreshadowing of Messiah's kingdom that was to come (**Ps 72:8-11, 15**).

Isaiah takes a similar approach when he describes the splendor of the coming Messianic Age (60:5b-6). Those Canadian truckers have nothing on these camel trains from Midian and Sheba. But these camels aren't just creating traffic jams, their transporting wealth in the form of tribute to Zion and the names he throws about from his map are there to impress on us the feeling of a world-wide surge into Israel. It won't just be one Queen with a trade delegation but kings and queens and heads of state a plenty. And don't forget that those camels will be straining under the weight of all that gold. Just as it was in [1 Kings 10](#), so shall it be in the Millennial reign of Christ!

Most successful athletes are discovered early in life. Not that they are skilled or trained or even ready to perform at the professional level. But with a trained eye, coaches can see natural talent, they can perceive drive and passion for the sport and that's all necessary things they can build on. The prophecy of [ch10](#) is just like that. The long journey of the Queen of Sheba and others is a preview of the future flow of Gentiles to Christ's throne in Zion. We can already see on [ch10](#) that Solomon's prayer for the foreigner in [8:41-43](#) is beginning to be answered.

But this is not just a matter of understanding a biblical concept; it goes well beyond that. In fact, it is our very hope! None of us here today are ethnic Israelites so what are we to do with this picture of gentiles being drawn into the covenant kingdom? By rights of our human blood and heredity, we have no claim to it, no place to stand in it. And yet here we are, Gentiles reading and studying the Hebrew Bible. How is it possible? Paul tells us how in [Eph 2:12-13](#). Gentiles coming to Jerusalem? It's not much of a stretch seeing that so many have already come to Jesus. Isn't grace grand?

Finally, [ch10](#) also speaks to us a word of criticism. We will move on from [ch10](#) after today but Jesus has informed us that we haven't seen the last of the Queen of Sheba ([Mt 12:42](#))! This statement comes near the end of 2 chapters that highlight the unbelief of both Israel and her religious leaders. These leaders had just insisted that Jesus provide them with an indisputable, miraculous sign to prove His claims; this He refused to do. He does, however, provide them with a couple of glimpses of the future dealing with the resurrection and final judgment and there she is, the Queen herself. Apparently, just her presence is enough to condemn Israel's unbelief.

This doesn't mean that we must accept the Queen's comments of [v9](#) as a true confession of faith. This may be no more than a polite reference to Solomon's God, brought on by the breath-taking glory of his kingdom. The Lord's argument in Mt 12 is that the Queen had both less truth and less privilege than Israel had in His day. She only had rumors of Solomon's wisdom and she wasn't one of Solomon's people and yet – she still traveled 1500 miles to hear him for herself. Not bad for a Gentile who is outside of the covenant loop. But now, Israel was being presented with something greater than Solomon in the Person of Jesus – both His words, which were indisputable; and His works, which were undeniable. Yet, Israel refused to hear Him or believe in Him. Israel's greater privilege didn't provide her with immunity from judgment; it added to her responsibility and condemned her to judgment. That's Jesus' point.

Israel isn't the only people who should take warning here. Never before has the truth of the gospel been so widely, so clearly and so continually proclaimed than in this current generation. Yes, there's a lot of nonsense doctrines out there but at the same time, there is no end to the available access of solid biblical teaching and truth. In fact, we have even more light than Israel had when Jesus walked in their midst. It doesn't matter if one is viciously opposed to Jesus or just casually indifferent – it's all the same to Him. No response is still a "No" response. Don't you dare read [1 Kings 10](#) and pass it off as a nice story. Don't presume to look at it as having entertainment value but no real relevance for you. Don't look down on this Queen as just being a cool literary character because, unless you bow before the Son of God and accept Him as your Lord and Savior, you will see this same Queen striding into God's judgment hall and pointing her finger at you!

If the Queen of Sheba sought Solomon and his kingdom so diligently, how much more should people today seek Jesus and the glory of His kingdom? A greater than Solomon has come, a wiser than Solomon has come – will you seek Him? If you won't seek Him for His wisdom, you must at least seek Him for His forgiveness, for that is what He most desires to give you. That is the greatest and highest blessing He can bestow upon you but it won't be the only one. He not only wants to give you life – eternal life – but He wants to give you life more abundantly.

There's another lesson in our text that is a good reminder for all those who serve the Lord today. One of the things that impressed the Queen was the happiness of Solomon's servants (8). Apparently, it was a joyful thing to serve such a great and wise and wealthy king. If it was such a joyful thing to serve Solomon, how much more joyful is it to serve Jesus? Is He not a greater than Solomon? Of course He is! And yet, not every believer finds joy in His service.

How can that be?

With all the glory and splendor of God's blessings around them Solomon and his servants had to be the happiest people on earth, and why wouldn't they be? And yet, Solomon who would later write in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Could it be that Solomon grew so accustomed to all the pomp and circumstance of court life, the extravagant display of wealth, that he began to see it as old hat?

One of the dangers of living in the presence of such extravagant blessing is that we eventually begin to take them for granted and maybe even begin to misuse God's blessings or worse – abuse them - to our spiritual detriment. Before long, we don't value them at all. This failure can apply to spiritual treasures just as much as material wealth and either may prompt the removal of said blessing for the purpose of reordering our priorities. God desires to give us many blessings, spiritual as well as material, but He may have been prevented from doing so up to this point because we cannot be trusted with more.

Are we a good investment of God's blessings or a bad investment? The parable of the talents is significant to this point. Are we willing to take the blessings that God has given us and entrust them back into His service so that they may be increased and multiplied by His Spirit and for His kingdom? Or, do we tend to take what He so graciously gives us and hide it away from public view so as to not risk its loss? If our tendency is to play it safe with God's blessings then we are cheating ourselves out of greater blessing and greater happiness. 😊