

Epiphany—C
1 Kings 1:1-9
The Wise Still Seek Him

People are willing to travel to see something great.

Do you know which are the most popular tourist attractions in America? Number 5: Yellowstone. 4: White House. 3. Statue of Liberty. 2. Niagara Falls. 1. Grand Canyon.

Most popular tourist attractions in the world? 5. Acropolis of Athens, Greece. 4. Eiffel Tower of Paris. 3. The Great Wall of China. 2. The Great Pyramid of Giza, Egypt. 1. Niagara Falls. This goes to show you that people are willing to travel to see something great.

King Solomon was the wisest king in the world when he was alive. God blessed him with wisdom and his wisdom was not a secret. When he solved the problem the two women who both had a child and then argued over the fact as to whose child the live one was—Solomon suggested that they cut the live baby in half. This was not the only problem Solomon solved, there were many others. People were impressed by his wisdom and would do almost anything to learn what his secret to this wisdom was.

The country of Yemen today is one of the poorest places in the Arab world, and its poverty glares all the more by comparison with its oil-rich neighbors. But Yemen was once a rich and prosperous trading center and oasis. Known as the land of Sheba in the 900s B.C., it was governed by a formidable queen. This remarkable woman is a hero to me because when she heard of King Solomon's wealth and achievements, she didn't just stew in envy or plot ways to try to dip into his river of cash. She packed up a camel train of servants and fabulous gifts and traveled to Jerusalem to see things for herself and listen to the king's famous words of wisdom, convinced that he was speaking for the Lord God (as in fact he was—there is a whole book of the Bible based on his utterances on human life). The queen of Sheba made a journey of 1,367 miles to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. She wanted to hear for herself and she was not disappointed. The distance and the cost were not important to her. There were other great nations in the world but the things people heard about Jerusalem were different and they had to send someone or go themselves. The queen of Sheba went to listen for herself and she was impressed.

About a thousand years later we hear about wise men who also came to Jerusalem to hear not only the wisdom of the king but to worship him. These men were called wise because they were looking for the Savior of the world they wished to worship. The wise men were impressed by what they saw and heard. But about a thousand years before the wise men came to Jerusalem a wise woman made the journey. She did not see a star but she had heard about this wise king Solomon and she made it her top priority to find out and learn for herself.

The queen of Sheba was no dummy either. Most monarchs in those days saw to it that those who would follow them on the throne were well educated. They made sure they would have the best education in the world. Moses received such an education and then there was Solomon who was especially blessed when God gave him a wish list of things to help him as king. We have some very valuable lessons from the queen of Sheba. As we celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord we come to the conclusion that the Wise Still Seek Him.

I. Seek him

The reasons for her coming are explained as follows: “*The Queen of Sheba heard about Solomon’s fame, which was connected with the fame of the LORD, so she came to test him with hard questions*” (1). It had been common knowledge that Solomon’s wisdom was a gift from God. Solomon was not only king but also a religious leader. His role was different than that of the religious leaders such as the High Priest and the Levites. His example and his decisions had an impact on the lives of the people. When the administration or government will not enforce law and order then things will spin out of control because there will be corruption. When the kings allowed the people to disobey God’s laws then everything in the land went backwards. It was different with Solomon. There was prosperity and justice, but when God is not part of the picture prosperity will decline and so will justice.

The queen came to Jerusalem not to beg for handouts. The most important part of her coming was to learn. She herself was not poor. We hear about the things she brought along. “*She came to Jerusalem with a very great entourage—with camels carrying spices and a large quantity of gold and precious stones. She came to Solomon and told him everything that was on her heart. Solomon answered all her questions. There was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her*” (2-3). The queen came prepared. It was a great caravan which she brought along many gifts which were customary to give when the head of a state was visited. Solomon was not just another king but the king of a superpower nation.

Solomon did not treat the queen with contempt but answered all the questions she asked. He could have treated her ignorance with disdain and laughed at her lack of knowledge, but Solomon was not this kind of king. He knew how God had blessed his father and how he himself was blessed. He wanted to share these spiritual blessings with as many people as possible. He knew the source of all blessings and gave credit where credit was due. When the temple was dedicated Solomon prayed that the temple attract people to hear the Word of God and believe in him. This most certainly happened when the queen of Sheba came.

Jerusalem was an impressive city. The eighty or so years David and Solomon ruled was known as the Golden Age for Israel. The roof of the temple was made from gold. The nation had everything in abundance. We hear about the queen’s response: “*The Queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, the house which he built, and the food on his table. When she saw the council meeting of his officials, the careful attention of his ministers, as well as their attire, his cupbearers, and the whole burnt offerings which he offered at the House of the LORD, it took her breath away*” (4-5). Everything was overwhelming. First of all, Solomon’s wisdom is on top of the list. Solomon’s palace and the food on his tables, the seating of the officials, and the offering and at the temple of the Lord were astounding and impressive. When we see how the rich and famous live we cannot help but to be impressed and astounded. Many world leaders in third world countries live like kings in mansions but you find that not far from where they live their subjects live in utter and total poverty.

The queen of Sheba was also a hero to Jesus himself. He cited her as a model of faith, in stark contrast to the hardhearted unbelief he saw all around him in Israel: “*The Queen of the South [i.e., Sheba] will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn them; 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). On Judgment Day the Queen of Sheba will arise and condemn those who refused to believe in Jesus when he was in Israel. In the same way there are many who do not have to go far to hear the gospel. The gospel is preached in many places and on any given Sunday people will travel miles to worship while others live under the shadow of the church steeple and question the existence of God.

The dedication of this queen is admirable. She went a long way and was determined to speak to the wisest king in the world to learn something from him. No one is ever too old to learn and grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The queen of Sheba was no dummy either. The reason for her coming was to learn more and she was not disappointed. The Wise still seek him and they also

II. Adore him

In those days it was not wise for a king to leave home for a long time unless it was for war or the security of the kingdom. People would ask questions when a king left for frivolous reasons and then depose him while gone. This queen did not regret her trip. For her more than her kingdom was at stake. *“She said to the king, ‘The report I heard in my own country about your accomplishments and your wisdom is true. I did not believe the report until I came and saw it with my own eyes. The truth is, not even half of it was told to me! Your wisdom and wealth surpass the report which I heard’”* (6-7). The queen was overwhelmed and stunned. Everything was greater than she ever imagined. Things often sound better than they are and even look better than they are, but when you actually see it with your own eyes you are disappointed. This was not the case with this queen. There were no regrets as far as the journey she undertook. It was all worth her while and then some.

This queen spoke words we wish heads of state would utter in our day and age. *“Blessed are your men, blessed are your servants, who stand before you continually hearing your wisdom!”* (8) This queen considered those who had to deal with the king as happy. They were exposed to his wisdom. It is great to listen to people who can make us wise. In my lifetime I had many such teachers whose wisdom I admired and cherished. It is unfortunate when people reject wisdom because they are jealous or are convinced that they know it all.

It has been said that history is the judge of great men. Many great leaders are not so much admired while they live but only but only years later when you see a bigger picture of how their influence continued long after they were gone. This queen gave honor where honor was due. *“May the LORD your God be blessed, who was pleased to put you on the throne of Israel. Because the LORD loves Israel forever, he made you king to administer justice and righteousness”* (9). This queen understood why Solomon was so great. These were her own words: *“Because the LORD loves Israel forever, he made you king to administer justice and righteousness.”* It is not possible for all people to live like the rich and famous. But in every nation you want justice and righteousness. This was the way it was in Israel. They had a king who was given the wisdom to see to it that this was implemented.

When the queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem and she was more than impressed. When she left she could say: “Mission accomplished.” These were the exact sentiments of the Wise Men when they came to worship another king. What about your trips to hear the wisdom from on high? We heard all those prophecies and their fulfilment. This is why we keep on coming back for more and each time can say with certainty: “Mission Accomplished.”

There will always be people who are wiser and more gifted than you and I am. This should not make anyone jealous and angry. God has blessed each one of us with the gifts we need to build up his kingdom. It may seem like my contribution is worthless compared to what Solomon had. Our Lord Jesus reminds us that even when you give a cup of cold water to someone it will not go by unnoticed. Solomon changed the world and you and I change the world. God can use all to the glory of his name. We may not have the same wisdom Solomon

had but we know Jesus as our Savior. This was something the Queen of Sheba also took home as well as the Magi and the Ethiopian Eunuch. The Savior came for all—again we worship and celebrate this great gift and treasure it in our hearts.

None of us needs to go on a long journey to seek the wisdom of God. You and I have it at home. The Bible is right there and we also have it in our church. The lessons from the Bible are read every time we worship. In that Bible we can read about the wisdom of Solomon in the Proverbs he wrote. There we also have the wisdom of David and the accounts of his life. We have a great history of the world from the time it was created up to the time when Jesus came live, died and his resurrection and ascension are all recorded for all to read. He also speaks of his coming which we await with great anticipation. The LORD will bless us as we seek the Scriptures for wisdom as we begin this New Year and also end it, knowing he will lead us where we need to go and finally take us home where we will have all the answers to the things we still wonder about.

The Queen of Sheba had no doubts about God's love and grace and neither do we need to doubt. The queen of Sheba was not Jewish but a gentile. The Festival of the Epiphany is also known as the Gentile's Christmas. Christmas was for all—Jesus came for all. The Lord has blessed and will continue to bless all people with the precious gospel the greatest wisdom and treasure in the world.

The Wise Men also left in faith, knowing that they had the opportunity to see the toddler Jesus who had come to save the world. So I hope and pray that you leave here today with this same treasure in your arms of faith, knowing that you have seen and held the Greatest King of all. You have nothing to be disappointed in. I hope and pray that his light shines in your heart and soul and beams out to a world living in darkness, so they too will come, ask questions, and find the answer to life in Christ. Amen.