

GOD PORTRAYS WOMEN

by

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CHAPTER TWELVE

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

I Kings 10:1-10; II Chronicles 9:1-9

KING SOLOMON'S REIGN was one of peace and great prosperity. He was noted throughout the world for his piety and wisdom. He delighted in great building projects and for this he required vast quantities of materials, many of them brought from the ends of the earth. So he and Hiram, king of Tyre, entered into partnership in foreign trade and the shipbuilding business.

These merchant marines not only were occupied in commerce but they disseminated the knowledge of their own countries, their rulers and of the Lord, witnessing a good confession in their lives as well as by word of mouth. Their trade extended to the Indies and down the shores of Africa opposite the now famous Island of Madagascar. Their ships visited the rich country of the Queen of Sheba.

As she inquired of the merchantmen of their king and country she was greatly impressed by the emphasis these travelers put on the godliness of their king. **"She heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord"** (I Kings 10:1). When your name or mine is mentioned, is it associated with the name of the Lord? Does God manifest through us in every place the sweetness of the knowledge of Christ?

The Queen's interest in Solomon became so intense she decided to take the long journey to consult him about the many perplexing intellectual and spiritual questions which vexed her mind and soul. For the answers she came to one who feared the Lord. But we have a greater than Solomon to whom we have immediate access for the solution of all our problems.

The woman of Samaria in her desperation exclaimed, **"I know when Messiah cometh which is called Christ he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he"** (John 4:25-26).

He extends a universal invitation to all those perplexed and burdened with difficulties to come to Him and find rest. Such words in the mouth of any other man would be blasphemy. **"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"** (Matthew 11:28).

As far as we know, the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon uninvited, not even sure of a welcome.

She believed the report she heard, and her heart-hunger drove her to undertake the arduous journey. There were extensive preparations. A large retinue and costly exceptional gifts were accumulated which would add to her prestige and personal importance. She lacked not for things. But things did not meet her soul thirst. Though she may not have been able to diagnose her case, she suffered from “soul-thirst for God,” as David said, “**My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God**” (Psalm 42).

Like her, many think they can buy the cure for their trouble. Naaman the leper came prepared to pay handsomely, but God’s gifts are without money and without price. This rather deflates our ego, our self-importance. Men are impressed with externals, but God sees below the surface. “**Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart**” (I Samuel 16:7).

She came to one who knew the Lord to inquire about the Lord. We need more folk like Elisabeth to whom the Lord sent Mary for encouragement; more folk in their home like Priscilla and Aquila to whom eloquent men in the Scriptures might go to be taught the way of God more perfectly. We need Christians who are unhurried and sympathetic and intelligent in the way of God who will take a heart-interest in an enquirer’s problems, and patiently explain God’s answer to their questions, for God can solve all human difficulties.

As Christ Himself for others gave
So let me live some soul to save;
Let me for others spend my hours,
For others give my worthiest powers;
Be this my joy from year to year
Others to love, and help, and cheer.

Evidently the Queen received a cordial welcome and had frequent long, unhurried audiences with King Solomon. “**She communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not anything hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of the servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her**” (I Kings 10:2-5).

The Queen observed with awe the order, the godly atmosphere, the congenial relation with the servants, and the abundant provision for all.

Her special interest was in the worship of the Lord. When the symbolism of the Tabernacle, Temple and sacrifices was explained to her from the books of Moses; it is said, “**There was no more spirit left in her.**”

Can you hear her asking, “What is the significance of the Tabernacle and Temple?” Then he would explain the sacrifices by which they approached their holy Lord. God requires cleanliness of life in those who draw near unto Him; and in His presence there is a consciousness of sin that has to be atoned for and put away by the sacrifice of another.

He told the Queen that they learned through the multiplicity of the sacrifices that sin was a dreadful thing in the eyes of God. But God had provided this way by which He could be righteous in receiving the repentant sinner who confessed and forsook his sins and yet could show mercy and receive the gratitude of the contrite soul. **“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit”** (Isaiah 57:15).

As Solomon elaborated on the meaning of the brazen altar with the sacrifice, the blood of which was sprinkled on the mercy seat; the laver and the need of constant cleansing of the worshiper; the candlestick with its never failing light, the table of showbread and the incense ascending; the Ark of the Covenant and how the high priest came out after being in the holiest of all to bless the people, she was deeply convicted of her sins and of her need for atonement, and felt grateful that a holy God desires to dwell with a humble and contrite heart. As she grasped the truth of it all there was no more spirit left in her. As we see God, our self-importance dwindles. She hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and God kept His promise, **“They shall be filled.”**

To those who will pour out their hearts before the Lord, He will begin at Moses and all the Scriptures and explain unto them the things concerning Himself till their hearts burn within them, making them burning and shining messengers for Him.

The Lord Jesus does not want us to forget the energy that the Queen of Sheba put forth by coming from a distant part of the earth to have her spiritual questions answered, whereas those privileged to hear the blessed Gospel from the lips of our Lord make no effort to understand the things of God and salvation. Will you remember with embarrassment the story of the Queen of Sheba in the day of judgment and own that you had greater privileges than she did, yet lightly esteemed them? Will you go away hungry forever? She went away completely satisfied. Are you taking advantage of your privileges? Are you making any effort to learn from a Greater than Solomon?

“And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom” (I Kings 10:6).

Our testimony is valuable only when what we say is backed up by our acts and life in the home, in business and in church. **“Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it”** (I Kings 10:7).

We need daily to pray that our lives may correspond to our profession, that on our garments there may be a pomegranate (fruit) for every golden bell of profession, that the world may see consistency in our lives.

“Behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard” (I Kings 10:7).

She learned the truth of those words, **“O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him”** (Psalm 34:8).

She bursts out, **“Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee and that hear thy wisdom!”** (I Kings 10:8).

The servants had the privilege of seeing and hearing and being with the king. Solomon in his Proverbs speaks of those who inquire daily for wisdom from the Lord. **“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord”** (Proverbs 8:34-35).

“Christ is made unto us wisdom” (I Corinthians 1:30). Do we daily seek Him, are we anxious for His smile of approval? If we are continually attending His court, we will become courteous and wear court manners. **“The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”** (James 3:17). Happy goes the day that we heed the wisdom from above!

“Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted 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” (I Kings 10:9).

God expects the man who learns from Him to be fair with other folk, and to spread an influence for good. The end of His education is **“to know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary”** (Isaiah 50:4). It is not for self-aggrandizement or display or pomp.

The Queen’s heart was so full of gratitude for all she had learned of the Lord that she must express it in gifts—and generous they were—in gold, spices, precious stones and alnum trees. The latter were used for pillars in the Lord’s house and in Solomon’s, and for making musical instruments to accompany the songs of the Lord in the Temple. This alnum wood was a very fine-grained, hard wood which needed much scraping before it could be used for a musical instrument. God too has cut down many hard knotty characters and, after much scraping and polishing, has produced music from them which He can enjoy.

Thy life’s long-prisoned music
Let the Master’s hand set free.

The Queen gave to Solomon, but Solomon gave unto her all her desire, whatsoever she asked beside the royal bounty.

The Lord delights to give exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Are we ready to give to and receive from Christ?

“They which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17).

Why are we groveling instead of reigning? Is it because we do not receive daily the abundance of grace from the hand of our Lord who is waiting to be gracious?

Like the Queen, let us bring our empty hearts and perplexing problems to the Lord Jesus and go away satisfied, joyful and enriched, to be a blessing and carry a blessing to our own people. And may we be like Solomon at this time, ready, prepared and meet for the Master's use, turning many to the Lord.

The Lord Jesus said, **“The queen of the south shall rise up in the 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”** (Matthew 12:42).

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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