

# The King Who Overwhelms

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[0:00] Can we open our Bibles again, please, in 1 Kings chapter 10. Let me just read verse 6. And she said to the king, The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom.

But I did not believe the reports until I came with my own eyes and I had seen it. And behold, a half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpassed the report that I heard.

And happy are your men. Happy are your servants who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom. The lifestyle and the possession of the rich and famous intrigue many people.

Some of the most popular magazines that people buy are magazines like Hello and OK. Folk look at them and they marvel at how celebrities and how the royals of Europe and across the world live. They love to see the furnishings. They love to hear and read of the extravagant lifestyle of the rich and famous and of the celebrities. Indeed, William and Kate, the leading UK celebrity royals, intrigue people.

[1:17] And folk are fascinated by how they live. Meghan and Harry, maybe somewhat less so. So even the King Charles has, do you know that King Charles has personally 50,000 guests to Buckingham Palace every single year?

50,000 people come as his guests and they are all amazed at what they see. And indeed, when Buckingham Palace was open to the public, 430,000 people per year paid to go inside Buckingham Palace.

And I don't know if you have ever been in Buckingham Palace, but it is an extraordinary place. The artwork from all over Europe, largely Vermeer, the great Rubens, Rembrandt, all the great artists are there.

The riches on show are absolutely incredible. We have that same feel, don't we, here, as you have read with me in 1 Kings chapter 10.

We read there of the opulence of King Solomon's palace. And you read there the language was rich and it really was over the top.

[2:35] A little bit like the Oval Office these days. Don Dahlia, I think, has got the gold everywhere in the Oval Office. Gold is his favorite color. And indeed, King Solomon was exactly the same.

So what we have here is the account, the famous account, of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. And this is a visit that's well known and is celebrated in history.

Handel, in fact, has got a great tune, The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba. You would know it instantly if you heard it. The Queen of Sheba, well, it was somewhere in Africa.

She was an African queen. Some suggest Yemen. But there's kind of Arabian opulence here. It really is quite a sight.

This is the rich and famous on steroids. So 1 Kings chapter 10 is a really good story. It's interesting that so much of the Bible, especially the Gospels and the Old Testament, stories.

[3:47] Everybody loves a good story. And all the elements of a good story are here. There's a tension. There's not a tension.

The Queen of Sheba thinks, were the reports of King Solomon's wealth exaggerated? Will I be disappointed when I go to the palace?

Will it be a letdown? There's a tension. And then she says, no, the half was not yet told me. There's detail. It was interesting that the peacocks and the apes got me, especially there.

The detail of this chapter. The Bible is a very interesting book, isn't it? Even on its own terms, just as a story here, you've got a turning point in verse 7.

That's another thing you look for in a story. And you've got the outcome. She goes away and she's amazed by what she saw. So this morning we're going to look at the visit of the Queen of Sheba to

King Solomon.

[4:53] And it's more than a story. Because what we will see here will impact our lives if we see the true significance of it.

It wasn't a diplomatic or trade mission. No, it was bigger than that. It wasn't just, you know, like the Chinese president going to see Trump last week.

It wasn't a diplomatic or a trade mission. It wasn't just money that was on the table. But what is on the table is the attraction of the Queen of Sheba towards King Solomon.

Not his wealth, but his wisdom. She wanted to know what made him tick. She wanted to know what was behind the wisdom and the lifestyle of the people of Israel in King Solomon's day.

And so what we have is the curious attraction of wisdom. And we will see even the wisdom of God. Wisdom is attractive.

[6:00] People ask questions all the time. People are wondering how the world ticks. People are wondering how they tick. Folk are asking questions out there.

However, many people are asking genuine questions. And maybe even in here, folk are exactly the same. They're wondering how does the world tick.

So it's all about questions, isn't it? Verse 1, she asks hard questions. Verse 2, she talks about all that was on her mind. Verse 6, she notes that all the wisdom was true. Verse 7, she now believes in it.

And so this is a woman who is attracted by the wisdom of Solomon. Now remember this. 1 Kings is part of a bigger book called the Bible.

And it runs from Genesis right through to Malachi, right through to the book of Revelation. The Bible is about a hero. The key person in the Bible is the hero, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[7:07] And we will see that he is seen here in 1 Kings 10 very, very clearly. And indeed, Jesus says in Matthew 12, he says there are parallels between King Solomon and me.

Let's just look at 1 Kings 10. For those of you, this will be a well-known story. And there may be others of you who've never heard this story in your entire life.

The visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. And we're going to look at wisdom. And we're going to notice four things about wisdom.

Number one, we're going to notice here the fact of wisdom. Now, wisdom is a thing. Look at verse 4. Verse 4 uses that expression, Now, what is wisdom?

There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. You know, some folk use this rather funny expression.

[8:25] Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. But wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad. That's the difference.

Knowledge is one thing. Wisdom is something else. So wisdom is not just knowledge. We know very smart people. We use the expression, don't we, in Scotland?

He's no wise. Someone could have a PhD in astrophysics. Someone could understand all the integrities of integral calculus.

And yet, there are no wise. Maybe you're like that. Maybe you're very, very clever. Maybe you know stuff. But wisdom has eluded you.

And so, we're seeing there. Haven't we seen it? And she hints at what they both understood as wisdom. Verse 3 and verse 4. Wisdom did stuff.

[9:30] There was a practical effect. Verse 4. I see that your kingdom is healthy. I see that your people are happy. So wisdom is more than a high IQ.

Folks, again, I repeated. You may be really smart. You may know stuff. But wisdom is beyond that.

And what we want today is we want to blow our hearts off. To experience. Blow our hearts open. To experience maybe a wisdom that we've never known before. In verse 4, verse 8 rather.

Wisdom leads to the happiness of the people. Look at verse 8. How happy your people must be.

So, the wisdom that's spoken of here in 1 Kings chapter 10 leads to happiness.

Happiness is a thing. Do you know that there's a happiness index? The World Happiness Report is a thing.

[10:37] It's published each year by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network. And the happiest country in the world. I wonder if you can guess the happiest country in the world is Finland.

Apparently. Followed by Denmark, Iceland and Sweden. They are the happiest countries in the world. Which surprised me. These kind of Nordic countries are all kind of dark and gloomy. And happiness is interesting. Actually, here's another thing. In the United Kingdom, do you know where some of the most happy people are?

They live here in the Western Isles. In the midst of all the rain, the bogs and heavy-handed Calvinism. In spite of all that, they are the happiest people in the United Kingdom.

We may not look it, but we are happy. That's the sort of thing we see in verse 8. Isn't it? How happy your people must be. And all that came from wisdom.

[11:45] Let's drill down a little bit. What is wisdom? Well, the classic definition of wisdom in the Bible is found in the book of Proverbs 1-7.

There's a sustained description of wisdom. Proverbs 1-7. And here's the interesting thing that we discover in Proverbs 1-7. Right through to 7.

That wisdom is not a thing. But wisdom is actually a person. Wisdom is encapsulated.

Wisdom speaks. Wisdom is a person. So wisdom is not just an idea. Wisdom is actually a person.

The thing or the one, the person that holds the universe together.

And the person who holds the universe together is Jesus. Jesus is wisdom. Jesus holds the universe together.

[12:47] Jesus is that one idea, that one element who holds everything that we know. He holds it together. We cannot speak too highly of Jesus.

Because when we speak about the fact of wisdom, we are actually speaking about Jesus. Last week I met two Mormons in Edinburgh.

Lovely, lovely two guys. They looked really bored. They were the world's worst missionaries. They really looked bored and disinterested. But they had to do their thing.

They meet in the street and said, Would you like to come to church next Sunday morning? And I said, Guys, you've got to work on your pitch. That really is not a great way to start.

And they were a bit downcast. And so they began talking about Mormonism. And they asked me if I knew about Mormonism. Turned out I probably knew more about Mormonism than they did.

[13:50] But here's the thing. I said, You know what one big problem with you guys is? And I mean this most respectfully. You've got to give Jesus an upgrade.

For to them, Jesus is just one of the prophets. For them, he's a great man. But he's just one of the prophets. It's the same in Islam. Jesus is good, but he's just one of the prophets. He's not one of the prophets. He is the wisdom of God.

He is the one who holds the universe together. The fact of wisdom here in 1 Kings 10. Jesus is wisdom. So we see here the fact of wisdom.

But the second thing we see here is the attraction of wisdom. The Queen of Sheba had heard about this. It starts off in verse 1. Now when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord.

The thing that attracted the Queen of Sheba to Solomon was concerning the name of the Lord. It was his theology. It was his relationship to God.

[14:56] And you notice how often wisdom is linked in this chapter to his relationship with God. You see that in verse 1. You see it in verse 5. You see it twice in verse 9.

That's what made her go from the ends of the earth to visit King Solomon. Because she wanted to know more about his wisdom.

Yes, there was a financial element. She gave him four tons of gold. That's a big present. We're doing a visit.

It might be a box of after-eights and a bottle of Prosecco. But it's four tons of gold she gave to King Solomon. This was huge stuff. But notice again verse 1.

She came to test him with hard questions. Enigmatic questions. She came to King Solomon to question, question, question, question, question.

[15:55] Folks, questions are good. We want as Christians people to ask us questions. There is nothing out of bounds.

We want the folk in this community to ask us constantly questions about the difficult things of life. About predestination. About why do good people suffer. About the reality of heaven.

The reality of hell. The fact is the Bible true. The miracles. We want folk to come and ask us very hard and tough questions. Because we want to face up to these things.

For far too often the church has been defensive. Indeed, when I was growing up I would ask constantly. I would ask people in the church questions. My relatives. And they would say, Don't, don't, don't ask that question. Be quiet. Don't ask that question. And the reality is it's the exact opposite here. Come with your questions.

[16:56] There was a hunger within the queen. The queen of Sheba had a hunger within her. And I am convinced that many folk who live in this community still have that.

Hunger for questions that they are honestly asking. The late chief rabbi.

Jonathan Sachs. He wrote in October the 3rd, 2015. In the Wall Street Journal of all things. He said it's Homo sapiens. That's human.

He says, Homo sapiens is a meaning seeking animal. If there is one thing the great institutions of the modern world do not do it. It is to provide meaning.

Meaning. We are a meaning seeking animal. That's what makes us different. That cheviot gimmer in the field is not asking big questions.

[17:57] Your sheep is not asking about the meaning of life. They couldn't care less. They're just sheep. Only we human beings ask about the meaning of life.

Why are we here? Why is there a meaning to my life? Is there a purpose to my life? We ask questions. So what are we seeing?

Wisdom. The fact of wisdom. The attraction of wisdom. But then thirdly the source of wisdom. And you see that in verse 2. She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue.

She's the queen of Sheba. She's coming to Jerusalem. She's got her camels. She's bringing spices. She's got a lot of gold. Precious stones. She's got a lot of stuff. And she's coming to Jerusalem.

Why Jerusalem? Well, it was all there in Jerusalem. A key phrase there is in verse 5. That she saw the food in his table.

[19:04] His clothing. His cupbearers. And his burnt offerings. That's something that the queen of Sheba didn't have back there in Sheba.

They didn't have burnt offerings. They didn't have the same sense of sacrifice. The source of wisdom was Solomon's faith.

And at the heart of his faith were these burnt offerings. These sacrifices. There's an old hymn, isn't there? What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

So the queen of Sheba is drawn here. And yet it points forward. You see, wisdom does not begin and end with Solomon. Wisdom begins and ends with Jesus.

Jesus said of himself, Matthew 12, 42. Something greater than Solomon is here. Whenever you read of a king in the Bible, there's always a greater king.

[20:07] And that king is Jesus. Always pointing to Jesus. Solomon's wisdom is imperfect. Now, it's interesting.

If you look in chapter 10, it talks about King Solomon. He's a great guy. You look at chapter 11. Solomon had a bit of a weakness.

Look at chapter 11, verse 1. Now, King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh. He was a bit of a player, King Solomon. He had many wives.

He had many wives. He had many wives. Either Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women. He kept his options open, didn't he? So Solomon, he was wise, but he had flaws.

He was a polygamist. He was a serial adulterer. He was immoral. So Solomon's wisdom is imperfect. Solomon had 700 wives.

[21:11] A lot of wives. But one man. Jesus only had one. Do you know that Jesus had a wife? Did you know that?

One wife. Yeah, not many folk know that. His one wife is a church. From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride.

The church is known as the bride of Christ. And Jesus is uniquely committed to that wife. Solomon's heart turned away from God.

Jesus was God. Solomon had many wives. Jesus had one wife. Solomon's heart was turned away from God. Jesus was God. The glory of Solomon was in his wealth.

The glory of Jesus is in his person. He had no wealth. Jesus owned very little. And that which he owned, the clothes and his bag, were taken from him at the cross.

[22:18] What does 1 Kings 10 remind you of? Monarchs from the east coming with gold to a king.

Reminds you of the Christmas story, doesn't it? We three kings of Orient are gold, frankincense, and myrrh. You know the story. And so what we have here is a hint.

And yet Jesus who had nothing, and yet the kings of the east or the wise men of the east came to him with gifts of gold. And those who met him fell down before him.

What's your response to wisdom? What's your response to the gospel? What's your response to the Lord Jesus Christ?

What's your response to the whole Christian story? Verse 5. As far as the queen was concerned, she was breathless.

[23:26] NIV says of verse 5, she was overwhelmed. The ESV says there was no more breath in her. She was astonished.

Verse 9 speaks there of the fact that she saw the source and she praised God. God is glorified. She saw that all the things she saw in Solomon came from God. And it's exactly the same today. And she went from the place and she told others there was a spontaneous overflow. That's what happens when you become a Christian.

That's what happens when you really get the gospel. You just cannot stop telling other people about it. The experience is so incredible, so amazing, that you just want to tell people.

[24:31] That's what makes our faith no longer something which is merely institutional, but something which is living and vibrant and something that we spread and something that we spontaneously talk about.

And we say it's amazing. It goes viral as we talk about what we saw and the riches and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. Solomon got it.

And he wrote a song about this, actually. The song is well known to many of you here. It's in Psalm 72. And it speaks of Solomon, but it speaks again pointing to Jesus.

Psalm 72 in the metrical version is, Yea, he shall live and given to him shall be of Sheba's gold. For him still shall they pray and he shall daily be extolled.

So Psalm 72 speaks about getting Sheba's gold and a king. But it's not just King Solomon because it says there, you know how the psalm ends, His name forever shall endure.

[25:43] Last like the sun it shall. Men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall him call. That's not about Solomon.

That's about Jesus. They're still talking about Jesus. All over the world they're talking about Jesus. You open up your social media, they're still talking about Jesus.

Even, a lot of them just don't like him, don't like his story. But he is still the number one subject of discussion. The book of Kings, 1st and 2nd Kings, is a tale of two kingdoms.

The kingdoms of this world against the kingdoms of God. Now the kingdoms of this world come and the kingdoms go.

I was trying to think of the prime ministers when I was born in 1961. and I'm trying to think of all the prime ministers of my life.

[27:00] I don't know. The ones I remember are Harold Wilson and James Callaghan and Edward Heath and the one whose name is never mentioned.

And all these prime ministers, they come and they go, but people forget. if I said to someone under the age of 40, do you remember Harold Wilson with his Gannick's raincoat and his pipe and the pound in your pocket is worth more under a Labour government?

They would not have a clue. You see, they come and they are forgotten. Forgotten. But there is a king who will endure forever and ever.

But you know what Jesus said he said in Matthew 12, the actions of the queen of Sheba or the queen of the south will rise up and speak against people in judgment because the queen of Sheba knew so little and yet she came and she worshipped.

We know so much more. Let's conclude. The queen in verse 4 ate at the table of Solomon.

[28:17] Solomon have you ever been to Buckingham Palace? Have you ever had a note from Charlach come round? Me and Camilla having a few folk round join us.

this morning you have a personal invitation from a greater king King Jesus who says come round meet with me eat with me rest in me enjoy my riches enjoy my love and in me you will find wisdom in me you will find that one thing that the whole universe coheres round.

Maybe you meet someone on Monday where were you Sunday morning I was at Carly a free church this guy this old guy from Edinburgh what did he say?

He said he spoke about the meaning of life and the key to everything and that is Jesus big subject you're a disciple of Jesus will you will you take this invitation to this feast a wonderful ending to if you look at the very end of Kings there's first Kings and the very last paragraph of second Kings speaks of a captive who is released and he puts aside his prison clothes and he eats at the king's table in your life come and eat at his table let me pray Father thank you for all you