

The Sunday-School.

FOURTH QUARTER,
LESSON XII.—Dec. 20.

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon.

1 Kings 10: 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.*—Prov. 29: 2.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time.*—The last half of Solomon's reign, B.C. 995 (Ussher), or 957-937 (revised). The queen of Sheba's visit was after Solomon's twentieth year as king (1 Kings 9: 10).

Place.—(1) Jerusalem, where Solomon had his royal palace. (2) Sheba, or Sebæa, a wealthy region in southern Arabia, bordering on the Red Sea. It was fifteen hundred to two thousand miles from Jerusalem.

Solomon was over 38 years old when the queen of Sheba came to visit him, and about 58 to 60 when he died.

THE LESSON includes 1 Kings 9-11, and the parallel account in 2 Chron. 7: 11-9: 26, together with the further story of Solomon's works and wealth in 1 Kings 4, which the queen of Sheba saw. We thus study Solomon in all his glory, up to the time of his death.

THE VISION, NEW HELP AS DANGERS INCREASED.—1 Kings 9: 1-9. 2 Chron. 7: 11-22. Solomon was in great moral perils from his very success. God in a vision set clearly before the king the way of life and the way of death, the conditions on which alone there could be enduring success. Solomon could choose his way.

THE GLORIES OF SOLOMON'S REIGN.—See description in Eccles. 2: 4-9.

1.—*The Extent of His Kingdom.* Solomon's kingdom extended from the Euphrates on the north to the boundary line of Egypt on the southwest, including the whole strip of territory lying between the desert on the east and south, and the Mediterranean Sea on the west, except the narrow strip occupied by the Phœnicians, who were in alliance with Solomon.

2.—*The Temple,* described in the last lesson.

3.—*The Royal Palaces* (1 Kings 7: 1-12).

4.—*The Enlargement and Beautifying of Jerusalem* (1 Kings 9: 24; 11: 27).

5.—*Waterworks.* Solomon brought water from a great distance in costly aqueducts, the first known in history.

6.—*Fortresses.* The whole territory of the twelve tribes were also protected for the first time by a number of strongholds, as if in anticipation of future invasions.

7.—*The Navy and Commerce.* Solomon, by a league with Tyre, had a wide-extended commerce. Their ships called as far west as Spain, perhaps beyond, along the coast of France to the British Isles, southward along the African shore, probably to the gold coast, down the Red Sea, along the shores of Arabia and East Africa, and the Persian Gulf, and, without doubt, to some port of India.

8.—*The Army.* Contrary to all former usage, he introduced into the army chariots and cavalry, till now almost unknown in Israel.

9.—*Revenue and Splendors.* Gold was accumulated in great abundance. (1 Kings 10: 27).

10.—*Knowledge and Literature.* We are told that Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs and one thousand songs. His wisdom as a judge, as a builder, as an organizer, as a statesman, gave him a world-wide reputation.

11.—*Religious Services.* Amid all these cares Solomon did not neglect the public religious life of the nation, but kept the three great feasts and sustained the priests in their daily ministrations in the temple.

THE VISIT OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.—1 Kings 10: 1-10.

The Queen of Sheba.—Sheba is almost universally regarded to be the ancient kingdom of the Sabæans in southern Arabia Felix, bordering on the Red Sea. The Queen of Sheba represented a civilization which doubtless regarded itself as venerable and cultured by the side of that of the rude tribes of Palestine.

Heard of the fame of Solomon, which through his commerce and conquests had extended throughout the known world. *Concerning the name of the Lord.* His religious fame. The story of his early choice, and God's promise, and the wonderful fulfilment of them in the rise of an almost unknown people into a world kingdom of splendor and power, may have reached the ears of the queen. *Came to prove (to test) him with hard questions.* To see if he were really as wise as rumor asserted. She tested him by riddles and enigmas of various kinds, which are so dear to the Oriental heart. The wonderful deeds of the God Solomon worshipped, and his readiness to answer prayer for wisdom and blessing, must have stirred her heart in the hope that she, too, might find the true God.

Lessons for Today.—1. Jesus Christ the Son of God is far greater than Solomon. There are spiritual riches of love, peace, joy, forgiveness, character.

2. His fame has gone over the world, with proofs of his wisdom, goodness, and power.

3. National prosperity testifies to the God of nations. England's and America's prosperity recommend the religion we exemplify, even though feebly. The way to achieve more is to serve God more. Christianity has increased amazingly; national power and greatness have increased amazingly.

4. Solomon's marvelous wisdom and countless wealth and wide-extended kingdom were given him, as an instrumentality for making known the true God and the true religion of the true God.

And she came to Jerusalem, a distance of fifteen hundred miles, which would take about 75 days each way. The queen and her company traveled by camels. *With a very great train,* for comfort, for safety, for bearing the presents to Solomon. *Camels that bare spices.* Of these there was a *very great store.* *And very much gold.* According to v. 10, an *hundred and twenty talents.* As a talent of gold is worth \$29,000, heavy standard, her present of gold would amount to \$3,500,000. The Sabæans were enormously wealthy, and used gold and silver in a most lavish manner in their furniture, their utensils, etc. *And precious stones.* The chief precious stones which Arabia now yields are the onyx and the emerald. Anciently she is said to have produced adamant,

amethysts, chrysolites, hematites, sards, sardonyxes, and several stones for which modern jewellers have no names.

Lessons for Today.—1. The highest use of this story is that which Jesus made of it, as a motive for seeing and searching for the Christ and his kingdom with all the heart (Matt. 12: 42).

2. No matter how much we have of worldly good, it can never fully satisfy the soul. Solomon tried all that the world can give, yet found all to be vanity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon told her all her questions.—There was not one of her riddles and hard questions he could not answer.

Had seen all Solomon's wisdom, the ordering of the kingdom, and in answering questions. *The house that he had built.* Referring doubtless to his palace. *And the meat of his table.* All his plate and drinking vessels were of gold. *The sitting of his servants,* the officers and distinguished persons who were privileged to sit at the king's table. *The attendance of his ministers.* Attendants, pages, men in waiting. *And their apparel.* The livery and uniform. *And his ascent.* The passage from the palace to the temple up the Tyropeon valley. *There was no more spirit (breath) in her.* Her amazement was so great that she was lost in admiration. *It was a true report.* She acknowledges the truth. *Behold, the half was not told me.* Nor would she have believed it if it had been told. *Happy are thy men.* *Blessed be the Lord thy God.* The queen understood that Solomon recognized all. *The Lord loved Israel for ever,* an everlasting love. *Therefore made he thee king.* The highest possible compliment to Solomon.

ROYAL GIFTS.—V. 10. The visit ended in an interchange of royal presents. The queen of Sheba gave presents to Solomon, according to Oriental custom. *An hundred and twenty talents of gold . . . spices.* The most precious things her kingdom produced. Solomon not only returns the queen's gifts with interest, but presents her with whatever strikes her fancy.

THE CLOSE OF SOLOMON'S REIGN.—From the glories of life we turn to look upon a tragedy. The Scriptures are too wise to portray the grandeur without also showing its dangers, and to show the source of the downfall of the wisest of men.

The causes was polygamy, and his marriage, for state reasons, with heathen women. His consequent toleration of idolatry and its vices, by which Solomon was led into bad company and placed himself under evil influences.

The consequences were the failure of Solomon to build such a kingdom as would endure. The people revolted, and the nation was divided, laying the foundation for centuries of civil war.

Lessons for Today.—1. No one is strong enough and wise enough to be safe in constant intercourse with persons of wrong principle and false religion, any more than one is healthy enough to be safe physically in a malarial or fever-laden atmosphere.

2. Old age has its dangers as well as youth. Starting right is not enough. It is he that "endureth to the end" who is saved.

3. Knowledge and worldly wisdom cannot alone save us from sin.

4. It is the duty of all rulers, teachers, parents, to train those under their care to live a true and useful life.

5. Wealth and prosperity are fraught with dangers and temptations.

6. The most dangerous temptations are those which come gradually, almost

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unconsciously. Men's opinions seldom make a sudden change. Solomon's fall from his great height was not like lightning from a clear sky, but from clouds which for years had been gathering electricity.

FEVERISH FROM WORMS.—Two of my little boys were troubled with worms. They would wake up in the night and vomit and through the day would sometimes be very feverish. I gave them Dr. Low's Worm Syrup and it completely cured them.

Mrs. Wm. Mercel, Teetersville, Ont.

The lamp must be lighted before it can shine, and it is lighted that it may "give light to all that are in the house." We are not only God's torch-bearers but we are God's torches. To shade our light and shut off its beams from others is not only making a narrow use but a wrong use of the light.

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