

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA... who argued herself into a journey
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(2 CHRONICLES 9: 1-12)

The queen of Sheba was one of the most glamorous figures in the ancient world. The fame of this illustrious woman had spread to many countries, for the splendour of her court was both lavish and sensational. Amid a magnificence peculiarly her own, this attractive lady reigned supreme, and it was difficult to believe that any other kingdom could be more brilliant than hers. When itinerant merchants spoke of the surpassing splendour of Israel, and described the amazing wisdom of king Solomon her eyes speculatively narrowed; and then, smiling, she dismissed the accounts as the exaggerations of overworked imaginations. Many years later, the Lord Jesus introduced this eminent woman into the Gospel story, and in the light of that introduction it is now possible to advance three propositions-

The Wonder of the Gospel is almost beyond comprehension
To say the least, nothing like this had hitherto been known. David's kingdom had been great, but the messengers claimed superlative splendour for Solomon. Could not these men be guilty of speaking untruthfully? Yet each time she examined their wares, and handled their treasures, she saw evidence in support of their claim. How could they possess such gems, and offer such goods, if their supplies were not obtained in a land of plenty? Her mind was greatly disturbed as she considered these possibilities. In like manner the story of the Gospel speaks to us of the greatness of the Kingdom of Christ. We are told of the gold of grace; the pearls of pardon; and the rich jewels of redeeming love, so plentiful in the realm of the spirit. The wonder of the Gospel message beggars description; yet every thinking man becomes confused when he recognises a true Christian. The radiance of a consecrated life suggests that such jewels surely come from a Kingdom of plenty.

The Challenge of the Gospel is almost beyond dispute
The palace of the queen of Sheba became a centre of animated debate, as each new merchant repeated his claim. Ultimately the challenge of the message overcame the unbelief of the woman, and she prepared to confirm or disprove the story for ever. That the message could be so tested was to her a great source of satisfaction. And thus the historian wrote, "And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem . . . and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart" (2 Chron. 9:1). In her search for evidence, she obtained thrilling results. The present-day world has also become a debating centre, and various findings have been released for the edifying of communities. Yet the greatest challenge has been ignored. If men came to Christ to test the claims of the Gospel, they would soon say, "Behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard. Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants . . . (vv. 6, 7).

The Sufficiency of the Gospel is almost beyond description
"And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA... who argued herself into a journey desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants" (1 Kings 10:13). Prayer is the key which unlocks heaven's treasure house. The enrichment of the ancient queen is a suggestive picture of the untold treasures obtainable at the throne of grace. Emulating the example of the royal lady, we bring our gifts to Christ, and He says, "Ask what ye will, and it shall be done." She was not impoverished by her giving to Solomon; and neither are we when we give to Christ. Our thankofferings are returned "shaken together, pressed down, and running over." And from the day of her return to Sheba's palace, the queen joyfully anticipated the coming of the merchants. Her debating ceased, as her home became a place of testimony. She had seen the great king, and loved to hear news of his kingdom. We are grateful to the ancient lady for supplying the world with such a colourful picture of God's saving grace. She was a wise woman who went in search of reality, and found it! And Jesus said, "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of 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" (Matt. 12 :42).

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