FIRST KINGS

Chapter 10

***The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon***

**When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions. 2 Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind. 3 Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her. 4 When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, 5 the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the Lord, she was overwhelmed. 6 She said to the king, “The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. 7 But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard. 8 How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! 9 Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the Lord’s eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness.” 10 And she gave the king 120 talents of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. 11 (Hiram’s ships brought gold from Ophir; and from there they brought great cargoes of almugwood and precious stones. 12 The king used the almugwood to make supports for the temple of the Lord and for the royal palace, and to make harps and lyres for the musicians. So much almugwood has never been imported or seen since that day.) 13 King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for, besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country.**

**10:1** *Sheba.* Archaeological evidence suggests that Sheba is to be identified with a mercantile kingdom that flourished in southwest Arabia (see notes on Ge 10:28; Joel 3:8) c. 900–450 b.c. (modern Yemen). It profited from the sea trade of India and east Africa by transporting luxury commodities north to Damascus and Gaza on caravan routes through the Arabian Desert. It is possible that Solomon’s fleet of ships threatened Sheba’s continued dominance of this trading business. (CSB)

*his relation to the name of the Lord*. The queen of Sheba recognized a connection between the wisdom of Solomon and the God he served. Jesus used her example to condemn the people of his own day who had not recognized that “one greater than Solomon” was in their midst (Mt 12:42; Lk 11:31). (CSB)

**10:9** *Praise be to the Lord your God.* The queen of Sheba’s confession is beautifully worded and reflects a profound understanding of Israel’s covenant relationship with the Lord. However, it does not necessarily imply anything more than her recognition of the Lord as Israel’s national God in conformity with the ideas of polytheistic paganism (see note on 5:7; see also 2Ch 2:12; Da 3:28–29). There is no confession that Solomon’s God has become her God to the exclusion of all others. (CSB)

**10:10** *120 talents of gold.* See notes on 9:11, 28. (CSB)

**10:11** *Hiram’s ships.* See 9:26–28. Hiram had supplied the wood, the sailors and the expertise in construction that Israel lacked. (CSB)

*almugwood.* See NIV text note and 2Ch 9:10–11. Its identity is unknown, though some suggest it is juniper. It was apparently available from Lebanon as well as Ophir (2Ch 2:8). (CSB)

**10:13** *all she desired and asked for.* The exchange of gifts between Solomon and the queen may have signified the effecting of a trade agreement (see note on v. 1). There is no basis for the idea sometimes suggested that she desired offspring fathered by Solomon and left Jerusalem carrying his child. (CSB)

***Solomon’s Splendor***

**14 The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, 15 not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all the Arabian kings and the governors of the land. 16 King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred bekas of gold went into each shield. 17 He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold, with three minas of gold in each shield. The king put them in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. 18 Then the king made a great throne inlaid with ivory and overlaid with fine gold. 19 The throne had six steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them. 20 Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom. 21 All King Solomon’s goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon’s days. 22 The king had a fleet of trading ships at sea along with the ships of Hiram. Once every three years it returned, carrying gold, silver and ivory, and apes and baboons. 23 King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. 24 The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. 25 Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift—articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules. 26 Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. 27 The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills. 28 Solomon’s horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue—the royal merchants purchased them from Kue. 29 They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans.**

**10:15** *revenues from … Arabian kings.* Tribute from Bedouin sheiks for passage of their caravans into Israelite territory. (CSB)

*governors of the land.* See 4:7–19. (CSB)

**10:16** *large shields.* Rectangular shields that afforded maximum protection (in distinction from the smaller round shields). These gold shields were probably not intended for battle but for ceremonial use, symbolizing Israel’s wealth and glory. They were probably made of wood overlaid with gold. Shishak of Egypt carried them off as plunder in the fifth regnal year of Solomon’s son Rehoboam (see 14:25–26). (CSB)

**10:22** *fleet of trading ships.* See NIV text note; 2Ch 9:21. The same fleet is referred to in v. 11; 9:26–28. “Ships of Tarshish” are not necessarily ships that sail to Tarshish (see note on Jnh 1:3) but can designate large trading vessels. (CSB)

**10:26** *chariots and horses.* See note on 4:26. Accumulation of chariots and horses by the king was forbidden in the Mosaic law (Dt 17:16). (CSB)

**10:29** *exported them.* Through his agents Solomon was the middleman in a lucrative trading business. It appears that he acquired horses from the north (Muzur and Kue in Asia Minor; see NIV text notes on v. 28) and sold them in the south, while at the same time acquiring chariots from the south (Egypt) and selling them in the north. See inset to map No. 4 at the end of the Study Bible. (CSB)