



LESSON XII.—DEC. 20.

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon.

I. Kings x., 1-10.

Golden Text.

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. Proverbs xxix., 2.

Home Readings.

Monday, Dec. 14.—I. Kings x., 1-13.
 Tuesday, Dec. 15.—Ecc., ii., 1-11.
 Wednesday, Dec. 16.—I. Cor. ii., 1-16.
 Thursday, Dec. 17.—I. Kings x., 14-25.
 Friday, Dec. 18.—II. Chron. ix., 1-13.
 Saturday, Dec. 19.—II. Chron. ix., 14-24.
 Sunday, Dec. 20.—Matt. xii., 31-42.

1. And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions.

2. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

3. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not anything hid from the king, which he told her not.

4. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

5. And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her.

6. 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.

7. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

8. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.

9. 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.

10. And she gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

INTRODUCTION.

At the time referred to in the present lesson Solomon seems to have reigned some twenty years. I. Kings ix., 10. Read chapters ix. and x., and you will get an idea of the glory and wealth of his reign. The fame of his wisdom, power, and splendor spread far among other nations, and in the present lesson we have an account of the visit by the Queen of Sheba, to learn for herself how true or false were the reports.

It is generally believed by scholars that Sheba, here mentioned, was the ancient kingdom of the Sabaeans was situated in southern Arabia Felix. This is known to have been, in Solomon's day, a rich and strong kingdom noted especially for gold, jewels and spices. Recently discovered inscriptions show that the nation was well advanced in civilization. The

Arabs have many legends about this Queen of Sheba, and among them her name is called Balkis.

The kingdom of the Sabaeans was fifteen hundred miles from Jerusalem, and it has been estimated that it required, with the slow means of travel then in use, possibly seventy-five days to reach Jerusalem. Yet so anxious was this queen to learn the truth about Solomon that she came this great distance, with all the inconveniences of ancient travel.

THE LESSON STUDY.

Verse 1-3. 'And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord.' It is not surprising that she should have heard of this industrious monarch, but notice that the queen heard of his fame 'concerning the name of the Lord.' The great temple erected to the worship of God, with rites that were so distinct from those of heathenism, and the God given wisdom of the king, were known far beyond the boundaries of the kingdom of Israel.

'She came to prove him with hard questions.' Riddles and puzzling questions have in the East been proverbially used as tests of wisdom, or their solution as conditions upon which this or that would be done. There are traditions that the queen asked Solomon to tell the contents of a closed casket, to thread a diamond through which an intricately winding hole ran, to perforate a pearl, and other things of like nature. All these puzzles he is said to have solved correctly, and to have answered the questions she asked.

'And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train.' She travelled with a splendor, and retinue that became a sovereign of a rich Oriental country. Notice in the second verse the mention of the costly things she brought with her. It would be necessary to have 'a very great train' of attendants for the sake of safety in transporting so much treasure.

4, 5. 'And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,' etc. Not only did the queen question Solomon closely to test the reports of his great sagacity, but she also inspected the evidences of his wealth and grandeur as presented by his environment in his capital. Solomon had constructed great public works, reservoirs, aqueducts, etc., and 'the ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord.' This probably refers to the connecting way between the palace and the temple, across a valley since filled with rubbish.

'There was no more spirit in her.' The queen's own wisdom, glory, and wealth had been so far eclipsed that she seemed to lose spirit, in the sense that her lofty pride was humbled.

6, 7. 'It was a true report that I heard . . . and, behold, the half was not told me.' Here is a frank confession of the greatness of Solomon, and, as verse 7 indicates, of the queen's doubts before she saw for herself. She found that the king's wisdom and prosperity exceeded the accounts she had heard.

8. 'Happy are thy men,' etc. They were not happy merely in the wealth that surrounded them, but in having the wisdom of Solomon before them constantly, for their spiritual and mental improvement.

9. 'Blessed be the Lord thy God.' It is evident from verse 9 that the queen had been made to understand that Solomon's wisdom, power, and possessions came from God. At this time Solomon seems to have been still using the exceptional means at his command to glorify God. Notice the recognition of God's love for Israel, and of the compliment paid to Solomon, but the statement that because of this divine love for Israel, God had made him king.

10. 'And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold,' etc. There came now an exchange of royal gifts, as we learn from verses 10 and 13 of this chapter. This was according to Oriental custom still prevalent.

The visit of the queen of Sheba, her early doubts, her confession of Solomon's greatness, and the generous exchange of

gifts, are good examples of spiritual things. Many a soul doubts, either really or wilfully, the love and power, and goodness of God. If such a one makes no effort to 'taste and see that the Lord is good,' he simply remains in his spiritual narrowness and ignorance, with all that this means in the present life and in eternity. Christmas box. 'Not frangincense or the honest effort to come to God and learn of him, to appropriate Christ, he finds that the half was never told him, and involuntarily he pours out his soul in blessing the Heavenly Father.

Next week the lesson is the Review and Christmas Lesson. Read Psalm ciii. and Matthew ii., 1-12.

C. E. Topic

Sunday, Dec. 20.—Topic—A vision of world-wide peace. Isa. xi., 6-9; 9-6.

Junior C. E. Topic.

BRINGING TREASURES TO JESUS.

Monday, Dec. 14.—Our love. Matt. xxii. 37.

Tuesday, Dec. 15.—Our songs. Eph. v., 19.

Wednesday, Dec. 16.—Our gratitude. Ps. l., 14.

Thursday, Dec. 17.—Our service. Rom. xii., 1.

Friday, Dec. 18.—For his brethren. Acts xx., 35.

Saturday, Dec. 19.—Our hearts. Psalm xxxiv., 18.

Sunday, Dec. 20.—Topic—What treasures can I bring to Jesus? Matt. ii., 1-11. (Christmas service.)

A Living Christ.

(Rev. W. H. Griffith-Thomas.)

The teacher must make Christ living and real to his scholars, and that, not merely as the Christ of Galilee and Calvary (of course, that), but the Christ of to-day, an ever present Friend. What is needed for children is to show the reality of Christ in our everyday life, his love, grace, power and joy. Here, too, it is the present and the concrete, not the past and the historical. If only Christ is thus made real to them all, questions of conviction of sin and conversion to God will easily and quickly settle themselves.

There was an officer's wife who showed her boy a photograph of the father, who was away in far-off India. This was done day by day for three years. Every morning the photograph was shown; 'That's father!' was the lesson. One day, as the little one was playing, the door of the room was opened, and a fine, manly form filled the doorway, when the child exclaimed, 'Father!' In like manner, if we make Christ real, living, and present to our scholars, we shall go farthest in leading them into living contact with him. If we would win some, we must be winsome with the joy of the Lord as our manifest power and charm.

The twofold secret of this is a life of fellowship with God by the simple but sufficient means of daily prayer and Bible meditation. Christ becomes real in proportion as we 'take time to be holy,' and live in his presence. Prayer keeps the avenues of the soul open to God, and meditation keeps them full of grace and truth for appropriation and expression in the life. 'There they dwelt with the King for his work,' and so must it be always. Abiding in him we bring forth fruit, much fruit, more fruit, fruit that remains, fruit unto holiness, fruit in other lives, fruit that blesses others, and continually glorifies God.

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