

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. The queen of Sheba. Sheba was probably in Arabia, near the mouth of the Red Sea, though tradition also placed it in Abyssinia. According to the Koran, the name of this queen was Balkis. **Heard of the fame of Solomon.** The commercial expeditions of Solomon spread in all lands the knowledge of his wisdom and wealth, and Sheba was a station on the voyage to Ophir, which was a general name for the far East. In all the oriental world the fame of Solomon is still remembered, and numberless legends are related concerning him. **Concerning the name of the Lord.** Probably meaning his fame in the things of God, or his moral and religious wisdom. 1. The most honorable fame is that given by the possession of true religion. **She came.** It was a journey of more than one thousand two hundred miles, undertaken not for pleasure, nor gain, nor health, but to learn the truth concerning God, to satisfy the deepest longings of the heart. 2. Learn to value God's truth as the most precious possession, to be sought with the greatest diligence. **Hard questions.** Not only the riddles and enigmas common in oriental conversation, but more especially the great questions concerning God, the soul, and the future life, which come to all thoughtful minds. The words of the queen in verses 7-9 show that hers was no frivolous curiosity.

2. **She came to Jerusalem.** The journey was taken upon camels, and would require about three months of slow and wearisome travel, in a hot climate and most of the way over a desert. 3. The heart eager to learn of God counts no toil nor sacrifice too great. **A very great train.** A caravan, even greater than those generally seen in the East, where such is the common mode of travel. **Spices.** For these Arabia was famous, and ancient writers say that the whole land was fragrant with them. They were mainly frankincense, myrrh, apobalsam, gum-tragacanth, and ladanum. **Very much gold.** According to verse 10, one hundred and twenty talents, or from two to three million dollars. All ancient writers speak of the gold mines of Arabia, but they were long ago exhausted. **Precious stones.** The onyx and emerald are still found in those lands, which formerly produced many other gems. **She communed with him.** She opened her heart freely, revealing her deepest doubts and questions, holding back nothing. Evidently, this was something more than a trial of wit in enigmas. 4. When thou comest to the King, keep back none of thy innermost thoughts, but cast thy cares at his feet.

3. **Solomon told her.** He showed the greatness of his genius, or the fulness of his inspiration, by the clearness with which he solved her difficulties and answered all her inquiries concerning God. 5. We cannot go to king Solomon, but we can possess the book which contains more than his wisdom!

4. 5. **The house.** This does not refer to the temple, for this, as a Gentile, she was not

permitted to enter, but his own palace, which occupied thirteen years in building, and was at that time the most magnificent royal residence in the East. **The meat of his table.** The profusion of food for the royal banquets, for which a system of purveyorships extended throughout the empire. **The sitting of his servants.** Either the rooms of his attendants or the assemblage of his courtiers when gathered together. **The attendance of his ministers.** "The standing of his servants;" probably the company of attendants immediately around the king. **Their apparel.** The gorgeous robes of an oriental court would make a most impressive picture before the eyes of the queen. **His cup-bearers.** Important officials in ancient kingdoms, having charge of the wine drunk at the royal table, and standing by the king's side at feasts. Nehemiah was cup-bearer to the king of Persia. **His ascent.** The private entrance by which the king went from his palace on the side of Mount Moriah to the temple at its summit. It is noticeable that there is no mention of the temple as visited by the queen of Sheba. **There was no more spirit.** Literally "no more breath;" as one breathless with surprise and amazement.

6. **It was a true report.** The mariners and merchants of King Solomon had told great things about him, but now she found their reports more than verified. 6. **God's servants enjoy more than the world gives them credit for.** Of thy acts. The achievements of his reign, as shown in his outward splendour. **Thy wisdom.** As revealed in his utterances.

7. **The half was not told.** This acknowledgment, by the queen of the richest land in the East, was the highest tribute to Solomon's greatness. **Thy...prosperity.** The Hebrew word here used may be translated either "goodness" or "prosperity;" as if to intimate that true prosperity is always found in goodness.

8. **Happy are thy men.** If she deemed herself fortunate in enjoying a brief visit with one so great and wise, how fortunate are they who could stand ever before him and hear his words. 7. We should seek companionship with the wise and the good. 8. The best society is found among the people of God.

9. **Blessed be the Lord.** She recognized that it was from Solomon's God that his wisdom and his prosperity came. While we are not to infer her conversion to the Israelite faith, (for we read of no gifts or offerings in the temple,) yet we cannot doubt that she went home with new and enlarged views of God. **To do judgment and justice.** One word refers to the practical vindication of wrongs, the other to the principle of justice in governing.

10. **She gave.** Such presents, though not usually of such value, were common between princes when visiting each other. **Talents of gold.** See on verse 2. **No more such...spices.** Southern Arabia was the land of spices. 9. We should give of our best to Israel's king.