

Solomon loved the LORD when he became king and after LORD gave him the knowledge and wisdom that he asked for, he eventually became known around the world for his wisdom and wealth. Sadly, Solomon's love for the LORD waned as his wives turned his heart toward other gods and he began to reap the consequences of disobedience that the LORD had warned him about.

## 1 Kings 10

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.

**“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD”** – It is unclear exactly where the town of Sheba was, but most commentators believe that it was about 1,200 miles southeast of Jerusalem in present day Yemen. This location is consistent with Jesus' referral to this woman as “the queen of the south” (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31). Solomon had become famous for his wisdom and wealth. Since his fame was “concerning [or in association with] the name of the LORD,” the stories of Solomon apparently included the understanding that these things had been given to him by the LORD. In fact, the story may have been circulating of how Solomon had asked for wisdom and knowledge when the LORD offered to give him whatever he wanted (1 Kings 3:5-14).

**“She came to prove [test] him with hard questions [riddles; perplexing questions]”** – Having heard of Solomon's wisdom, the queen wanted to see for herself if his wisdom was as great as she had heard. Often such stories became exaggerated each time it was told and she expected that to be the case here (vs. 6-7). She had prepared a list of riddles and questions that she believed would certainly stump Solomon in order to test his intelligence and wisdom. Her list of questions could be considered an ancient IQ test.

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 *any* thing hid from the king, which he told her not.

**“And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train [company]”** – The queen of Sheba did not come alone, for she had a large company of people accompanying her to Jerusalem, most likely servants responsible for such things as navigation, managing the camels that carried the gifts she was bringing, the queen's security, etc.

**“with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones”** – It was a common practice in that day to bring gifts when you visited a dignitary such as a king, so the queen of Sheba brought spices, gold and precious stones, three valuable commodities from her country.

**“and when she was come to Solomon, she communed [spoke] with him of all that was in her heart”** – The queen was able to ask all of the “hard questions” she had prepared for Solomon. He allowed her to ask him anything she wanted until she had no more questions.

**“And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not *any* thing hid from the king, which he told her not”** – Solomon was able to thoroughly and correctly answer all of the queen's questions. None of her questions were beyond his ability to explain to her satisfaction.

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.

The queen of Sheba saw the immensity of Solomon's wisdom as she exhausted her list of questions. Solomon must have taken her on a tour of his palace (“the house that he had built”) and she was able to see its grandeur. As a queen, she was no stranger to seeing wealth and prosperity displayed, but what she saw in Solomon's palace was unlike anything she had seen before. She saw the fine foods that he ate, the conduct and apparel of his servants and the beautiful exit in the palace that had been built to give Solomon easy access to ascend to the temple mount. The word for “spirit” means “breath,” indicating that all that the queen of Sheba had seen literally took her breathe away. She had never seen anything to compare to Solomon and his kingdom.

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.

**“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”** – The queen of Sheba admits that everything she had heard about Solomon's wisdom and his accomplishments were true.

**“Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*”** – Knowing that rumors and stories have a tendency to be exaggerated, the queen was skeptical that Solomon's wisdom and wealth could possibly be as extensive as she had heard. She now realized that these stories were true because she had witnessed them for herself.

**“and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard”** – Instead of being exaggerated, the stories that she had heard of Solomon's wisdom and prosperity actually did not do him justice. Everything she saw pertaining to Solomon far exceeded her expectations and even the most amazing stories she had heard about him. In vs. 8-10, the queen continues to compliment Solomon and she presents the gifts that she had brought (v. 2).

24 And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. 25 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

People from other nations came to benefit from hearing Solomon's wisdom. It was common to bring gifts when visiting dignitaries such as a king, but the phrase “a rate year by year” implies that these gifts were not from random visits. It seems that these people visited and brought their gifts on a consistent basis in exchange for the honor of hearing Solomon's wisdom and taking it back to use at home. These visits were apparently not treating Solomon like a tourist attraction; these foreign visitors may have regularly consulted with Solomon to help solve problems in their own nations.

26 And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem.

**“And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen”** – Chariots and horsemen were desirable as military assets since they were more effective in battle than standard infantry. Solomon never had to fight any wars during his lifetime, but he prepared his military for it. His powerful military likely also served to discourage other nations from challenging Israel.

**“and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen”** – Solomon’s wealth allowed him to acquire 1,400 chariots, along with horses to pull them and for 12,000 horsemen to ride. The LORD had forbidden the accumulation of horses by the kings of Israel, presumably so that they would depend on Him for their victory (**Deut. 17:16** “*But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way*”). Solomon’s father, David, had won his military victories without the accumulation of horses and chariots because he depended on the LORD and not on military might.

**“whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem”** – Solomon distributed the chariots and horsemen among the cities of Israel and Jerusalem to guard them from enemy incursions.

27 And the king made silver *to be* in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he *to be* as the sycamore trees that *are* in the vale, for abundance.

Solomon was so wealthy that silver had become as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones. Cedars, a tree valued for its wood, had been planted and become as common as the sycamore trees found in the local forests. This verse states the magnitude of Solomon’s wealth by illustrating the idea that valuable commodities, which were usually rare elsewhere in the world, had become commonplace around Jerusalem.

### 1 Kings 11

4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father.

**“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods”** – It was common in Solomon’s day for kings to give their daughters to the kings of other nations for the purpose of maintaining good relations or establishing treaties, and Solomon had accumulated many such women as wives and concubines. Verses 1-3 tell us that Solomon had acquired these women from the nations surrounding Israel and that this was something that God had forbidden, warning of the dangers of the influence of these women (v. 2). These dangers were real because these foreign wives eventually turned Solomon’s heart toward serving their gods in his later years.

**“and his heart was not perfect [complete; whole] with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father”** – Even at his worst, such as when he sinned with Bathsheba and killed her husband Uriah, David never considered serving other gods. However, Solomon did not remain as faithful as his father. He apparently did not abandon the worship of the LORD altogether, but he also served the gods of his wives in addition to the LORD.

5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as *did* David his father.

Ashtoreth was the Canaanite goddess of love and fertility that was worshiped at Tyre and Sidon (“Zidonians”), while Milcom (also known as Molech) was the national god of the Ammonites. The fact that child sacrifice was often used in the worship of Milcom likely contributed to its description as being an abomination. We are not told that Solomon allowed child sacrifice to be performed in Israel, but simply worshiping Milcom and Ashtoreth was considered to be evil in the sight of the LORD. The phrase saying that Solomon “went not fully after the LORD” implies that Solomon did not stop worshiping the LORD but also worshiped these other gods as well.

7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

Not only did Solomon allow his wives to worship their own gods, he went so far as to build special places where they could do so.

9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, 10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.

The LORD had appeared to Solomon twice (1 Kings 3:5, 9:2), a privilege most people will never have. The LORD also had specifically warned him of the consequences of going after other gods (1 Kings 9:4-7). In spite of these, Solomon disobeyed, which angered the LORD.

11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

The LORD confronted Solomon and declared the consequences of his disobedience: the kingdom will be taken away from Solomon.

12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: *but* I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. 13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; *but* will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

Solomon’s sin would have consequences but in order to keep the promises made to David concerning the Messiah, there would be limits to the punishment. The LORD would wait until Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, assumed the throne before taking the kingdom away. Also, the tribe of Judah would remain under the rule of David’s descendants while the rest of Israel would become a separate nation. In this way the LORD could execute the punishment for disobedience while remaining faithful to His promises concerning our Savior, Jesus Christ.