A Greater Than Solomon Is Here

David Wilkerson
July 12, 2004

According to Jesus, a certain witness will appear on Judgment Day offering a damning testimony against this present generation. The Queen of Sheba is going to take the witness stand, and her words will be condemning: “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with 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” (Matthew 12:42).

This queen will address our generation, we who live in the very last of the last days. And her condemnation will be this: she’ll describe every effort, agony and hardship she endured to obtain wisdom from Solomon. You see, in her lifetime, this woman was desperate for truth that would set her free. And at the Judgment she’s going to testify, “I traveled from the uttermost parts of the earth to lay hold of Solomon’s wisdom. You, on the other hand, are satiated with gospel truth. You have One much greater than Solomon living in your midst. Yet you’ve shut your eyes and ears to him.”

Who exactly was this Queen of Sheba? And why was she so important that she’ll make an appearance at the Judgment? Scholars say she was an Arabian ruler, reigning over the region known today as Yemen. It was a culture that over the centuries indulged in riddles. The Arab mindset constantly posed questions without giving answers.

This prominent woman could have been troubled in soul that all the big questions of life — about God, the future, death — had no answers. She wanted wisdom to help her know how to live, govern and help others. Yet no amount of wealth, fame or counsel could answer her soul’s cries. Her soul’s deepest longings had gone unmet.

Then she heard about King Solomon. He had a reputation throughout the known world as having incredible wisdom. Scripture says the queen “heard of (his) fame” (1 Kings 10:1), perhaps through merchants or sailors who had traveled to Jerusalem. According to their reports, Israel’s king understood human nature like no one else. He was able to answer every question and solve any problem, no matter how complex.

The queen must have wondered, “Who is this man who speaks such wisdom and answers the hard questions of life?” Her own gods didn’t speak, hear or converse. So she determined, “I must get to Solomon at any cost. I have to settle these burning questions. If he can solve the riddles of life, then he’s the one to answer my yearnings.”

She called for a caravan to carry her to Jerusalem, a distance of some 1,500 miles. The journey would take about 75 days — 150 days round-trip — almost half a year. And it would lead them through a hot, broiling desert. They would face marauding thieves and a barren terrain with no creature comforts. They would endure bitterly cold nights. Yet nothing could stop the queen from gaining an audience with Solomon.

She had to be accompanied by soldiers, government officials, servants, cooks and interpreters. Camels had to be laden down with food, water, and gifts of jewels and spices. Altogether, the caravan comprised “a very great train” (1 Kings 10:2). Imagine the sight of this great entourage arriving in Jerusalem, after months of dusty whirlwinds, withering heat, incredible hardships. Now, as they approached the capital, Solomon’s attendants rushed to meet the queen, saying, “What a journey you’ve had. Please, refresh yourself. Our king has made his great baths
Later, the queen was ushered into Solomon’s court. And she wasted no time in asking him every question that had ever confounded her. “She came to prove him with hard questions…and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart” (1 Kings 10:1-2). The queen laid everything out to him.

And she was not disappointed. Scripture says, “Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not” (10:3). Solomon generously answered her with awesome, illuminating truths. He didn’t leave a single topic unanswered. I picture the queen’s face lighting up at each answer, realizing, “So that’s how it is.” Imagine the peace that flooded her soul as her lifelong questions were put to rest, one by one.

Afterward, she was given a tour of Solomon’s kingdom. She saw firsthand the order, beauty and prosperity that Solomon’s wisdom had brought to the nation. She beheld “the house that he had built, 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” (10:4-5). It was so overwhelming, “There was no more spirit in her” (10:5). Simply put, she was left breathless.

When she’d soaked it all in, she told Solomon, “It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes have seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God…to set thee on the throne of Israel…to do judgment and justice” (10:6-9).

After her tour, the queen offered Solomon all the gifts she’d brought in the caravan. In return, he opened his entire storehouse to her, and she marveled at his vast riches. “Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty” (10:13).

When Jesus referred to this queen, he was addressing scribes and Pharisees. The religious leaders of Christ’s day were familiar with the queen’s story. They had taught it in their synagogues, and they knew all about her desperation to meet Solomon. Now Christ used her story to warn them, “This same queen of the south is going to condemn you before the Father. She came from the farthest parts of the world to hear Solomon’s wisdom. And behold, One greater than Solomon stands before you now.”

Indeed, that queen is going to ask the Pharisees, “How could you have been so blind? You brought all your hard questions to the King, even trick questions to try to trip him up. Yet he is the all-knowing God in flesh, the very One who gave Solomon his wisdom. He stood in your midst and invited your questions, urging you to open your hearts to him. He even died for you. But you closed your eyes to him and turned a deaf ear to his truth. You preferred living in darkness, because your deeds were evil.”

I wonder: will this queen accuse our generation of the same sin? Will she say, “I saw and heard the wisdom of a man who lived in my time, and his words changed my life. I had but one session with him, and he answered everything in my heart. He knew all the issues and concerns in my life, and his truth relieved me of all my confusion.

“But the time came when I had to leave that man’s presence. Not so for you. You had One who lived in your midst, and you had access to his wisdom at all times. Moreover, King Jesus is infinitely greater than Solomon. And he has a Word to speak to you about everything in your life. He wants that Word to bring you relief, to supply you with peace and joy.

“So he continually invites you to his banquet table. You don’t have to travel 1,500 miles to get there. He came to you, and he doesn’t ask you for gifts or jewels. All he wants is for you to bring to him your burdens. He wants to hear your concerns, to take on your cares, to answer your worries. The only incense he desires from you is prayer and praise.

“When I was in Solomon’s palace, I saw how happy his servants were. They came to the king’s table daily and gladly soaked up his wisdom. They listened intently to his every word, with great respect. And when they went to the temple to worship, they had a holy fear. It was such a glorious sight, it took my breath away. I had heard great things about Solomon, but nothing prepared me for what I experienced in his presence.
“With your generation, it’s a different story. You’re so flippant about your King. You have access to all his marvelous wisdom, all his righteousness and holiness, but you ignore him day after day. How can you be satisfied to lead such downcast, fearful lives? You have in your midst the Source of your answers. He is far greater than Solomon!”

Let me ask you: when was the last time you had an awe-inspiring experience with Jesus? When were you so enthralled by his peace-giving wisdom that it took your breath away? When did you last say, “Nothing I’ve been taught about Christ prepared me for this experience with him. He has solved my doubts and brought me utter joy”? Jesus is telling us in this passage, “If you profess to be a follower of mine, you have to ask yourself a certain question.”

We all have to answer one crucial question today: “If One greater than Solomon is in my midst, would he possibly leave me in confusion? If his wisdom is always available, do I seek for it as passionately as the queen sought Solomon’s wisdom?”

I believe the queen is asking us, “If Solomon was willing to listen to all my questions, would your King be any less willing to hear yours? If Solomon was so patient to answer my concerns, wouldn’t your omniscient Lord all the more take on your burdens? How could Jesus be any less willing to speak to you, to give you his wisdom and guidance?”

The truth is, God still speaks to his people today. And he speaks as clearly as he did in the Old Testament, or to the apostles, or to the early church. Yet we must realize one thing: God chooses to speak only to those who have ears to hear. Let me illustrate.

Mark 4 tells us Christ “taught (the crowds) many things by parables” (4:2). In this passage, Jesus tells the parable of the sower, about a man who sows seed in a field. Yet when he finished the story, the crowds were baffled. They wondered, “Who is this sower he’s describing? And what does the seed represent? All this talk about birds, devils, thorny ground, good soil — what’s it about?”

Jesus didn’t explain it to them. Instead, Scripture says, “He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (4:9). Only the disciples and a remnant few others wanted answers. So they came to Jesus afterward, asking the meaning of the parable: “When he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable” (4:10). Then Christ took time to answer all their concerns (see 4:14-20).

Do you see what’s happening in this scene? Jesus had given the crowd revelation truth, a word spoken directly from God’s mouth, yet it puzzled them. You may wonder, “Why didn’t Jesus explain the parable more clearly?” We find a clue later in the same chapter: “Without a parable spake he not unto them” (4:34). I believe Jesus was saying, “If you want to understand my Word, you’re going to have to pursue me for the answer. And you must come as the Queen of Sheba did: with a hunger for truth that will set you free. I’ll give you all the revelation you need. But you have to come to me with a pursuing, attentive ear.”

Imagine what happened with the majority of that crowd after they went home. Neighbors crowded around them, anxious to know what Jesus had said: “What message did he bring? Tell us all you learned.” Those who’d heard him might have been able to repeat his parables. But their words would have been dead, lifeless, with no impact or life-changing power.

I believe the same thing happens in Christ’s church today. The word that goes forth from many pulpits is dead-letter, with no Holy Spirit revelation or power to deliver from sin. Then, when the people go home, many of them merely repeat the word they’ve heard without the life of the Spirit. What a contrast to the hungry disciples and the others who remained followers of Christ in this scene. These people represent everyone who hunger for God’s Word, and who’ll pursue Jesus at any cost to get it. They comprise a “Queen of Sheba Company,” servants who want Christ’s life-changing revelation.

How does Jesus respond to their pursuit? He says, “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables” (Mark 4:11). The Greek word for mystery here means secrets. In short, Christ reveals his secrets only to those who hunger for life-changing truth. He’s saying, “If you want answers to your hard questions, pursue me. Spend time with me. I’ll reveal my Word to you, and show you truth that others don’t see.”
So, who are those “that are without” (4:11)? Jesus is referring to the multitudes who aren’t willing to wait on him. They won’t give up their comforts to do what’s necessary to train their ear to his voice. They may come to church regularly and seek the Lord to meet all their human needs. But they’re not interested in knowing his voice beyond his ability to provide for them. His freeing truth remains a bafflement to them, a series of unopened riddles.

Satan’s present warfare against God’s people takes aim at our faith.

In recent months, I’ve heard confessions from godly saints who speak of awful attacks on their minds. They’re plagued by arrows of doubt and nagging questions about God’s faithfulness. They wonder if He’s concerned about their stagnant ministries, their troubled marriages, their children going astray. Many are just staggering onward, wavering in their faith, thinking, “I don’t know if I can keep going.”

Then I read the letter of a dear 81-year-old woman who wrote to our ministry. She said, “My husband is being eaten up with bone cancer. Meanwhile, my son is dying of AIDS. And I’m slowly wasting away with diabetes.” As I read everything this family is enduring, I shook my head, wondering, “How could she possibly maintain her joy? This is too much for anyone to bear. Surely God will cut her some slack about her faith.”

Then I read the final paragraph of her letter: “In spite of it all, God is faithful. He has never once failed in any word He has promised us. We have given our son over into Jesus’ hands. And now we’re waiting for the day we see our blessed Lord face to face.”

Yes, the battle is all about faith. We see this illustrated in Mark 8, when Jesus had just fed 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread and a few fish. Afterward, he got in a boat with his disciples and sailed for the other side: “Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

“And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not? And do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?” (Mark 8:14-21).

Jesus was reminding them, “Don’t you remember who I am? You just saw me multiply a few loaves and fish to feed multitudes. How could you forget such a miracle? I told you One greater than Solomon was in your midst. When will it dawn on you that God is present with you at all times, in every crisis? You have eyes, but you don’t see.”

How it must grieve our Lord when we forget his past victories in our lives, all his miracles of deliverance. He has called us his friends (see John 15:15), yet in our crises we often forget all about his faithful friendship. This is why Jesus warned the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees. He told them, in essence, “If you come to me with hard questions, don’t expect me to answer if you have a heart of unbelief. You’re to come to me with trust and faith, believing I am One greater than Solomon.”

In another scene in Mark 4, the disciples were again crossing a lake. This time, “There arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full” (Mark 4:37). A torrent of waves flooded the boat, and the frantic disciples rushed to bail out the rising water. These were experienced fishermen, and they soon saw that their lives were in danger. So they quickly woke Jesus, who’d been asleep at the back of the boat, and cried, “Master, we’re going down!”

As I see Jesus being roused, my flesh wants him to encourage the disciples: “I’m so glad you woke me. This is serious. You poor brothers, I’m sorry I let you endure this storm for so long. Forgive me for not acting sooner. Hopefully, you didn’t think I was uninterested about your crisis.”

No, Jesus’ reaction was just the opposite. He rebuked the disciples! “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have
no faith?” (4:40). Imagine what those men thought in that moment: “Did Jesus really expect us to stand in water up
to our waists, and have no fear? This is the worst storm we’ve ever faced. Waves are pouring in, the ship’s about
to sink. Were we supposed to practice faith in a seemingly hopeless situation?”

The answer is: yes, absolutely! Jesus was testing their faith. He wanted to know, “Will these followers trust me in
the face of death? Will they cling to their belief in me?” In the flesh, Christ may have been asleep. But he was also
God, and the Lord never sleeps: “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psalm 121:4).

Right now, your boat may be flooding, your situation beyond all hope. The storm swirling around you may be as
frightening as any you’ve faced. But he is still God, and you have One greater than Solomon present with you. He
is Master over every storm, and he’ll use that storm to test you. He’s allowing your crisis to see what’s in your
heart.

You may think, “But what if my ship actually sinks? What then?” Consider Paul’s example in Acts. His ship sank,
and he didn’t lose his life. In fact, he clung to God’s Word to him in the midst of that storm: “The ship will go down,
but I will give you the lives of everyone on board.” When the storm ended, God was glorified for his faithfulness.
And great miracles followed, accompanied by an awesome revival (see Acts 28:1-10).

Yes, the Lord may allow you to endure something that looks absolutely disastrous. But you will survive — and so will
your faith — if you trust him. Your ship may go down, but God will give you the strength to swim ashore, as he did
for Paul. All you can lose is that which is material, and God can easily replace that. He owns bigger, better boats,
and he’s able to bless you with more than anything you may have lost.

I have to admit, as I read Jesus’ rebuke to the disciples, I think, “Lord, that’s not fair. I receive letters from people
today who are facing their own terrible disasters. They’re losing their homes, their jobs, loved ones. Surely you
don’t expect them to remain full of faith.”

Then the Holy Spirit reminds me of some of the poverty-stricken areas I’ve visited. I’ve seen people who live in
shacks and sleep on dirt floors, yet who have a joy I’ve never witnessed anywhere else. They rejoice in God’s
daily faithfulness to them, and he causes their faith to abound, despite all their trials.

There is a great falling away today from faith and trust in the One who’s greater than Solomon.

This great apostasy is prophesied in Scripture. Paul warns, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day
[Christ’s return] shall not come, except there come a falling away first” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

In the Old Testament, the Lord gives us an example of what happens to those who fall away from faith in God’s
power on their behalf. In 2 Chronicles 14, King Asa faced a million-man army of Ethiopians. But the king had great
faith: “Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with
them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this
multitude. O Lord, thou art our God” (2 Chronicles 14:11).

What happened then? “The Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa” (14:12). What great faith Asa had! For years
afterward, “There was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa” (15:19). For years, Asa
walked in faith before the Lord, and that brought God’s favor to Judah. A great peace fell over the land, and that
peace became a witness to the world. Soon hungry people from surrounding nations flooded Judah, because they
knew Asa walked with God.

Then, in the thirty-sixth year of his reign, Asa faced another crisis. Israel’s king rose up against Judah, capturing
Ramah in an effort to cut off all trade to and from Jerusalem. The plan was to starve Judah into submission. Asa
was left completely vulnerable, but this time he didn’t rely on the Lord in his crisis. Instead of praying for God’s
direction and counsel, he turned to the king of Syria. In exchange for Syria’s help, Asa opened up Israel’s
treasury, emptying it of all the nation’s gold and silver.

And so Judah was delivered from their enemy, but not by the Lord. That glory went to an alien army from Syria.
And now Judah’s witness to the world of God’s power was gone. A righteous prophet in the land came to Asa with
this scathing word: “Thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God... For the eyes of the
Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect
toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars” (16:7, 9).
I’m convinced many Christians today are troubled for the same reason Asa was. They have war in their souls, because they’ve traded faith for self-reliance. But the fact is, there’s no way a follower of Jesus can have faith in any other source and not be troubled.

Christ’s warning is simple and clear: One greater than Solomon is among us. And we are to believe him, to trust wholly in him, and give ourselves utterly to his care. He will fight our battles and deal with our enemies. Then there will be no more wars, because he will settle them all for us: “He maketh wars to cease” (Psalm 46:9).

One greater than Solomon will show himself strong on your behalf, if you will trust him.

Links