

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 KINGS 8-10

Next August, Beijing, China will host the summer Olympics – and if the Beijing Games are like past Olympics - the most popular ticket will be for the Opening Ceremonies. There's always a buzz around the opening of the games.

It's a new stadium. It's the pageantry. It's the dignitaries. It's the Olympic oath. It's the high hopes of the athletes. And of course, it's the lighting of the flame.

Yet the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games pale in comparison to the opening ceremonies for Solomon's Temple. Solomon also had a new stadium. He had just finished the final walk through of the new building. There's the pageantry of a dedication. The dignitary of all dignitaries shows up - God comes to the open house. Solomon prays and offers sacrifices. There's also a lighting of the flame.

For the next 370 years the Temple of Solomon will serve as the centerpiece of the Hebrew's national life. The Temple will be the holiest spot on earth.

This was probably the most glorious day in Solomon's reign. It may've been the most glorious day in the history of Israel.

Chapter 8 begins when Solomon brings the most important treasure into the Temple – the throne of God - the Ark of the Covenant. **“Now Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the City of David,**

which is Zion.

Therefore all the men of Israel assembled with King Solomon at the feast in the month of Ethanim, which is the seventh month.” “Ethanim” is also called “Tishri”. It’s our September / October - and the holiest month of the year for the Jews.

This one month holds three feasts – Rosh Hashanah or Trumpets – Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement – and Sukkoth or the Feast of Tabernacles.

According to 6:38 the Temple wasn’t finished until in the 8th month - Solomon waited eleven months to hold the dedication. One commentator, Bishop Usher, suggests Solomon waited until the next year because it was a Year of Jubilee.

“So all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.

Then they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that were in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up.” The Law had specific instructions for transporting the holy furnishings... not the least of which, were the movers had to be Levites.

It’s obvious here, that Solomon is moving the treasures by the book.

“Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude.” It was a giant barbeque – beef abounded.

Solomon went out of his way to show God how much he loved Him.

“Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. The poles extended so that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day.”

Notice verse 9, “Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.” Hebrews 9:4 tells us that at one time the Ark held “the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant...” When and how the manna and rod were removed we don't know, but in Solomon's day they were missing...

But look what appears in their place? Who needs a *rod*, when you get *God*?

Verse 10, “And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.” This cloud was God's glory – or what the Hebrews called “*the Shekinah*”. It was the radiant shining – the manifested fall-out of the presence of God.

This is the cloud that led Israel through the wilderness – from which God spoke to Moses – that caused Mt. Sinai to shake – that filled the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle – that Ezekiel

saw departing from the Temple – that overshadowed a virgin named Mary – that encompassed Jesus at His transfiguration.

This is the cloud that received Jesus into heaven, and when Jesus returns to earth He'll come in the clouds... The Shekinah glory is integral to God's story.

And the glory was so intense the priests couldn't continue. *The brilliance - the heaviness – the enormity of God's presence* forced all human activity to cease.

David Guzik makes this comment, "The intense sense of the presence of our holy God is not a "warm and fuzzy" feeling. Men like Peter, Isaiah, and John felt stricken in the presence of God... they sensed the difference between their sinfulness and His holiness." God's glory certainly drives out all human ego.

"Then Solomon spoke: "The LORD said He would dwell in the dark cloud. I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to dwell in forever."

Verse 14 records Solomon's dedication speech. "Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing. And he said: "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David, and with His hand has fulfilled it, saying,

'Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that My name might be there; but I chose David to be over My people Israel.' "Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple for the name of the LORD God of Is-

rael.

But the LORD said to my father David, 'Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless you shall not build the temple, but your son who will come from your body, he shall build the temple for My name.' "So the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke; and I have filled the position of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised; and I have built a temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

There I have made a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt."

In verse 22 Solomon prays, and notice his prayer is four times longer than his speech. *God didn't come to hear him speak.* He humbles himself and prays...

And what a prayer it is... Solomon praises God for His faithfulness.

"Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven..." You see this over and over in the Old Testament. Today we bow our heads and close our eyes to pray, but the Hebrews stretched out their hands toward heaven and prayed.

But there's a reason for each posture. In the Old Testament God was outside a believer – up there, in the heavens. Whereas under the New Covenant God dwells inside – down here, in our hearts. It's natural we close our eyes and look inward.

Solomon lifts his hands “and he said: "LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts.

You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day.

Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.' "And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!

I love verse 27 – it proves Solomon has not lost perspective.

The king has just spent \$30 billion and 7½ years building a Temple, but he’s known all along that God will never fit in a house made with human hands. He says, “Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!”

From the earth to the sun is 93 million miles. Imagine that distance as the thickness of a piece of paper. The nearest star is 4.5 light years away. Keeping with our analogy, that’s a

stack of paper 71' high. The diameter of our galaxy is 100,000 light years - or a stack of paper 310 miles high. And to the edge of the known universe is 10 billion light years, or a stack 31 million miles high.

Now read Isaiah 40:12, “Who has measured... heaven with a span?” A span is the distance between God’s thumb and forefinger, yet with a span he’s measured the heavens. That means there’s at least 31 million miles between God’s thumb and forefinger. Solomon knows God ain’t going to fit in a 90’ by 30’ building.

Guys, when are we going to learn... *you can’t put God in a box?*

God is boundless. He doesn’t fit into Temples made by men – nor does He confine Himself to man-made systems, or formulas, or traditions. Just about the time you think you’ve figured out how God has to work – bang, God blows out a side of your box. God is beyond our ability to hem in, or figure out, or tuck away.

You gotta let God be God! Trust God - don’t try to fit Him in a straightjacket.

Solomon didn’t try to put God in a box, but he asks God to make the Temple a point of contact – a meeting place between His mercy, and repentant sinners.

Verse 28, “Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there,'

that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive.”

Let me summarize the next few verses... Solomon proposes all kinds of scenarios Israel will face... when the people sin... when they're defeated by an enemy... when there's a drought, or famine, or pestilence, or locust, or plague...

Solomon says in verse 38, “whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this temple: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men), that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.” In essence, be a merciful God who answers prayer!

Verse 41 "Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name's sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name.”

Solomon sees the Temple as part of Old Testament evangelism. Gentiles will see the Temple - hear of God's glory - and

come to the Temple to seek His face.

Verse 44 "When Your people go out to battle against their enemy, wherever You send them, and when they pray to the LORD toward the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name, then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

"When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to the land of the enemy, far or near; yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive..."

Years later Daniel is living in exile in far-away Babylon. The Temple is in ruins. It's been razed by invaders.

Yet three times each day Daniel opens his window and prays toward the Temple and Jerusalem. Apparently, Daniel had read Solomon's prayer...

When you're in a foreign land pray, "saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness'; and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause, and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and grant them compassion before those who took them captive,

that they may have compassion on them (for they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out of Egypt, out of the iron furnace), that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant and the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them whenever they call to You.

For You separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be Your inheritance, as You spoke by Your servant Moses, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD." God chose Israel to be His special people, and He will never, ever abandon them. God's plans and purposes for Israel are eternal.

Verse 54, "And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven."

Remember in verse 22 Solomon began his prayer standing before the Lord, but in here he ends it on his knees. The more time you spend with the Almighty God the more humble you become. Verse 54 paints a beautiful picture – the world's mightiest and wisest man on his knees before the All-wise and Almighty God.

"Then he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying: "Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses." God's promises are sure. They can be trusted. We need to take His promises to heart, and build our lives on them.

I like what CH Spurgeon said... "God sent the promise on purpose to be used. If I see a Bank of England note, it is a promise for a certain amount of money, and I take it and use it. But oh I my friend, do try and use God's promises; nothing pleases God better than to see his promises put in circulation; he loves to see his children bring them up to him, and say, 'LORD, do as You have said.' And let me tell you that it glorifies God to use his promises." Are you using His promises?

Verse 57 "May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers.

And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near the LORD our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day may require, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other.

Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day."

After Solomon's prayer something happens. The flame is lighted.

2 Chronicles 7 tells us, "When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house.

When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever." God personally lights the fire on the sacrificial altar!

Verse 62 "Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, 22,000 bulls and 120,000 thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD." It was the largest single day slaughter of blood in the history of the Temple – 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep.

That's more barbeque than CCSM serves at the annual pastors' conference!

"On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings." The altar's first day in operation and it was too small.

At that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, 7 days and 7 more days - 14 days. On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they

blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people.”

When Moses dedicated the Tabernacle, God sent fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. When Solomon dedicates the Temple, God sends fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices. Apparently, God’s grand openings include fireworks...

But as I mentioned last week, God is at work in the world today building a Temple – a spiritual house – His Church. He’s fitting us together as a Temple.

And on the day the Church opened – in Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost – God again sent fire from heaven – flickers of fire settled over the heads of the disciples.

Again, God sends fire on the sacrifices. Yet this time not dead sacrifices, but living sacrifices. He sets on fire witnesses not carcasses. You and I need to offer our bodies to God as a living sacrifice - be filled with the Spirit - on fire for Jesus.

In 1 Kings 2 God paid a special visit to Solomon, in a dream – and granted him wisdom. Now in chapter 9 God comes to him again, and encourages him to use his wisdom. This visitation occurs after Solomon has been king over 2 decades.

God comes to him at mid-term and provides a warning...

“And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he wanted to do, that the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon.

And the LORD said to him: "I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually."

Notice here the cooperation between man and God. Man does His part and God does His part. "God won't do man's part, and man can't do God's part."

Here Solomon builds a building, a Temple – but it's up to God to make it holy.

FB Meyer writes this, "Man builds; God hallows. This co-operation between man and God pervades all life. Man performs the outward and mechanical; God the inward and spiritual . . . We must be careful to do our part with reverence and godly fear, remembering that God must work in realms we cannot touch, and to issues we cannot reach, before our poor exertions can avail."

Verse 4 "Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.' The length of his dynasty is up to him.

"But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword

among all peoples. And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' "Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the LORD has brought all this calamity on them.'"

Hey, the Temple will honor God one way or the other – either people will see it standing and praise God’s glory - or see it in ruins and marvel at His judgment.

Verse 10 “Now it happened at the end of 20 years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king's house (Hiram the king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress and gold, as much as he desired), that King Solomon then gave Hiram 20 cities in the land of Galilee.

Then Hiram went from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, but they did not please him. So he said, "What kind of cities are these which you have given me, my brother?" And he called them the land of Cabul, as they are to this day." The Hebrew word “Cabul” means “*worthless, good-for-nothing*”.

“Then Hiram sent the king 120 talents of gold.” Obviously, Hiram was disappointed with the cities, but he paid for them anyway...

Verse 15 “And this is the reason for the labor force which King Solomon raised: to build the house of the LORD, his own

house, the Millo (or fortress), the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.” These were the three major cities that controlled the trade routes throughout the region. Hazor was 3 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It controlled the Via Maris – or the road running to Damascus.

Megiddo controlled the pass that linked the coastal plain to the Galilee.

Gezer sat on the road that ran from Philistine country to Jerusalem.

(Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer and burned it with fire, had killed the Canaanites who dwelt in the city, and had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife.) Apparently, it was given to Solomon as a wedding gift.

And Solomon built Gezer, Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land of Judah, all the storage cities that Solomon had, cities for his chariots and cities for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

All the people who were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who were not of the children of Israel - that is, their descendants who were left in the land after them, whom the children of Israel had not been able to destroy completely - from these Solomon raised forced labor, as it is to this day.”

The leftover Canaanites were used as slave labor to build Solomon's projects.

“But of the children of Israel Solomon made no forced laborers, because they were men of war and his servants: his offi-

cers, his captains, commanders of his chariots, and his cavalry. Others were chiefs of the officials who were over Solomon's work: 550, who ruled over the people who did the work.

But Pharaoh's daughter came up from the City of David to her house which Solomon had built for her. Then he built the Millo. Now 3 times a year Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he had built for the LORD, and he burned incense with them on the altar that was before the LORD.

So he finished the temple.

King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Ezion Geber, which is near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.” Solomon built an Israeli navy.

And they were docked in Elath – the modern day Israeli resort of Elat.

“Then Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, seamen who knew the sea, to work with the servants of Solomon.” The Phoenicians were the most famous sailors of antiquity. Hiram sent his naval experts to launch Solomon’s navy.

“And they went to Ophir, and acquired 420 talents of gold from there, and brought it to King Solomon.” A talent weighed between 70-100 pounds. On the low-side 420 talents would’ve been 29,000 pounds of gold... at \$400 an ounce.

We’re not sure of the location of Ophir – perhaps Arabia, or the east coast of Africa, or maybe India. But the fact Solomon was willing to build bridges of trade with such far-away ports

shows his industriousness and his pioneering spirit.

Chapter 10, “Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions.”

“She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels that bore spices, very much gold, and precious stones...” Sheba is today the country of Yemen - on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. I’m sure it created quite a stir – a buzz - in Jerusalem when her large and exotic caravan pulled into town.

Verse 2 “when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart.” Remember also verse 1, “she came to test him with hard questions.”

“So Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain it to her.” Wisdom wars were common in oriental times – *cerebral showdowns*. One wise man tried to trick another wise man.

The Queen of Sheba had heard of Solomon’s wisdom. He was a challenge. She came a long way – 1500 miles - to match wits with the King.

According to verse 3 he got the best of her every time.

“And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.” It took her breath away. This was a Queen – a woman familiar

with treasures and luxuries. Sheba was a wealthy land. But her finest possessions paled compared to Solomon.

She marvels in verse 6, “Then she said to the king: “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom.

However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard. Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom!” *“the half was not told her.”*

And notice verse 9, here’s a vitally important point... the Queen of Sheba credits Solomon’s greatness to his God... “Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness.”

Here is Old Testament evangelism at work... God so blesses Israel the world can come to only one conclusion – Israel’s God is the one, true God.

Verse 10 “Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, spices in great quantity, and precious stones. There never again came such abundance of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.” Arabia was known for its spices.

“Also, the ships of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought great quantities of almug wood and precious stones

from Ophir. And the king made steps of the almug wood for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, also harps and stringed instruments for singers.” Almug was probably a sandal-wood.

It's a red wood – hard and heavy – perfect for musical instruments.

“There never again came such almug wood, nor has the like been seen to this day. And King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked, besides what Solomon had given her according to the royal generosity.

So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.”

It's interesting we're told, “Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired...” Legend has it that she asked Solomon for a son. He obliged. The queen named her son, “Menelik” – and he became the ancestor of all future Ethiopian kings.

In fact, Menelik's dynasty lasted nearly 3000 years - until 1974 when Haile Selassie, who claimed to be a direct descendent of King Solomon, was deposed by a communist coup. Selassie used to call himself “*the Lion of Judah.*”

To this day Ethiopian Jews – who are black skinned – are “Falasha Jews”.

There is an Ethiopian book called the *Kebrä Nagast* – the Glory of the Kings.

One excerpt quotes the conversion of the Queen of Sheba, or Queen Makeda. When she beholds Solomon's wisdom she concludes, “From this moment I will not worship the sun, but will worship the Creator of the sun, the God of Israel.”

The Kebra Nagast also tells the story of Menelik. He was raised in Jerusalem, in Solomon's court, until the age of 25, when his mother died. He had to return to rule in her place. His father knew that he would live so far from the Temple in Jerusalem he might never be able to return and worship before Jehovah. So Solomon fashioned for Menelik a replica of the Ark that he could take home.

Menelik though, noticed his father's apostasy. He was beginning to turn to the idols of his pagan wives. Menelik worried about the safety of the Ark, so with the help of a few priests he took the real Ark to Ethiopia, and left the replica in the Temple. This has led some folks to believe the Ark resides today in Ethiopia.

There's only one problem with this theory – 2 Chronicles 35:3 tells us King Josiah returned the Ark to the Temple. *Was it the real Ark or the replica?*

Well, that's probably more conjecture than you wanted to know...

Back to what we know for sure... Jesus did mention the Queen of Sheba's visit in Matthew 12:42. He used her as an example to the hard-hearted Pharisees.

Jesus told them, "The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here." The Queen of Sheba so admired Solomon's wisdom she traveled 1500 miles to sit at his feet.

Yet Jesus was far wiser than Solomon – and He came to them, they didn't have to come to Him - yet the Pharisees still refused to listen to Jesus. Thus, the Queen will rise up on Judgment Day and condemn the Jews who rejected Jesus.

Verse 14 provides an intriguing fact, “The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was 666 talents of gold...” Solomon's yearly salary was 666 talents of gold.

Obviously, that's a lot of gold – at least 23 tons worth.

But what's intriguing is the association of Solomon with the number “666”. Revelation 13:18 tells us the number of the Antichrist is six – six – six.

And this is not the only association between Solomon and six - six - six.

Jump ahead to verses 19-20, and look at Solomon's throne. His throne was a sight to behold. It was made of ivory, overlaid with gold. But when you approached it you saw six – six – six. There were six lions to the left – there were six steps in the center – and there were six lions on the right. From right to left...6-6-6.

This all appears before Solomon's slide - but we're about to see that Solomon was a good apple who went bad... He took a terrible spiritual fall. Solomon has the dubious distinction of being the culprit who introduced idolatry into Israel.

And because of this, Solomon is a perfect type of the Antichrist...

David was a man of war. Thus, he couldn't build the temple. Solomon was a man of peace and a temple-builder. That's

how the Antichrist will start out. He'll make a covenant with Israel – a peace treaty. And rebuild their Temple.

People from all over the world journeyed to Jerusalem to marvel at Solomon's wisdom. The Antichrist will likewise impress the world with his wisdom.

Solomon was initially a good man, but ended up falling into idolatry and bringing it home to Israel. The Antichrist will likewise initiate idolatry in Israel.

Solomon showed keen business prowess and amassed great wealth. We learn in Revelation 18 the Antichrist does the same. The parallels are numerous...6-6-6.

Solomon's yearly salary was 666 talents of gold, verse 15, "besides that from the traveling merchants, from the income of traders, from all the kings of Arabia, and from the governors of the country. And King Solomon made 200 large shields of hammered gold; 600 shekels of gold went into each shield. He also made 300 shields of hammered gold; three minas of gold went into each shield." A mina was about 2 pounds so each shield weighed 6 pounds. They cost \$40,000 each.

"The king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon."

Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold." A glorious king needs a glorious throne - fitting of his stature, wealth, and power.

Let me suggest this throne was not only made of ivory and gold... but pride.

"The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round at the back; there were armrests on either side of the

place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the armrests. Twelve lions stood there, one on each side of the six steps; nothing like this had been made for any other kingdom.” Look at the throne, and you saw six – six – six. The antichrist will also be *lying* from his throne.

Solomon’s wealth is summed up in verse 23, “So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.” He was the Bill Gates of his day.

“All King Solomon's drinking vessels were gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Not one was silver, for this was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon.” *A silver set...* how cheap. Only gold was good enough for Solomon. Silver was the equivalent of paper cups.

Verse 22 “For the king had merchant ships at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys.” Solomon also loved exotic pets. He had his own zoo.

“So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.” Solomon was the Bill Gates of his day – the world’s richest, wealthiest man.

“Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. Each man brought his present: articles of silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses, and mules, at a set rate year by year. And

Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had 1400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.

The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones...” If you’ve been to Jerusalem you know it’s the rockiest place on the planet. ”And he made cedar trees as abundant as the sycamores which are in the lowland.”

Verse 28 “Also Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh; the king's merchants bought them in Keveh at the current price.” Remember this was a violation of Deuteronomy 17 – we’re going to talk more about this next week.

But the king was not to accumulate horses, but Solomon had an excuse...

He wasn’t using the horse for himself – he was acting as a middleman, and selling them to others... Verse 29 “Now a chariot that was imported from Egypt cost 600 shekels of silver, and a horse 150; and thus, through their agents, they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.” Which just goes to show there’s always a slick rationalization that will cover-up an evil deed.

Next week, we’re going to look at the downfall of a glorious king.