2 Chronicles - Commentaries by Walter Potter

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 5

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The Queen of Sheba's Visit to Solomon2 Chronicles 9:1-12

In the Old Testament we have instances of the work of God and of God's grace and that outside of His own chosen people. It seems we have one of those instances here.

What brought this Queen and all her wealth from what the Lord Jesus calls "The uttermost parts of the earth?" She came with evidence of her wealth and glory—"a very great train." She had heard the fame of someone far-off, and that fame had attracted her and wrought mightily in her soul. The proof of that is the journey she undertook.

She heard of the fame of Solomon. Solomon is one of the types of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. It is not a type of Him as the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—not in that low path of His service to God and man on the earth—not as a Man of conflict and warfare, but a type of the Lord Jesus in His glory as He will be known in this world, His fame spread abroad but not from heaven.

God has His servants abroad in the earth now and will have His servants abroad in the earth after the Church is taken to heaven. Those servants which God will have after the Church has been taken to heaven will proclaim what the Lord Jesus and John the Baptist proclaimed, and which His disciples did at first: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is Christ coming to take His earthly kingdom and to inherit His earthly glory. As we know, those beloved servants will suffer greatly; many of them will give up their lives. But after that, God will have another class of servants. They will not be Jews, but Gentiles. They will go out and say, "The kingdom of heaven has come!" They will be messengers of Christ's glory on earth.

Isaiah 66:18 says, "It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues." There is nothing about heaven there; there are no nations in heaven, "and they shall come, and see My glory." There is nothing about death and resurrection. Verse 19 continues, "And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard My fame, neither -have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles."

The Queen of Sheba is a foreshadowing of that. That is not Christ's fame as we know Him as the Saviour of sinners. (That is His fame, too.) However, this is His fame as typified by Solomon and all his glory.

Verse 20 tells us "they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel unto the house of the Lord." They will go and bring those Jews that have not heard. Solomon in all His glory as we have him here in Chronicles is just a type of the Lord Jesus in that way. It is well for us to see the different glories of the Lord Jesus.

She heard his fame; God has those in the world today who tell the Saviour's fame—His fame as Saviour. The evangelist who goes out and says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" is proclaiming the Saviour's fame. Thank God for every voice that tells of the Saviour's fame, and that is God's way of attracting.

The Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon and it attracted her. How powerfully it must have been brought to her soul. How definitely she speaks!

What a journey she has to take! When we tell of the Saviour's fame to poor sinners now, we tell one phase of His fame as He came from afar. The Saviour of sinners came from heaven. That is part of His fame. He came from heaven, and we do not have to take a long journey to go to Him. We proclaim Him as the One who came, and came from afar—mighty to save. He is the One who stood in this world and said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." What He said was true. What a fame! And it does not say his thirst would be satisfied, but that "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," a blessing flowing out to others from the thirsty one coming to Christ and drinking.

One sometimes thinks, what a strange kind of being, in one way, the Christian is. The world does not understand him. The Christian is in the world out of which he has been taken and to which he does not belong. A hymn we used to sing many years ago goes as follows:

"How happy ev'ry child of graceWhose sins are all forgiven;This earth, he cries, is not my place,My happy home's in heaven."

He is here in this world but all that he has is in another world.

This fame, the Queen of Sheba says, had been told her, but she says that the half of it was not told. We always feel, after we have been allowed to speak a little of Christ, how little of His fame we are able to tell. The report she heard came from afar. There is a report from heaven going abroad in this world. That report is the fame of One in heaven. How blessed when that report so heard begets desire in the soul. That is the way God converts people; He begets a sense of need and desire in the soul. We sometimes think, too, of what she says about the report being true, but not half had been told. Let our testimony and proclamation of the Saviour be ever so feeble, but let it be true. "It was a true report I heard in mine own land."

She comes and her heart is full of hard questions, enigmas, and puzzles. She had heard of his wisdom and now she comes to prove him. When the poor sinner comes to prove the Saviour's fame, how delighted that Saviour is! What joy the blessed Lord has! Indeed, it is part of His fame to answer every question—the hundred and one questions which our hearts and consciences raise. The answer to them all is Christ and found in Christ. There is not a difficulty our souls come in contact with but what the Lord can answer; such is His fame!

Judging from the nature of the things she brought, likely this Queen came from some part of Abyssinia. Think of 120 talents of gold, an enormous sum. The displayed magnificence, honor and glory in this poor world pales into insignificance in the presence of some of the wealth mentioned in Scripture, in a certain sense. That is a great thing for our poor proud hearts to know.

Where do you ever hear of a feast lasting six months now? Think of that mighty monarch reigning over 127 provinces, all the known world at that time. Think of the magnificence of Belshazzar's feast. Here this magnificence of the Queen of the South, as the Lord calls her, must have been very great. When she comes to Solomon, where is her greatness and majesty? It is lost in the presence of what she sees and hears. She comes in a very great company that bears spices and gold in abundance and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. "And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not."

"And when the Queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and 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; his cup-bearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord" all her magnificence paled into nothing; there was no spirit left in her. That was the happiest moment of her life. It is a great thing to be stripped of everything we have. We learn our nothingness in the presence and glory of another. Think with what importance she must have come to Jerusalem as she looked at her great train. When we learn a little of the fame of Christ the Saviour, it is our joy to lose our fame in Him. Happy is the soul that loses itself in Christ and in the sense of His fame. As one thinks of the fame of Solomon in connection with Christ, how he feels his inability to speak of it. It is a good thing to feel; we are happy in feeling it because it magnifies Christ, and that is always the work of the Spirit of God to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, whether it be in the gospel or ministry of the Word to the household. If it is in the power of the Spirit, it is the ministry of Christ.

We do not know that the ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord could be defined, but at least we could make this application of it: what it will be to meet the Lord in the air, every redeemed one from the earth and the tomb, with glorified, clothed bodies in immortality and incorruptibility—one magnificent, innumerable throng—to meet the Lord and go up with Him to the Father's house!

There was no more spirit left in her and what does she do? She thinks of the happiness of others, and who are they? "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom."

Our real happiness now is in the presence of the Lord, there occupied with His magnificence and His fame. Can we not also understand how she lost herself in the happiness of others? And what happiness is like deliverance from self! Happy are thy men, thy servants. Then she goes on: "Blessed be the Lord thy God," (that is worship) "which delighted in thee to set thee on His throne, to be king for the Lord thy God, because thy God loved Israel."

Let us apply that to Christ and His fame. Do we not bless God for the fame of Christ—the Saviour's fame? It was the grace of God working in that soul of that far-off land. The same grace wrought hundreds of years later in another in the same part of the earth, perhaps, that eunuch of the 8th of Acts. He had come to Jerusalem to worship, a poor stranger. The grace of God led him to do that.

What a different Jerusalem he found than what the Queen of Sheba found! It is the same Jerusalem, not in her glory but in her guilt. She had crucified her Messiah. The God Who had brought that eunuch to desire to come up to worship met that desire but not in Jerusalem; it was after he had left Jerusalem, "was returning." He causes that one to hear the Saviour's fame from the lips of Philip not in that Solomon glory but as One despised and rejected—a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, the same blessed Saviour. That also is part of His fame.

"I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip . . . began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him JESUS." This servant of the Lord was telling out the fame of Jesus, but how different, and we have to present the Saviour's fame in many different ways. As it were, His fame covers a large territory. Who can tell the glories of Christ! There is another little hymn that reads:

"Jesus, in Thee our eyes beholdA thousand glories moreThan the rich gems of polished gold,That the sons of Aaron wore."

Oh yes, "In Thee our eyes behold a thousand glories more." May God teach us more of the fame of Christ. The Saviour's fame is proclaimed less and less in this poor world. What is displacing it? Man's fame; what man has done and is doing. May God enable us to proclaim the Saviour's fame more faithfully and more fully too.

"Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on His throne, to be king for the Lord thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them forever, therefore made He thee king over them, to do judgment and justice." That is very beautiful. The throne is God's, and it is the God of Israel that set him there. That is a divinely taught soul and there is not a trace of envy or jealousy but just the heart won. A soul taught of God always takes in the people of God. "Because thy God loved Israel." How much does she give Solomon credit for? Nothing. It is all the Lord his God had given him. The owning of that is happiness. That is one evidence of the soul being taught of God.

May we appreciate the sovereign grace of God. Our happiness deepens as we realize all is grace; it is worship.

Then, in believing, peace we found; And in Thy Christ we live.

"All that we are as saints on earth, All that we hope to be

When Jesus comes and glory dawns, We owe it all to Thee."

That is true worship—the sense of our indebtedness to God and His grace.

What filled that Queen as she returned to her home? When she left her home, she had her heart full of hard questions, but she got them all answered. What occupies her as she returns? What absorbs her is what she had seen at Jerusalem. That is just the way of grace in presenting Christ. How happy it is when we can lose ourselves in Christ. That is a very difficult thing to do, and it is only as His fame is learned, really learned, that we are able to do it.

God from heaven above is proclaiming the fame of His Son as the One in whom alone salvation is found and who made atonement for sin and sinners. God delights to tell the fame of Christ.

The Queen of Sheba became a receiver too. She took back what the King gave her. How sweetly it tells of grace, "And King Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which she had brought unto the king. So she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants." There is not a desire of the heart that Christ cannot satisfy. If we have Christ, we have the answer to every difficulty. Who is it that will engage us when we get to heaven? Christ. In one way heaven is a continuation of a certain line of things here on the earth.

So she returned with her heart full, but not of her own importance or magnificence.

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