

1 Kings 10:1-24

Aim of lesson

To show how God's gifts of wisdom and riches made Solomon a great king, and demonstrated God's power to the surrounding nations.

Background study

1 Kings 4:21-34. Find a map to illustrate the extent of the journey of the queen.

Suggested outline of lesson

This lesson begins on a note of expectancy and excitement as the people of Jerusalem prepared to receive a visiting queen. Lavish provision would have been made for entertaining so distinguished a guest and her entourage. Children will understand the thrill of anticipating such an occasion, if they can draw on events within their own experiences, such as a visit of a member of the royal family, a local festival or carnival, or any similar event involving extensive preparations. Recreate in their minds the atmosphere that would prevail. Numerous people would be busy for weeks beforehand. Protocol would be of prime importance. There would be much to organize, rooms to be cleaned and polished, meals planned, transport arranged, and special decorations provided in readiness for the great day.

The arrival of the Queen of Sheba

The arrival of the Queen of Sheba was an impressive spectacle, more exotic than any twentieth century counterpart. The approach of a train of camels richly bedecked and loaded with treasure cannot be compared with a cavalcade of black limousines. With the help of a map and pictures of the terrain, show the distance she had travelled and the probable route. Suggest how arduous the journey would have been through the hot and dusty desert, with the sun blazing down. The length of the journey would have necessitated camping at night, and carrying a great deal of food and equipment. They would have had to be on the lookout for marauding bands of robbers, because of the valuable treasure they were carrying. Here was an important person who had heard so much about King Solomon's fabulous wealth and extraordinary wisdom that she felt compelled to undertake this long and difficult journey in person to find out for herself whether the tales she had heard were true. She was not prepared to believe the reports until she had seen everything with her own eyes.

Questions

Ask the children what sort of questions the Queen of Sheba might have asked Solomon. What was the secret of his great wealth? How had he come to be so wise? How had he come to make the laws by which his people were governed? What things were important to him? Was there one God, or many? Whatever she asked, it is clear that she was impressed

by the extent of his knowledge and understanding. Perhaps she had heard some of his poetry, and his wise sayings. Show the children the parts of the Bible that are attributed to Solomon. Refer also to 1 Kings 4:29-34, to show that his interests included music, poetry and nature.

The Queen amazed

Besides being convinced of Solomon's wisdom, the Queen of Sheba saw the evidence of his great wealth all around her. Even though she herself was wealthy, she was overwhelmed by the sight of the magnificent temple, the beautiful palace, the vast number of horses and chariots, and the sheer abundance of priceless possessions. All her doubts were now dispelled. What she had been told was no exaggeration; rather, the reports had underestimated Solomon's status.

Gifts

As was the custom for visitors in those days, the Queen presented her host with gifts which were representative of the wealth of her own country. He, in turn, generously showered her with presents, to the extent of giving her all that she desired. The fact that she asked for things may seem discourteous to us, but it was evidently

regarded as a normal part of accepting hospitality. The general impression is that this had been a happy and successful encounter. There must have been mutual respect and a sharing of interests for them to have talked at such length, and so openly to each other.

Above all, the Queen of Sheba had been convinced that the Almighty God ruled in this land through a divinely appointed king.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, help us to show others, by our good behaviour, politeness and helpfulness, that we are trying to live in a way that will please you. Amen.

Memory verse

"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favour is better than silver or gold" (Proverbs 22:1).

Relevance to the children's lives

Solomon was the kind of person whom people wanted to meet. He was known for his wise words and good deeds. Everyone is known for something, (some for their kindness, politeness, helpfulness and good behaviour, others for their rudeness, selfishness, lying and naughtiness). What kind of things are some children known for? How can we make sure that we are known for good things, so that God will be pleased with us, and people will be glad to know us?

