



Some people make more than New Year's resolutions, they make lists of places they want to try to visit. There are some places around the world which many people decide they have to see for themselves. They are usually places of curiosity, history, or architectural significance. Not too surprisingly many want to see the international attractions like the Great Pyramids in Egypt, the Great Wall of China, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Zócalo in Mexico City, Niagara Falls between US and Canada, and the Taj Mahal in India. Our own state has its world-wide attraction. According to the US national park statistics the Grand Canyon is the second most visited US national park. It has over seven million visitors last year and it is the US national park with the most international visitors each year. People from all over the world come to see the vast beauty of what can only be seen in part because of its enormous size. And they come in the millions from all parts of the world. But these are all man-made buildings and natural wonders. But is the world's most amazing international attraction really a landmark feature or historic building? Isn't it a person. That's what we see this morning as we turn to God's Word. We see a woman who forms her checklist of what she'd like to discover and see. And it leads her to travel great distance to see someone. His name was Solomon. And we'll see from 1 Kings 10 this morning just why she traveled so far to see far more than she even expected. Lord willing, by doing so it will help us prioritize our list of what we'd like to see this coming year.

Consider what wonders of the world were around at Solomon's time. He ruled over Israel about 3000 years ago. Back then Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon had no international visitors. It would be hundreds of years before anyone even started building man-made wonders like the Great Wall of China. The only man-made wonder of the ancient world with international fame built by that time would have been the Great Pyramids. But a new wonder entered the stage. It was David's son, the king of Israel. 1 Kings 4 tells us that people came from all surrounding nations because they heard of the great wisdom of Solomon. With his wisdom he arranged for peace, justice, and for great building projects. The first twenty years of his reign involved two massive building endeavors: building the Lord's temple and his palace. The details and descriptions in 1 Kings give us a clear picture: Solomon had done a lot of elaborate building with gold, silver, bronze, cedar and stone. The amount of gold which covered everything is staggering. The records indicate that Solomon received around 25 tons of gold each year of his forty-year reign! And that's not including all the other riches! We can only begin to imagine the beauty of what he built. It lasted for nearly 400 years and was a wonder to be sure!

Solomon's achievements caught the attention of someone who lived far off. She was the Queen of Sheba, a place most identify as somewhere in modern day Yemen. She was nearly 1500 miles of travel across the Arabian desert from Jerusalem. Just to give you an idea of how far that is it is about the distance from here to Mexico City, or from here to Chicago. And she traveled this distance with an entourage of camels all the way across the Arabian Peninsula. Why? *"She had heard about the report of Solomon, associated with the name of the Lord."* She set out in person to see this great wonder she had heard about, this man in Israel.

It doesn't say that she actually believed everything she heard. The reports were so far fetched that she really couldn't. She came "to test him with hard questions." "If this man really is so wise" she reasoned, "he should be able to give me the answers I'm seeking." She arrives in Jerusalem and brings her hard questions to Solomon. He answers them all. To her great amazement there is nothing he doesn't know. It literally reads, "She asked him everything that was in her heart. But nothing was hidden from Solomon." She didn't just ask him why the sky was blue. She no doubt asked him all the hardest of questions in life such as, "How did we get here? Why are we here?" and "How can we know the truth about the meaning of life and of God." Solomon had all the answers. He knew the Lord. He showed her all the Lord had done for him, the temple he had built for his name. He showed her the sacrifice he offered to the Lord in his temple.

Did Solomon, it turns out, far exceeded her expectations. "When the queen of Sheba observed all of Solomon's wisdom, the palace he had built, the food at his table, his servants' residence, his attendants' service and their attire, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he offered at the LORD's temple, it took her breath away." She said she didn't actually believe the reports until she saw them with her own eyes. And she had not even been told half of it!

I love what this account teaches us! She heard some of the reports of the wonders of what the Lord had done. When she came seeking to learn more it blew her away! That's what happens when someone starts to dig into the reports of what God has done for his people! It ends up being far more than they could have even imagined. God blesses his people with something greater than this world could ever offer. It's vaster than the Grand Canyon, more powerful than Niagara Falls, and more impressive than the Pyramids. It is the wisdom of God and the working of God for his people.

Don't misunderstand. I'm not saying that God has blessed his Church with material riches just like Solomon. He's given far more wonders than that. And the Queen of Sheba was drawn to more than just that. It was wisdom and the words of Solomon that amazed her the most -wisdom and words from God. He is the one who gave Solomon his wisdom. He is the one who surpasses all wonders and workings in history. Everything centers on the Lord.

Consider what wonders the Lord has done. He has caused his justice and righteousness to spread far beyond Israel. He rules in the hearts of people all over the world. And he has given us something of far greater worth than all the riches of Solomon. It is what Solomon's father, David, described as of greatest worth. "Your Word is more precious to me than gold." (Psalm 19) With that Word of God we have what every king and queen on earth would envy: the knowledge and wisdom of God. It is in the Word of God that we are "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 3) In the Word of God we hear how Jesus, also David's Son, came to build a temple which would last forever. That's the one Solomon wrote about. He wrote about Jesus, the true world-wide attraction. "May he rule from sea to sea... to the ends of the earth... may he rule until the moon shines no more... May all nations be blessed by him and call him blessed." (Psalm 72)

Jesus is that world-wide blessing and wonder. The world has been drawn to what he has done through one who is greater than Solomon: Jesus. When Jesus walked this earth, he said "One greater than Solomon is here." He built a temple, the body of believers, which covers this whole earth. He paid the price and poured out his holy precious blood to make the world richer than its wildest dreams. Jesus our king conquered our enemy the grave that we are made richer than kings and queens. Jesus gives us a peace that surpasses all understanding. When we read in the Scripture that he has removed our sin and crowned us with his righteousness, shouldn't that take our breath away? When we discover and hear in his Word that he has given us an inheritance in heaven which can never spoil, perish, or fade, isn't that a wonder? When you hear that he has paid the price to buy back the whole world from the grave, doesn't that deserve world-wide attention? It is through him that we now have the promise of a place in his heavenly kingdom. He rules in mercy and love for us.

This is exactly why Solomon had built the Lord's temple and had done everything up to this point. Notice what the Queen of Sheba responded to. "She heard the report of Solomon who was connected with the name of the Lord his God." It wasn't all about Solomon. He recognized who is the real attraction and center of it all: the LORD. In just these nine verses the name of the LORD comes up three times. It is the report of the LORD that the Queen heard, not just Solomon his servant. And it is the temple where he offers sacrifice to the LORD that Solomon shows the Queen. And it is the LORD that the Queen praises when she is overwhelmed by all she sees. This was Solomon's intent all along: To bring many people from everywhere to know the LORD the God of Israel. He said this himself when he dedicated the temple. "*Even for the foreigner who is not of your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name— for they will hear of your great name, strong hand, and outstretched arm, and will come and pray toward this temple— ...Then all peoples of earth will know your name, to fear you as your people Israel do and to know that this temple I have built bears your name.*" (1 Kings 8:41–43)

The Queen of Sheba traveled many miles across the desert to discover and see more about what she had heard. Doesn't that at times put us to shame? Sometimes those who hear about the wonders of the Lord, the wisdom of God and his great working for us, don't take the time to travel at all to hear more. Some of us travel a way to get to church to grow and discover more about the wonders of God together. Yet at times we may be tempted to dismiss it all. Sometimes it can be hard for a Christian to just travel a few miles to make it to the nearest faithful house of worship. Sometimes it is too hard to dedicate a few minutes for a Bible study group. Sometimes we act like it is too hard to open up the Word when it is right there in our homes. The wisdom of Solomon is written down right in the books of the Bible -so easily accessible! The wonders of God's working for his people is so easily obtained. We hear about it, but do we desire to see it more for ourselves and marvel at it as we ought?

Solomon, who knew the Lord, made it his goal to make him known. He spent years to this end. Is that also our priority as the people of God? Do we strive to make known to others the wonders of the Lord and his great working for his people? Or is it sometimes that we get lost in our own little checklists so that we lose sight of our great mission in life? Like the Queen of Sheba we have discovered the wonders of the Lord. He has made known to us what great things he has done. And it has taken our breath away! Do we like Solomon, now strive to make the Lord known?

This new year you may have a long checklist, or you may not. You may have already visited more than one wonder of the world. But you don't have to travel far to experience the greatest wonder. You have and hold the wisdom of God and the world's greatest treasure. By God's grace you will see more today as you read about the Christians around the world who are hungering to learn more about him. People like those in the Hmong Christian Fellowship in Vietnam which though so far away desires to work with our church body and learn more about the Lord through seminary training for pastors. We get to be involved in that effort with our gifts and we can pray God will make his wonders known around the world.

Sometimes you just have to see for yourself something wonderful. My wife recently had someone online tell her a certain recipe was super easy and tasted amazing. She didn't believe it. But what did she do? That very night, even though it was very late, she decided to try it. She had to test it and see for herself. And it was worth it. The Queen of Sheba did the same when she heard about the fame of Solomon and the Lord his God. She had to test it and see it for herself. It was more than worth it! Experience the wonders of God and his working for you. You don't have to travel far to do it. It's actually quite easy. The world has found its greatest wonder: it is Jesus. Keep him at the top of your priority list. Discover, experience, and share the wonders of what he has done for us all. See him, and you see the envy of kings and queens.