

In Jesus' name. Amen.

The scene is the same as that of last week.

The scribes and Pharisees were pressuring Jesus for a sign to validate and authenticate His preaching.

To be fair: Moses had given them signs. Joshua had given them signs.

Elijah and Elisha had given them signs.

And Isaiah had prophesied of the Messiah,

Isaiah 29:14

“behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder;...”

So it is not unreasonable that God's people would be looking for signs

– EXCEPT that all the signs and wonders that Jesus HAD BEEN performing already,

and that they themselves had witnessed, were being completely rejected as signs and wonders.

These scribes and Pharisees were doing what Isaiah had said they would do:

This people draw near with their mouth and honor Me with their lips,

while their hearts are far from Me... Isaiah 29:13

And so Jesus warns them that their actions will bring about their condemnation.

Last week we heard Jesus say,

The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it,

for they repented at the preaching of Jonah,

and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

This week, we are meditating on the next recorded sentence Jesus spoke, from St. Matthew 12:42

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

Notice that there are contrasts as well as a comparison going on in these 2 statements of condemnation:

The contrasts are regarding those who will rise up against **“this generation,”**

that is the unbelieving Jews in Jesus' day.

God had sent disobedient Jonah to Nineveh, to that vile, hedonistic capital city of the Assyrians,

and they accepted God's word, even from this unwilling prophet, and they responded in repentance.

And now, God had sent Jesus, the Messiah Himself, a willing prophet, even the very Son of God,

yet these Jews would not believe God's Word through Him.

And now in today's text, Jesus is contrasting these Jews, who have Jesus right there in their midst, with the Queen of the South, who traveled **“from the ends of the earth”**

to hear and see for herself IF the reports she had heard about Solomon were true.

In the Lesson we just heard from 1 Kings 10, we heard the report of what the queen saw and heard.

By the time of her visit, some 20 years into his reign,

Solomon had built his palace as well as the Temple.

Silver was as common as stones in Jerusalem – of little worth because of its abundance.

His kingdom was at peace all around, with countries bringing him tribute and trading with him.

But she was not only impressed by the wealth, but more so by his wisdom — what truly set him apart.

It was this that elicited from her a blessing which glorified, not Solomon, but Solomon's God:

Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel!

Because the Lord loved Israel forever, He has made you king,

that you may execute justice and righteousness." 1 Kings 10:9

This queen got it; the work of a truly great/glorious king is to **execute justice and righteousness**, to serve his people, God's people,

by punishing the evil and blessing the good and protecting the innocent.

As Jesus pointed out, this foreign queen, who no doubt had her own objects of worship back home, having travelled so far at her own expense to hear and see Solomon and his wisdom and glory, was more noble than those standing before Him who insisted that He show them yet another sign. She believed in this God of Solomon, though Solomon himself had not performed a single sign.

And so this woman, on the last day will rise from the dead and condemn these scribes & Pharisees because she recognized wisdom, God's Word, even from the less glorious messenger, Solomon.

Which leads us to the point of comparison that Jesus made:

something (Someone) greater than Solomon is here.

Now this was a pretty bold statement.

We just heard about how Solomon's reign was literally the golden years of Israel's history.

All his ornate metal work was done in gold, not inferior silver.

And at this time, politically, Israel's borders were at their furthest extent and they were ruled by their own king.

Israel's army and chariot divisions were strong, with the finest in Egyptian chariots and horses.

Her cities were well fortified and supplied.

Her mercantile fleet was prosperous, bringing the riches of the nations to Jerusalem's gates.

The arts and culture flourished. Wisdom abounded.

In the minds of the Jews in Jesus' day, how could you top all of this?

But more to the point... How could Jesus even come close to that glory?

Jesus had no palace.

His servants were 12 previously blue collar workers, many of them uneducated fisherman.

He had no money of His own, but relied on the generosity of His hearers.

He had no kingdom, at least not that they could see.

And yet, now Jesus said that He was greater than Solomon?

I wonder if Jesus got anyone laughing out loud at this statement.

Or if they just stood there dumbfounded, that He would dare to make such a comparison.

And we might be tempted to agree with Jesus being greater than Solomon, merely on the basis of Solomon's moral/spiritual lapse.

In 1 Kings 11, the chapter immediately following the Queen's visit, we hear of Solomon's foolishness; how his multitude of idolatrous wives and concubines led him astray

so that on the mountain east of Jerusalem, he had built temples and high places for their idols.

But Jesus is not comparing Himself to this low part of Solomon's reign and life;

He is comparing His glory to that of Solomon's glory, and they don't really compare.

St. Paul clearly understood the comparison and spoke of it in 2 Corinthians 8:9:

**For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich,
yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.**

Jesus looked the part of a poor, itinerant rabbi while He walked this earth,
but He is nothing less than the King of Heaven, and heir of a kingdom whose streets are gold,
whose 12 gates are each made from a single pearl, whose attendants are the angelic hosts,
and who is Wisdom Himself, the Word of God, made flesh.

But while Solomon, as he himself testified in Ecclesiastes, **kept [his] heart from no pleasure,**
and allowed himself over to every whim of enjoyment that he might see or hear of for himself,
Jesus **came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give Himself a ransom for many.** Mark 10:45

And thus Jesus fulfilled the role of a true king of Israel, and of the world,
He came to **execute righteousness and justice.**

He defended the innocent and justly condemned the guilty.

But if we might turn the phrase a little, He came to be executed for righteousness and justice,
so that He might take the just judgment of condemnation upon Himself for the earth, for you,
and give you His righteousness, His perfection, before His heavenly Father's throne.

This is so needed by us, since we are no better than the Ninevites,
no better than the Queen of the South,
no better than Solomon, and no better than the scribes and Pharisees.

The corruption of sin that they were guilty of is also found in our hearts.

We struggle to see Jesus' true glory and to serve Him alone as the one true God.

We give into our wanton passions and pursue pleasures for ourselves.

We are cruel to our enemies and give in to hatred.

We each have our own personal idols that we trust in for our good,
rather than rely on the only true God.

But behold, Someone greater than Solomon has come.

We gather, anticipating the celebration of the birth of this King, this Son of David and Son of God. Rev. 1:4

Indeed, Someone greater than Solomon is here, the King of kings and **the Ruler of kings on earth.**

Someone who uses His authority and power, not to serve Himself, but His people,
our Lord Jesus Christ.

**To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood
and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father,
to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen** Revelation 1:5-6

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria