

BIBLE STUDY NOTES
All Nations Bible Study Groups, Term 2 2020

1 Kings 9-10
CHRISTIANS AND THE WIDER WORLD
For the week starting May 31, Study 6

Introduction

1 Kings 9-10 is a summary of what the kingdom of Solomon looked like more broadly, with a particular focus on the relationship of this kingdom to the wider world. Solomon was an extensive trader and builder, to the degree that seems almost unimaginable.

The aim of this study is for us to consider how the people of God, the church, can and should influence the world around us.

To get you thinking

- When people who have never been to a church think about the church, what do you think are the main things that pop into their mind? Why is that?
 - If someone with no experience of church was to visit a church service, what do you think their impression would be? Like they expected or different?
 - Many churches try in some way to reach the non-Christian world around them. Make a list of ways you have seen churches try to do this.

Context

1 Kings 8 was a lengthy prayer at the dedication of the temple, looking to God's promises and God's character. The two chapters we looked at on Sunday followed on from this by describing Solomon's kingdom and wider activities to give us a better idea of the place of this kingdom in the world.

As the passage is long, we will focus our attention on the visit of the Queen of Sheba, which you can read about in chapter 10.

We'll read 1 Kings 10:1-13 and then move to the questions.

1 Kings 10:1-13 questions

- What had the Queen of Sheba heard about Solomon?

- Why did she come to visit Solomon?
 - What do we know about her based on the description here?

 - What service did Solomon provide the Queen?

 - What was it that took her breath away? Knowing what we do about her, how does this impact how we view Solomon's riches and wisdom?

- Let's think about this for a moment. Translating this to modern times, however wealthy and prosperous the world is, the church has things to offer that others do not have.
 - Many people in Perth think they have all they need because they are wealthy and healthy most of the time. What don't they have that they need?

 - What can be found in the church that is not found in the world? Make a list.

 - What is different about the wisdom taught in a church as opposed to the wisdom you can find in other places?

 - Think about the church community, the church family. How is this community attractive and different to other communities in our society like sporting clubs and craft groups?

- V6-8 outline what the Queen of Sheba's impression of Solomon's kingdom was, that it was better than she expected. What is it that she thinks would make the servants of King Solomon happy?

- Does being in the church and receiving good teaching something you thank God for, realising it is a gift others don't have? Or is it something you take for granted?
- V9 makes it clear, as v1 did, that the Queen of Sheba is not only impressed by Solomon, but she understands that all of this comes from God.
 - The danger that comes from Christians and churches influencing the wider world is that others might misinterpret our efforts as being due to us being nice people. How might we help people to see that the church is different because of Jesus?
- V10 shows that the Queen gave Solomon a massively costly gift, including spices that were priceless and abundant. This matches how other foreign rulers who came to Solomon behaved, we are told in v25. Her inclination was to put God and his kingdom first.
 - Do you think Christians should also be generous with their resources towards the church? What does our generosity reveal about our heart?
 - Despite all of this, the Queen leaves with more than she gave (v13) as well as with her questions answered. What benefits do we get from the people of God today?
- The general principle of this passage is that the kingdom of God at its best should be attractive to the watching world, enticing people to come to find out more.
 - The church has terrible associations with child abuse and with the Crusades; how might we help people to have good associations with the church in their minds instead?
 - Do you think the church should mainly run soup kitchens and ministries for the needy as their outreach to the world? What are the good and bad aspects of this?
 - What can we do in our church services to be attractive to outsiders while also presenting the wisdom of God faithfully and accurately?

Some case studies

- Eliza lives near your church. She sees all the cars coming on Sunday mornings and other times, but she has never gone herself. She does wonder why people take precious time out of their week to be involved in religion; aren't we past all of that now in our scientific age? Everything she reads in the media casts a negative view of the church in her mind. How do you think your church could have contact with Elizabeth and help her to see what the church offers? Give some suggestions.

- Frank, a Christian who is part of your church, has been getting to know one of his work colleagues. They talk about all kinds of things and have met one another's families and spent time together doing things outside of work. Frank is interested in the church because it is a big part of your life, though he is nervous about visiting as it is not anything he has done before. As you pray and plan with Frank about how to introduce his friend to Jesus, how would you go about it? How would you help Frank's friend to find the riches and wisdom that are only found in Jesus?

- Are there any other questions on this topic we should discuss?

Prayer: Take time to pray. Get to know one another's situations so you can pray better when you are apart as well.