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**Solomon and Jesus:** by Ben M.

**Reading: Matthew 2**

### **The Power and the Glory of Solomon and of Jesus**

Solomon stands head and shoulders above all who have gone before him because of the combination of his astronomical wealth and his divine wisdom. (1 Kings 10:23) He is established as the great king of scripture. Rivers of wealth poured in from the tributes of the surrounding nations that his father David had subdued. His trading partnership and defence contract with Egypt brought in even more wealth. Solomon defended Egypt's northern border. It was a bit of 'a deal with the devil' since Egypt was not best friends with the God of Israel. £100bn of this wealth was used to build a house for God. That's the sort of money used to build the international space station. No one exceeded the power and the glory that Solomon put into the building the temple until 1,000 years later when Herod the Great invested an enormous amount of wealth into building a massive new complex where the portico of the temple was covered with a sheet of gold. It faced into the rising sun so people had to shield their eyes against its brilliance. There were vines twisted around the white stone columns and each leaf and grape was made of solid gold. He built castles, fortresses and cities with ports for extensive trade. He was a powerful man supported by the Roman Senate and the Roman army. Herod was a converted Arab. For the first time in 1,000 years there was a Jewish king on the throne who could come near the power and the glory of Solomon. Herod's wealth came from a lucrative defence contract as the defender of the eastern flank of the Roman Empire. Revelation 17:2 describes this as an act of adultery, a deal with the devil but it made them very rich.

Did this second Solomon imagine he was the Messiah who would bring salvation to God's people? The Magi arrived from the east with a very well-crafted insult. Their question, 'Where was Messiah to be born?' reminded Herod that whoever he thought he was, he was not the one born to be king of the Jews, the Messiah. He had inveigled his way into power. Herod's glory is not God's glory. God has his own king. For all of his religious fervour Herod doesn't even know where the Messiah was to be born. Herod would do anything to stop anyone who threatened his own self-image as *The King of the Jews*, hence his horrific attack on Bethlehem. Whatever power or glory we think we have or whatever delusions we suffer from, we are not God's anointed Messiah. We all have to fight the big battle to humble ourselves and bow the knee to one greater than we are. We are not the I AM. It's the starting point in Christianity. 'it's not about me, it's about Him.'

So let's think about Jesus. He doesn't seem to be much of a presence. He was born in what would now be called a pub car park. We don't ride around on donkeys so we don't need stables. It's not the usual starting point for one of great glory and power to be born of a teenage mother who was not yet married to the man who though born of the royal line was working as a tradesman in a very small village. Jesus spent the first few years of his life as a refugee in Egypt. He lived in Nazareth: "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46) Jesus learned the scriptures in the local synagogue and visited Jerusalem three times a year. He walked about in ordinary clothes with ordinary people, sofa surfing in Peter's house in Capernaum. He had no means, background or connections. "The Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." (Luke 9:58) In Matt 12:42 Jesus says about two tiny villages where he was preaching, "The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's

wisdom, and now someone greater than Solomon is here.” The Queen of Sheba travelled a long way to hear the Wisdom of Solomon, but here is one greater than Solomon and no one will listen to him. He has no outward glory and yet he is rebuking them for not treating him like a king. He is saying that he is that king that everyone has been waiting for. He is saying he is greater than the man who put £100bn into building the temple. He said “The kingdom of God is at hand.” So, where’s the gold? Where’s the glory? He didn’t build any great buildings or have a retinue of soldiers. Is this man out of his mind? At one point his mother thought so. Others accused him of being a blasphemer because he said he was equal with God.

The preacher John Wesley would ask the people who they thought Jesus was. Was he mad, bad or is he who he said he was? Who do you say he is? Is he truly greater than Solomon? When he said that Solomon was not arrayed like one of the little flowers (Matt 6:29) he is saying look at the one who made the flowers, the rivers, and the lakes and the sea. Look at the one who set the stars in the sky. Look at the Lord of creation. He’s the one whom Solomon spent 100bn pounds to glorify. He puts us all in the shade. We are only a speck of dust on the fringes of the great cosmos he created. God is truly great and Jesus is saying ‘I AM here.’ There isn’t much to support Jesus’ claim until you find yourself in a state like the Gadarene man living amongst the tombs. Jesus says a word to him and he is restored to his right mind. He makes the rotting leper clean and healthy. He goes out in a boat with experienced sailors who are afraid they are drowning. He speaks ‘peace be still’ and the sea becomes like glass. No one else can walk on water. A little daughter gets sick and dies. Jesus tells her to get up and she gets up. Solomon can’t do any of these things. Surely these are things only God can do. He goes up the mountain with Peter and John. Suddenly Moses and Elijah are standing there conversing with him and he shines like the sun. It’s a glimpse of the glory of who he really is. The deaf hear, the blind see, the lame walk. That’s the power and glory of a real king. When he says a thing it really happens. Immanuel, God has come amongst us.

He walks into the temple and sees the moral and spiritual corruption. He cleans the whole thing up. It is his father’s house, a house of prayer. The Pharisees ask for a sign and he says destroy this temple, [you don’t need it anymore]. In three days I will raise it again and he did it but at what cost! If you were given the choice between £100bn or your life what would you choose? What’s the point of £100bn if you don’t have your life? Jesus sheds his own life-blood on the cross to build a house for God of infinite value and worth where people of every tribe and nation can come and find purity and holiness and refuge and salvation and help and prayer. We can come and be one with God’s Messiah himself. You can sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You can sit right next to God and call him Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Of all the other demonstrations of power and glory nothing can compare with the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day. It is incomparable. The most glorious Temple that has ever been built stands pure and holy where you can come and worship God. His name is known throughout the earth. Look at us 2,000 years later worshiping him here in Mold. King of Kings and Lord of Lords! When he comes he will judge the living and the dead. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The power and the glory of Jesus Christ is equal to the power and the glory of God himself. Do you believe in the one who is greater than Solomon? If you do he has a table prepared for you. Come and eat.