

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
June 4, 2016

- ✓ **2 Chronicles 9:1-10:19.** The queen of Sheba, death of Solomon, disintegration of Kingdom.
- ✓ **Titus 2:1-8.** Virtue according to sound doctrine.
- ✓ **Psalm 95:1-11.** The will and “Today.”

COMMENTS:

2 Chronicles 9:1-10:19. Chapter 9 records the visit from the Queen of Sheba, and the wisdom, wealth, and international prestige of Solomon. While the visit of the queen of Sheba may have had commercial motives, the stated reason for it was Solomon’s *fame* (9:1), in particular the fame of his *achievements* and his *wisdom* (9:5). What is recorded about her visit is the splendid speech she makes in praise of Solomon—not for his own sake, but to exalt the Lord who has made him what he is, and to compliment the people for whose benefit (once more) He has been made so great (9:8). Evidently the queen of Sheba was a woman of great wealth like Solomon. She came with caravans of camels laden with spices, gold, and precious stones. Female rulers in pre-Islamic times played important roles. Several classical writers testify to their wealth and power. The kingdom of Saba was renowned for frankincense and myrrh. Negotiations with Solomon concerning trade in aromatic resins were to be expected. Frankincense and myrrh were in high demand for use in pharmacopoeia and cosmetics, embalming and religious offerings (Isa 60:6; Jer 6:20). Frankincense and myrrh ranked alongside gold for trade and as gifts for a king. In 9:12 we see that Solomon’s gifts were generous. He gave the queen of Sheba all she asked plus other gifts in value greater than she had brought to him. The close of chapter 9 records the death of Solomon. It is interesting that Solomon’s spiritual apostasy is not recorded, and thus the end of his reign ends on a high note in this section of Scripture. Like all men, except believers in the Rapture generation, Solomon died. As I mentioned in our last Bible class, we do not have much time on this earth and every believer should live his life in light of eternity. This attitude should be reflected in our daily prayers to the Lord as we prepare for the time when we will meet our Maker face-to-face. It is unfortunate that so many Christians today are not prepared mentally or spiritually for their deaths. Instead of see their going to be with the Lord as “far better” (Philip 1:23), they live in “fear of death” (read Hebrews 2:15), and thus live like pagans who have no hope in the next life. What’s worse is that some Christians have more fear of death than pagans, especially pagans who lived before the modern era. Again, one cannot truly live the Christian life apart from the eternal perspective. To be afraid of dying and going to be with the Lord is an indication that one lacks serious faith in central tenets of Christianity. There simply is no biblical counterargument to the requirement of the eternal perspective before one can live, thrive, grow, and then die in Lord. As far as 2 Chronicles 10, we see that Solomon is scarcely cold in his grave before the glorious kingdom begins to fall apart.

Titus 2:1-8. Our recent studies at FBC on virtue find strong corroboration in this section of Scripture. Note the strong emphasis on virtue for the various age groups of believers. Note that the marks of a mature Christian man: temperate, worthy of respect, and self-control. Maturity really is more about character *developed* than the amount of doctrine *resident in* someone's soul. Note the supernatural virtues of faith, love, and endurance that is found among virtues associated with maturity. Older women were to live virtuously according to sound doctrine, which shows the importance of knowing doctrine. Older women generally have more time on their hands, and should use that time to reach outside of their homes and share what they have learned to younger women. Note the seven virtues that Paul lists for younger women in verses 4-5. Christian wives and mothers can be sure that the Lord will honor those who value what He values, and that He will ultimately vindicate both His Word and those who are faithful to it. With the young men, we see once again a great emphasis on virtue rather than some spiritual conduit formula. Note the emphasis on works. As I have noted repeatedly, character is developed through human action, not by knowledge. While one must have correct knowledge for correct action, unless and until there is action on that knowledge, there is no true development of maturity nor virtue. We become what we do. Every time we actualize sin or evil in our lives, we create vice and with that vice a desire or taste for evil once again, which, of course, has serious ramifications for our spiritual lives. Both the Word of God and the very structure of the conscience (*synderesis*) and will of man warn us to avoid evil and seek the good. Every bad habit, sinful or not, that you and I have, are only there because we have habituated that act in our lives; we are an amalgamation of our previous actions, at least as far as character. To break the habit requires stopping the action, whether it is simply a bad eating habit or some sin in the life that one continues to be plagued with. The wonderful advantage that we believers have is that we have spiritual resources of the Holy Spirit to aid us. One of the strangest things in modern times is that there are unbelievers who have more integrity and virtue, even those listed in our passage, than some believers with Bible doctrine and the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. I believe one reason is because of the modern monstrosity of artificial conduit spirituality that replaced the classical view of virtue as a foundation for the nature of "rational" man.

Psalms 95:1-11. This "enthronement psalm" calls for the people to acknowledge that the Lord is a great King above the gods. But having exhorted the congregation to worship their Creator, the psalmist warned them against unbelief as in the days of the wilderness wanderings when God's rest was not experienced. The psalmist warned the nation not to repeat the folly of unbelief that cost their ancestors the promised rest in the land. In exhorting his audience, the psalmist began with the word *Today*, a rhetorical device to stress the immediacy of the opportunity. They must not resist God's voice calling them to trust and obey. In the Bible the word heart often refers to the human will. To harden one's heart meant to refuse to obey. It is with the will that we obey or disobey. It is the will that is the spring of all action for good, like loving the Lord, or evil of disobedience. The exhortation is always made to the will. Moreover, if this psalm's hearers also disobeyed through unbelief, God would keep them from attaining rest in the land. This passage is quoted in Hebrews 3:7-11 as a warning for Christians who through unbelief (Heb. 3:12) were in danger of not receiving the promised rest.

Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Pastor Don