



“Greater Than Solomon”

Kevin Presley

Today, I want to look back at one of the greatest men and greatest kings in history. Specifically, we’ll see what he can teach us about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord made some very important comparisons in **Matthew 12** where He referred to this great king. Let’s pick up the reading in **verse 38**.

Matthew 12:38-42 “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.””

That is a concise declaration that is brimming with meaning and truth when Jesus says that *one greater than Solomon is here*. We want to pitch our mental tents in that vast field of thought for a while in our study today.

The scribes and Pharisees were constant antagonists of our Lord. Over and over, He exposed their hypocrisy and their ignorance of their own scriptures. On this occasion, they approached Him asking for a sign from Him, but Jesus refused to perform a miracle. It wasn’t that He was unable to do so or was averse to performing miracles; after all, Jesus worked many miracles during his ministry, and those miracles were to prove that He was divine. Well, didn’t that need to be proven to these skeptical men? But this time, Jesus refused to work a miracle. Why? Because He knew their hearts and knew that they wouldn’t believe if they did see a miracle.

Jesus points out in **verses 39-41** that the people of Nineveh repented after what happened to Jonah. Of course, we remember that story. Jonah first refused to go to Nineveh and preach, like the Lord told him to. So, the Lord caused him to be thrown overboard a ship and to be swallowed by a giant fish. Jonah then spent three days and nights in the belly of that fish before finally being released. He then went to Nineveh where he preached and turned that entire city back to God.

Well, they did know that story. They knew all about Jonah, but what they didn't understand was that Jonah was a *type* or *representative* of Jesus in the sense that Jesus would be crucified and buried in the tomb for three days and when He arose, He would bring about repentance among sinners. Jesus tells these people that Nineveh was more receptive to Jonah than these hardhearted, proud Pharisees were and would be toward Him—even after His resurrection. So, the people of Nineveh would arise as witnesses in the Day of Judgment and condemn them.

In the same way, Jesus said in **verse 42** that the queen of the south (or the queen of Sheba) would condemn them in the judgment because she came from far away to sit at the feet of Solomon and learn, but one much greater than Solomon was standing before them and they refused to listen to Him. Well, if they answered Him, the Bible doesn't tell us how. I think they silently answered Him with scowls and sneers and with clenched fists. Had their thoughts been put into words, they would've replied something like this: *Solomon was a king's son, born to royalty in a palace! Who do you think you are? You are a carpenter's son born in a barn! Solomon was from the great city of Jerusalem, and you? You're from that tiny backward town of Nazareth, out of which nothing good ever came. Solomon wore a regal robe and here you are wandering about in a peasant's garb. Solomon commanded the world's most powerful armies and navies, but you go around raking the gutters to find people to follow you. Solomon drank from vessels of gold, but we see you going around asking Samaritan harlots for water. Solomon dined with the queen of Sheba and the dignitaries of earth, but here you go into homes to eat with publicans and sinners. Who do you think you are, saying that you're greater than Solomon?* But He IS, and in every respect. In fact, Jesus could not have chosen a more striking comparison because none greater than Solomon had ever lived. Jesus even spoke of Solomon in all his glory in **Matthew 6:29**. There are at least three things that we readily associate with Solomon. One, of course, is his wisdom.

I Kings 4:29,31 “And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore...For he was wiser than all men...”

Indeed, he was. He wrote 3,000 immortal proverbs, more than 1,000 songs, and he could speak with scientific expertise about every living thing. In fact, he was so wise that the most noble kings came from all over the earth to sit at his feet and hear his wisdom.

Solomon was also indescribably rich.

I Kings 10:23 “So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.”

He lived in such luxury that he makes the president of the United States or a king sitting in his palace somewhere around the world today look like a pauper living in a slum. Solomon made silver in Jerusalem as common as stones scattered all over the ground according to **I Kings 10**. Every drinking vessel in the palace of Solomon was made of solid gold. He lived and ruled in such wealth and opulence that we can scarcely imagine it. His economic policy for Israel was built upon the principle of trade with other nations and that expanded and enriched Israel until it was the envy of the world at that time. But Solomon was also great in rule. He was a wildly popular king.

I Chronicles 29:25 “So the LORD exalted Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.”

He was one of most popular, successful, and effective kings in the history of the world. He ruled over the forty most glorious years in the physical nation of Israel’s history.

Yet, after all this and more, here’s Jesus—the fisherman, the son of a carpenter, the homeless vagabond who travelled no farther than the small region of Palestine—claiming to be greater than Solomon. How? What makes Jesus greater than Solomon? To answer the question is to learn a great deal about who Jesus is and to understand the gospel and His mission to earth. We could spend our time in no better way than understanding who Jesus is and what He came to do.

First of all, I would suggest that Jesus had a much greater birth than Solomon. Try to imagine what a wonderful event the birth of David’s son must have been in Israel way back then. Solomon was doubtlessly born in a beautiful palace, attended by nursemaids and servants, and afforded every possible comfort and luxury. Jesus, on the other hand as we know the story so well, was born among cattle in a lantern-lit barn in Bethlehem. The circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus could not have been more humble and lowly. But there is, of course, a much greater difference. After the fashion of any other child, Solomon was conceived of David and Bathsheba. But in a fashion fit only for one who is divine and taking on the form of man, Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. Yes, that’s a miracle, but that’s exactly what it was and what the Bible claims it to be, and what God intended for it to be. Many modernists teaching in theological seminaries in the last 100-150 years went so far as to claim that Jesus was not really born of a virgin, saying that His conception was completely natural. However, Joseph had never been with Mary. When she became pregnant, it was natural to suspect unfaithfulness, but when the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, the angel said this:

Matthew 1:20-21 “...“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.””

You see, Solomon was just like any other man begotten by man and woman. But Jesus was begotten by the confluence of natural and the supernatural. And He was not even “part man and part God.” He was a God-man; that is, He was all man and all divine at the same time, the great mystery of His incarnation. His birth was one of the greatest miracles of all the ages.

When Solomon was born, it was a great event in Israel. His parents may have smiled. But when Jesus was born, God opened the curtains of heaven and a host of angels broke out in praise to God, saying, “*Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!*” (**Luke 2:14**). When Solomon was born, he was declared the son of Israel’s king, but when Jesus was born, He was declared the Son of the Almighty God. When Jesus Christ was born, He bent the datelines of earth around His lowly cradle until the date on every newspaper you read today, on every check you write, every deed recorded, and every monument etched testifies to the significance of His birth. The timeless Christ Christianized the calendars of the world in His lowly cradle long ago, but nobody I know dates a letter by the birth of Solomon because one much greater than Solomon is here. Jesus Christ was greater than Solomon in birth.

Secondly, Jesus is much greater in wisdom than Solomon. Solomon knew much about the birds, but he didn’t mark each sparrow’s fall as does Jesus. Solomon may have understood a lot about fishing, but he

didn't fill a net that had been empty all night with enough fish to sink a ship like Jesus did. Solomon knew a lot about trees, but Jesus killed a barren fig tree once with a few quietly spoken words. Solomon knew plenty about the stars. The Bible indicates that Jesus numbers the stars and measures the heavens with a span. Men may have gone to Solomon from all around the world for advice and wisdom. Yet today, 2,000 years later, men turn to the words of Jesus Christ for the keys to life eternal itself. Think about it: Jesus never went to school, yet He confounded and confused the most elite scholars of His day by His answers to their questions and His questions they could not answer. More books have been written about His teachings and His word, and more people have devoted themselves throughout the ages to a study of His life and His words. His wisdom is immortalized in the gospel, even beyond that of Solomon because He was God in the flesh, and He has existed through eternity.

Thirdly, Jesus was a greater builder than Solomon. Think about that because Solomon built one of the most famous and impressive buildings of all time—the temple of Jerusalem. One of the world's all-time greatest architectural wonders! Let me give you some idea of what the temple was like. It took some 183,600 men working for 7 ½ years to complete Solomon's temple. God, the architect of the ages, drafted the plans Himself and gave them to David. David was stopped from building it because he was a man of war, so Solomon inherited the task and used the limitless wealth that his kingdom had accumulated to construct it. Modern architects have estimated that it might cost some one hundred billion dollars in today's money to build that temple. It was opulent in every respect. In fact, its entire front side was overlaid with plates of gold which faced the east. In the morning sun, it had a dazzling brightness that was too much to look at directly. It was indicative of the glory of God in every respect because God dwelt in that place. He dwelt in the most holy place of that temple. It's where men went to meet God. In fact, when it was completed, all of Israel gathered for the ceremony. 4,000 ushers served the event. A choir of Levites sang. An orchestra of 4,000 instruments played. When Solomon finished his prayer of dedication, the glory of God came down and filled the temple and it was so great that the priests could not even enter it for some time (**II Chronicles 2**).

Yet, Jesus—having only worked in an humble carpenter shop—took three rusty nails and two pieces of wood as it were, and He built a temple that spans to eternity. He built a temple that makes Solomon's temple look like nothing.

I Peter 2:5 “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

You see, the temple that Jesus built is His church. It's the antitype to that type of Solomon's temple. That which was built by Solomon was a symbol of that which would come in Jesus.

Ephesians 2:22 “in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

God doesn't dwell in a temple of wood and stone today, but in temples of flesh. He dwells in the church. Folks set about to build massive cathedrals and sanctuaries under the illusion that it's some sacred and hallowed place filled with God's presence and that's where they go to be in the presence of God. But that's all wrong. Paul told the ignorant idolaters of Athens that God doesn't dwell in temples made with men's hands, but among the people of His church no matter where they come together. That makes the Church of Christ the greatest institution to ever be established in this world.

Admittedly, people don't look at the Lord's Church as being such a glorious thing today. In fact, if you're not spending millions of dollars and attracting thousands of people every Sunday to some grand stained-glass cathedral, then you really don't amount to much in the eyes of a lot of carnally minded people in our age. But the Church of Christ is glorious—not because of some dazzling edifice or some great worldly organization, but because of what it is in relation to Christ. It was built by Christ, purchased with His precious blood. It is ruled over by Christ, the King of kings. It is built on an unshakeable foundation and has withstood the storms of persecution and hate for 2,000 years and will stand until Jesus comes again! Where's Solomon's temple? It lays in the ash heaps of history, destroyed thousands of years ago. But the Church of Jesus Christ has stood for twenty centuries and continues to fill the earth.

On the same note, I wish to point out that Jesus is a greater king than Solomon. Solomon was a powerful and popular monarch, but Jesus is much greater. He is the King of kings! When Solomon was crowned King of Israel, it must've been an austere, elegant occasion, but my friends, when Jesus left this earth from the Mt. of Olives 2,000 years ago, a much more thrilling event took place on the streets of heaven above. When Jesus swept through the gates of glory, the psalmist indicates that He was crowned King of kings. The king of glory came in and He sat down at the right hand of God on David's throne that is much greater than Solomon's.

The Jews of the first century could not imagine such a thing. Solomon—the regal, rich, and renowned king of Israel. If they ever pointed to a period of glory in the history of their nation, they pointed to the era of David and Solomon. And here's Jesus—this homeless vagabond who went from town to town with an entourage of fisherman and common lowly people like publicans and sinners! He didn't even have a home! He? A king on a throne? Greater than Solomon? That's because they saw the kingdom and the Messiah as a period of earthly rule and Jewish sovereignty. They were looking at it through a lens of carnality and worldly ambition—just like people think the reign of Christ is still some future earthly reign with the Jews in Jerusalem today.

But that's not what the reign of Jesus is. He reigns NOW and His kingdom on earth is in the hearts of people who bow to Him in gospel obedience. He has all power and authority NOW (**Matthew 28:18**). He has foiled Satan and his sinister plan. He has broken the stranglehold of sin upon the hearts of man and the hold upon this earth by what He did at Calvary and His resurrection from the tomb. Now, all who will come to Him in faith can have freedom from sin and victory over sin. He has won the victory for men and women of every tribe and tongue who bow before His throne in obedience and become His subjects in obedience to the gospel. He's a greater king than Solomon ever was.

Finally, it's a comforting fact that Jesus has built a better home than Solomon. We went into great detail about the construction of Solomon's temple, which took more than seven years to build and nearly 200,000 workers to construct. Consider that if it took him seven years to construct the temple and took him thirteen years to build his house. In many ways, like the temple, I'm positive it was the very best that money could buy at that time. It was costly, ornate, and opulent. What luxury it must've afforded. Jesus couldn't speak to building any such house on this earth. In fact, I suppose some of the most pathetic words to ever fall from human lips were the words are savior said in **Matthew 8:20**.

Matthew 8:20 “And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”

But Jesus could and did speak of His Father's house.

John 14:2-3 “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Solomon's house—as fine and luxurious, as grand and glorious as it might've been—was built by hands. Jesus' home is not. It's builder and maker is God (**Hebrews 11:10**). What would it have been like to live in Solomon's palace? To be invited to stay in that glorious home with every luxury and convenience that the world at that time could afford? It was a home of kingly comfort and unparalleled provision. But you know what else was there? I'm sure there were times when the pall of sadness and gloom was cast o'er the home of Solomon. I'm sure there were many times that a funeral procession left that house. People got sick and eventually grew old in Solomon's house. There were doubtlessly heartaches and disappointments. Sin invaded Solomon's home.

But none of those things can be said about the home in which Jesus lives. A funeral train has never passed the mansion lining the golden street of heaven. There are no hospitals or nursing homes in that home. There are no sad goodbyes spoken in heaven. No tearstained eyes. That's because truly, a greater than Solomon is here.

The Pharisees to whom Jesus spoke so long ago in our text revered Solomon. At that time, they were living under the heavy yoke of Roman rule and they yearned for the day when Solomon's kingdom and all its glory would reappear and they would become a sovereign, triumphant nation again. But they rejected the One who is much greater than Solomon who came to bring them true peace and true victory, true sovereignty, and real riches.

Have you allowed the Lord Jesus Christ into your life by obeying His word and becoming His? If not, you need to obey the gospel. You need to come and bow before the King of kings and Lord of lords today. You can do that through gospel obedience by believing in Him, placing your faith in Him as the Son of God. Turning from your past sins in repentance, resolving to stop living the way you've lived. Confessing the name of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. Then being immersed, baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. I hope you'll take those steps and do that very thing today.

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