

GOD WITH US
Part 4: The Life and Writings of Solomon
Wisdom and Wander – 1Kings 1-11

Message 2 – Solomon builds the Temple
1Kings 5-9 (and 2Chronicles 2-8)

Introduction

King David desired to build a temple for God in Jerusalem. He was prohibited, however, because he had fought many wars. While God gave David the plans for the temple (1Chronicles 28:19) and allowed him to amass many materials and offerings for the project, the task of building it fell to Solomon. He made this project a major 7-year priority early in his reign as king.

Solomon's intention: 2Chronicles 2:4-6

In a letter to Hiram, king of Tyre, Solomon revealed his heart concerning the temple project:

“The house which I am about to build will be great, for greater is our God than all the gods. But who is able to build a house for Him, for the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him? So who am I, that I should build a house for Him...? (2Chronicles 2:5,6).

Solomon knew two things about God: 1) He is GREATER than all other gods and 2) He is SO GREAT that there is *no earthly house* that could possibly be suitable for Him. Solomon's temple-building efforts were his sincere attempt to reflect to the world his view of the character of his God.

Do you live with the awareness that your everyday works are a reflection of your view of God's glory? Paul wrote: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve” (Colossians 3:23,24). It matters HOW you work at your: business, studies, relationships, church, career, community involvement, caring for people, doing housework ... ALL of your 'building' efforts today are a reflection of your view of God. It doesn't matter WHATEVER you do ... you are ultimately serving Christ. He deserves your very best.

Solomon asks for help: 5:1-16

King David had a good relationship with Hiram, king of Tyre. Solomon drew on that friendship to secure help building the temple. He asked King Hiram for quality building materials *and* a skilled craftsman to help him. Solomon *affirmed* the abilities of an outsider to help him in significant ways.

“Behold, I intend to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to David my father, saying, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he will build the house for My name.’ Now therefore, command that they cut for me cedars from Lebanon, and my servants will be with your servants; and I will give you wages for your servants according to all that you say, for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians” (5:5,6).

Hiram provided valuable wood and an exceptionally gifted craftsman to serve as construction manager for the project.

“Now I am sending Hiram-abi, a skilled man, endowed with understanding . . . who knows how to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone and wood, and in purple, violet, linen and crimson fabrics, and who knows how to make all kinds of engravings and to execute any design which may be assigned to him, to work with your skilled men and with those of my lord David your father” (2Chronicles 2:13,14).

Who are the skilled people that you are bringing alongside of you to help accomplish your work? It is unwise and unhealthy to think that you can do it all alone. Is there some area of your life where you need to look for a Hiram-abi . . . a skilled person who can add value to your work? Pray for discernment as you begin to search for the special someone who can assist you. If you get the right people working with you, you will have more peace and joy in the process, and your works will turn out much better in the end.

The location of the temple building: 2Chronicles 3:1

The location of the temple had been previously selected as a result of a major failure/sin in King David’s life.

“Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite” (3:1).

Near the end of David's life, his pride moved him to count his troops (2Samuel 24:1-13). As a result, God sent a plague in Israel that lasted for 3 days. The plague was stopped by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (2Samuel 24:16). David then built an altar on that spot and dedicated it to the Lord. *It was a place that represented divine MERCY intervening to check the JUDGMENT of God against human SIN.* How fitting, then, that the temple – where God would accept sacrifices and forgive peoples' sins – should be built on that very spot.

Our God is a God of grace! While we continually go astray and fall short of His glory, He always interposes with a way of salvation growing out of His grace. Today, Jesus Christ – the crucified and risen Savior – stands between guilty sinners and a holy God, offering mercy and grace. The apostle John put it like this: “My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the One who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins – and not only our sins but the sins of all the world” (1John 2:1,2). Have you accepted God's gracious gift of forgiveness through Jesus???

The building of the temple: 1Kings 6:1-38

The 6th chapter of 1Kings records the details of the construction process. The work was started in the 4th year of Solomon's reign and completed in his 11th year. In the midst of this detailed description, God had a message for Solomon concerning His stipulations for dwelling among His people by His Spirit:

Now the word of the Lord came to Solomon saying, “Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel” (6:11-13).

To God, His main issue was *not* the glory of the temple (as if God needed anything that could add to His glory); rather, it was **the devotion of His people in their daily lives.** IF the people walked in His ways, THEN He would be pleased to dwell among them. But IF they did not walk in His ways, He had no desire to remain in this “glorious house” built for Him. We might recall what the prophet Samuel said to Israel's 1st king, Saul, when he kept disobeying God (and then expecting God to bless his life and rule):

“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1Samuel 15:22).

Buildings, rituals and routines do not move God’s heart; rather, He is looking for people whose heart is fully devoted to Him. Many years later, through the prophet Isaiah, God would say this about the temple: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the Lord. But these are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word” (Isaiah 66:1-3). God has always cared much more about the condition of our hearts than the condition of our buildings and external forms of religion. Ask yourself this simple question: Do you have a deep reverence for God’s voice (His word) in your life? Does it move you to love and obey Him? Is your spirit sensitive to His invitations, moving in the directions He invites?

Solomon’s personal buildings: 7:1-12

Following the construction of the temple, Solomon built his own house and various other royal buildings over a period of 13 years (thus taking a total of 20 years to build all of his structures). Along with a residence in Jerusalem, he built a country home in the forest of Lebanon, to which he could retreat from the busy life of a ruler. He also built a hall of justice where he could sit on a seat of judgment and render decisions for the people.

Details of Hiram’s work on the temple: 7:13-51

Great detail is given to the description of the construction process. The temple was ornate, to say the least, even the door hinges being made of gold (7:50)! A very large basin (measuring 15 feet across and 7-1/2 feet deep, holding 11,000 gallons of water) was made for various purification rituals (7:23-26). The priests would purify themselves in this large basin. The immersions that took place here were the forerunner to the immersions in water that formed the basis for John the Baptist’s ministry (Matthew 3:6). John’s baptisms, in turn, became the basis for the ‘believers baptism’ in water that we find in the book of Acts. Thus, when we participate in modern water baptism we are connecting to a very long tradition of water-immersion ceremonies that depicted purification from sins and standing holy (spotless) before God.

Another interesting feature of the temple was the two tall columns erected at the entrance (7:15-22). Each pillar was 27 feet tall, and each was named. The pillar on the right was named Jachin (He shall establish), while the one on the left was named Boaz (In it is strength). The names reminded the worshippers that their strength and security grew out of their right relationship with God, as maintained through confession, sacrifice and worship.

What does it really mean to have a 'relationship with God?' First, it means that you turn to God from your own ways. You acknowledge your need for His forgiveness. You believe (accept) that Jesus died for your sins. At that moment, you become a child of God. His Holy Spirit enters your being (much like God's Spirit would enter Solomon's temple). But having a relationship with God further means that you live in daily, moment-by-moment dependence upon Him. He is your foundation and strength in life. Everything is built on Him (the foundation), and everything is done with Him (the strength). As King David wrote: "I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock . . ." (Psalm 18:1).

The ark brought into the temple: 8:1-11

Having completed the construction, it was time to bring the sacred Ark of the Covenant into the temple, along with all of the other key items from the Tabernacle (tent of meeting) that had been constructed in Moses' day. At that time, the Tabernacle and its furnishings were at Gibeon (about 5 miles northwest of Jerusalem), while the Ark of the Covenant was already in a temporary tent in Jerusalem (2Chronicles 1:3,4). The elders of Israel accompanied the priests in bringing these sacred items into the new temple. When the Ark reached its resting place in the inner sanctuary, the presence of God filled the place.

"When the priests came out of the Holy Place, a thick cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of the Lord" (8:10,11).

Once again, we see the central message of the Bible: God desires to be *with us* – *Immanuel*. In every period of history, He is seeking to dwell with people. Even today, He desires to make *your heart His home*.

Solomon's prayer of dedication: 8:12-61

After addressing the people of Israel (8:12-21), Solomon turned to

the Lord and offered a prayer of dedication (8:22-53). Throughout this lengthy prayer, one request is repeated over and over again. It may be paraphrased like this: *When Your people sin, and they come to this place to repent and confess, please hear from heaven, forgive their sins and restore them.*

Finally, Solomon blessed the people (8:54-61) and dedicated the temple with a massive number of sacrifices (8:62-66). The celebrations lasted for 14 days before the people returned with incredible joy to their homes. God's new house was open!

Today, we have immediate access into the presence of the Lord at any moment of any day. We do not need to go to a specific location to approach God. We can come confidently to Jesus "to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). There is no need to sit in defeat over our failures. Go directly to our faithful and merciful High Priest, Jesus. "This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

God's Answer to Solomon's prayer: 9:1-9
(see also 2Chronicles 7:11-22)

In response to Solomon's prayer of dedication, God had two messages. First, concerning Solomon's request that God *hear* His peoples cries for forgiveness, God said:

"If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place" (2Chronicles 7:14,15).

God is looking for humility and brokenness, not perfection. As Solomon put it in his prayer of dedication: *"For there is no man who does not sin" (1Kings 8:46).*

2Chronicles 7:14 is often used on the National Day of Prayer in America. This is, indeed, a fitting call to national repentance and confession. But now that we see the original context of this verse (Solomon's dedication of the temple, and God's response), we can make a much more personal application of this famous verse. God was saying that He is open ANY DAY, and ANY TIME to the humble prayers of His people, even individually. We need not wait for a National Day of Prayer to claim the promise of 2Chronicles 7:14. It is God's promise to you, today. When was the last time you humbled yourself before God, confessed your sins, and asked Him to bring healing and wholeness to your life?

Second, God had a specific message for Solomon:

“As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’

Obedience to the covenant would bring great blessings to Solomon, the house of David, and the whole nation of Israel. On the other hand, disobedience would have grave consequences . . .

“But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight . . . this house will become a heap of ruins . . .” (1Kings 9:4-9).

Sadly, Solomon would *not* remain faithful to God; rather, he would eventually turn away, allowing his love for many women to rule his heart. It took him 20 years to *build* all of his structures. The last 20 years of his reign he *destroyed* them through disobedience. The house of his God would become the house of his wives’ idols. As a result, the kingdom of Israel was torn apart, and would never again see the glory of the early years of Solomon’s reign.

The apostle Paul wrote to 1st century Christians about the temple of God: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price (the precious blood of the perfect Son of God): therefore glorify God in your body” (1Corinthians 6:18-20). The glorious presence of God no longer dwells in a building made by human hands; rather, He dwells in human hearts that choose to enthroned Him. If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you must realize that YOU are now the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul so strongly admonished the early Christians to be careful to maintain holiness in their “temple” (their bodies). How well are you taking care of the God’s modern temple? Is He pleased, today, to make His dwelling with you?