

# Temples . . . Past and Present

Solomon: The Renaissance King – Part III

I Kings 5-6; II Chronicles 2-7

## The Decision

The decision is final, the time has come for Solomon to build the temple for the glory and presence of Israel's God, the only true God. Please turn in your Bible to I Kings, chapter 5.

## The Treaty

The first thing wise Solomon does is offer a treaty to the Phoenician king, named Hiram. He is mentioned as the king of Tyre in verse 1. This allowed Solomon access to the trade and skill of that nation.

## The Project

The entire temple was not overly large. The interior holy place was only ninety feet long. If you combine the accounts of II Chronicles and I Kings, you will learn that the building of this temple took approximately seven years, involved as many as 200,000 employees, and cost, in our economy, about five to six billion dollars!

The careful skill involved in building the temple was such that all of the stones and timber were cut at a location that was away from the site. Notice chapter 6, verse 7, of I Kings.

*The house, while it was being built, was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built.*

What incredible craftsmanship! When it arrived at the site, it all fit together perfectly.

The foundation stones were massive.

Archaeologists have uncovered the remains of some of them and have verified that the mason's signs on them are those of the Phoenicians.

## What the temple was not

Now, before we go any further, let me tell you some things that the temple was not. I will follow that with what the temple was.

## The temple was not a house for worshipers to assemble

- The temple was not a house for worshipers to assemble.

In other words, the Old Testament temple was not the New Testament church. We will talk more about that in a moment. It was not built to accommodate congregations. In fact, the people never met within it, but offered worship towards it, as being the residence of God.

Turn to I Kings, chapter 8. Look at verses 29 through 30a.

*that your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, "My name shall be there," to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place. Listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place . . .*

Look further at verse 35a.

*When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name . . .*

Continue to verse 38b.

*. . . each knowing the affliction of his own heart, and spreading his hands toward this house*

Skip to verse 42b.

*. . . when he comes and prays toward this house*

Continue to verse 44b.

*. . . and they pray to the Lord toward the city which You have chosen and the house which I have built for Your name*

You may remember that Daniel opened his windows and prayed three times a day toward Jerusalem. Now you know why!

### **The temple was not a replacement for personal integrity**

- You also need to know that the Old Testament temple was not a replacement for personal integrity.

Look at I Kings, chapter 6, verses 11 and 12.

*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 . . .”*

In other words, “Solomon, don’t think this dazzling, golden temple will blind My eyes.”

Now, this is an analogy. Even to this day, there is the temptation to think that, if you go to church, then you are a good person in the sight of God. It does not matter what you do Monday through Saturday, as long as you “clock in” on Sunday. Religious activity, however, can never replace personal integrity!

### **What the temple was**

Now, let me tell you what the temple was.

### **The temple was the dwelling place of God’s glory**

- The temple was the dwelling place of God’s glory.

I want to point out the detail of the holy of holies. Turn to II Chronicles, chapter 3, and look at verses 10 through 11a.

*Then he made two sculptured cherubim in the room of the holy of holies and overlaid them with gold. The wingspan of the cherubim was twenty cubits . . .*

It may be difficult to imagine, but these two angels were each fifteen feet tall and they stood beside each other with their wings spread wide. One wing of each cherubim extended all the way to one wall and the other wing touched the other cherubim. These massive golden angels hovered, as it were, over the ark of the covenant. The Jewish nation considered the wings of the cherubim to be the throne of God and the ark to be His footstool.

Now notice further, verses 13 and 14.

*The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits [thirty feet], and they stood on their feet facing the main room. He made the veil of violet, purple, crimson and fine linen, and he worked [sewed] cherubim on it.*

What a gorgeous work that must have been. And, it is no wonder, as this was the formal living room of Almighty God.

### **The temple was a testimony to God’s name and character**

- Also, the temple was a testimony to God’s name and character.

As I read and re-read these passages, it struck me that the this entire building process was marked by several things; several key words. Let me give them to you.

### **The temple building process was marked by – Excellence**

1. First, the place where God’s glory and presence were known was a place of excellence.

The temple was not built by the lowest bidder; the cheapest subcontractor was never considered. Look at chapter 2 of II Chronicles, at verses 13 and 14. This is Hiram, the king of Tyre, talking to Solomon.

*And now I am sending Hiram-abi, a skilled man, endowed with understanding, the son of a Danite woman and a Tyrian father, 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.*

Frankly, I would like to know a little more about Hiram-abi! Can you imagine a man who knows how to work with gold and silver, iron and stone, and yet, can also pick out delicate fabrics and do embroidery?

By the way, for those of you who work with your hands, with a hammer and wood or with a sewing machine and fabric, what an excellent model this man provides. He was a man who was working in the construction world and was known as a person of understanding, wisdom, and skill. If you start a company, name it, “Hiram and Sons,” or “Hiram and Associates”!

The God of creation has given you the ability to create with your hands, to fashion, to design, to decorate. That is His gift to you to be used in your craft, a craft that ultimately, brings glory back to God.

### **The temple building process was marked by - Holiness**

2. The second key word is holiness. Purity was the order of this ceremony.

Notice the priests in II Chronicles, chapter 5. The priests had already sanctified themselves, yet in verse 14, we are told that, when God’s glory filled the house,

*. . . the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.*

When God’s glory moved into the temple, certain things had to “bow out”. As prepared as the priests were, when God’s glory came, they knelt and bowed.

### **The temple building process was marked by - Joy**

3. Now, I have to tell you, as I tried to crawl back into this incredible scene, the third word that came to my mind was joy.

You can almost feel the excitement and sense the joy when reading II Chronicles, chapter 5. Let us start at verses 7 and 8a. Here comes the ark, the priests, and the entire magnificent procession.

*Then priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the holy of holies, under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark . . .*

Skip to verses 11 through 13.

*When the priests came forth from the holy place . . . all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the Lord saying, “He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting,” then the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud . . .*

Continue to the last part of verse 14.

*. . . for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.*

Wow! The earlier silence during construction has now been replaced by incredible music. There are trumpets, cymbals, harps, and singers under the leadership of professional musicians. The celebration begins.

Imagine the music, the anticipation, the joy – God’s glory was seen! This is where God lives, so to speak! He inhabits this holy house.

Excellence, holiness and joy – what a combination associated with the Old Testament temple of Solomon.

Guess what? One of the clearest New Testament revelations that should impact and motivate every New Testament believer is the astounding fact that God’s glory and presence no longer abides on the wings of the cherubim, but in the body and life of every Christian.

## **The Application – Your Body . . . God’s House!**

Let me give an application. The truth is, your body has become God's house.

Listen to two very familiar passages of scripture from Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, *The Message*. Let these words grip you by the heart like they have mine.

We will begin with I Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 16.

*You realize, don't you, that you are the temple of God, and God himself is present in you? No one will get by with vandalizing God's temple, you can be sure of that. God's temple is sacred - and you, remember, are the temple.*

Perhaps a better known passage is I Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 19 and 20.

*Didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.*

Ladies and gentlemen, this truth makes an impact. I love the way Petersen paraphrased, "God owns the whole works."

The question we need to ask is, "If God lives in our house, have we told Him that there are certain rooms that are 'off limits,' or does He have unrestricted access?"

The best way to answer that is to honestly answer this question, "If God had, literally, gone everywhere with you and been involved in everything you were involved in this past week, is there anything you would like to have changed?"

The truth is, God did go everywhere with you and was involved in everything you were involved in this past week! When you gain the understanding that your body is the taxi, the temple, the house of Almighty God, several things come into focus.

### **Understanding that your body is God's house produces motivation for purity**

1. First, understanding this truth, that your body is God's house, produces motivation for purity.

I love the story of Daniel, whose life we studied in a previous discussion. One of the amazing things about him was the fact that, if anything, he was motivated to be impure. He never married; he was prominent and successful; he was wealthy and well known, yet his purity was such that it mystified everyone around him.

You may remember the plot against Daniel. His contemporaries lured King Darius into signing a thirty day edict stating that anyone who prayed to any god, or toward anything other than the throne of King Darius, would be thrown into the lion's den. The Bible records that Daniel, knowing the decree had been signed, went to his room, opened his windows toward Jerusalem, and prayed.

Did I mention the lion's den? Daniel was thrown into one. Ancient Kings were fond of their wild animal collections. Solomon had his own, if you remember.

Archeologists have uncovered dens they believe to be like Darius' version. It was open at the top and had a dividing wall in the center. At the bottom of the wall was a hinged iron gate. The keepers would throw meat into one side of the den from above and open the gate for the lions to gather to that side. They would then, lower the gate and be able to go to the other side to clean.

Daniel was evidently, thrown into one side of the den. Soon he would hear the sound of those creaking hinges and feel the rush of lions coming at his body.

What was the price of praying toward Jerusalem's holy temple? What was the price for purity?

Now, we know the rest of the story, but do not forget that Daniel was a real human being. At this moment, I believe he was terrified.

I like the story of the little boy who stood in front of his class and said, "When I grow up I'm going to be a lion tamer. I'll have lots of fierce lions and I'll walk into the cage and they'll roar at me. Of course," he added, "I'll have my mother with me."

What is the most frightening experience you have had? I will share mine.

When we first moved to town, we rented a little house and lived there for almost four years. Near the end of our stay, we discovered that, in that house, there had been a murder/suicide between a husband and wife. We started looking around the house and

wondering where it took place. We were going to move soon and that was motivation to do it sooner!

One night before we moved, however, we had the most frightening experience. As we were lying in bed asleep, about one o' clock in the morning, we heard a loud crash and rumbling sound, as well as sounds of movement. Have you ever had something like that happen and wake you immediately? You are jarred awake and wonder, "Did I hear something?"

That is what had happened, but the sound had lasted long enough that I knew I had heard it. My eyes were wide open and I was staring at the ceiling thinking, "Oh, no! A burglar has come into this house."

I looked at my wife and she was wide-eyed, too. I could tell by the look on her face that she was not going to go and check to see what it was, so I had to go and check. I got out of bed, crept to the bedroom door, and opened it as quietly as I could. I looked down the short hallway leading to the kitchen, which was on the left at the end of hallway. There was a light that was on over the kitchen sink. My wife left that light on at night and it would usually cast an uninterrupted, rectangular beam of light into the dining room. I noticed this time, however, that the light was interrupted by a form that was about three and a half feet high and was crouched beside the refrigerator door. I knew a burglar was there waiting for me!

I decided I would have to creep in there and find out. So, I crept down there, in my green and brown checked pajamas, but please do not try to imagine that part! It seemed, and if you have ever tried to sneak up on anyone, you know what I mean, that every bone in my body was cracking and shouting, "Here I come! Here I come!"

I got close to the kitchen, as quietly as I could. My heart was beating wildly. The form was unmoving, crouching, and waiting. I was scared to death! I stood with my back to the refrigerator, knowing the crouching figure was right around the corner. I was thinking, "Well, I'm young and it has been a good life. I'll get one punch in. It will be 'one, two' and then I'm home to heaven."

I balled my fist and went around the corner – ready to go at this thing. Now, I hate to tell you this, as it is disappointing, but it was a bag of trash! My wife had set it up on the counter and it had shifted during the night, fallen off, and rolled against the refrigerator door. By that time, though, I was so

"psyched up," I wrestled it to the ground and kicked it out of the house! I then marched triumphantly back to bed. When I got back into bed, I realized that my body was covered with sweat. I have never been that scared since!

Has something intimidated or frightened you out of integrity? What would it take to cause you to give up your purity and character? Would it be a den of lions, popularity, money . . . ?

If you really understand that your body is the temple of God, then what you have, in Him, will always be considered more valuable than anything else in the world.

### **Understanding that your body is God's house provides purpose in work**

2. Secondly, realizing the truth that your body is God's house, or sanctuary, provides purpose in work. Ultimately, whatever work you do, is for God's glory.

Paul put it this way, in I Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 31b.

*. . . whatever you do, do all to the glory to God.*

More than likely, your work is a struggle and a tension between priorities.

I like the suggestion of a little boy, and you may wish this solution were available, which it is not. The young first grader's father brought office work home nearly every night. Finally, his elementary son asked, "Why?"

"Well," this dad said, "I just can't seem to get it all finished during the day."

His son then suggested, "In that case, Daddy, why don't they put you in a slower group?"

Perhaps you wish they would!

I like the way Doug Sherman worded it in a booklet that he wrote. Let me read it to you.

*It is not always immediately clear how some work contributes to God's work. How does a cashier, a data processor contribute to God's work? Or someone who sits in a cherry picker all day or repairs traffic signals? How does the ordinary job contribute to God's work in the world?*

Sherman goes on to give five reasons how:

1. *through work we love people by serving them*
2. *through work we meet our own needs*
3. *through work we meet our family's needs*
4. *through work we earn money to give to others*
5. *through work we honor and love God.*

I love the illustration he provides.

*On any given morning you might sit down to a breakfast of ruby-red grapefruit from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, boxes of cereal from Battle Creek, Michigan, and milk from a local dairy. Before eating, you thank God for the food – and look how many people He used to bring it to you. He has used farmers to plant and cultivate citrus trees and wheat to feed dairy cows. He has used scientists to check the food for purity, and bankers to arrange financing. Then, there are the dealers in farm equipment, and behind them, the builders of that equipment, steelworkers who make the steel for it, and miners who mine the ore for the steel. There are railroad workers who transport the ore, and oil workers who provide the diesel to run the trains. There are the truckers who deliver the food your way and truck stop operators along the way who pump fuel and pour coffee – and, of course, someone put down miles of interstate highways. Finally, there are the supermarket stock clerks and checkers, stockers and baggers.*

*Whether or not anyone ever thanks God for what you do; you need to realize that God uses our work to accomplish His purposes!*

I happen to believe that Hiram-abi, and all his skillful associates, had no idea that God would commend them, for all time, in inspired Scripture. Imagine being named in this record as pleasing to God.

The biblical truth is, *your work matters to God!*

Every job you perform is a self-portrait, so autograph it with excellence. Ultimately, as Schaeffer wrote, “By exercising your talents God has given you, you are praising Him.”

**Understanding that your body is God's house promotes fellowship among believers**

3. Thirdly, recognizing that your body is the holy of holies of Almighty God promotes fellowship among believers.

Note Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 19 through 22.

***So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.***

Imagine that! As individuals, we, together, make up a collective, special corporate sanctuary of God! As we submit to Him, we all fit together!

It is not a wonder that the writer of Hebrews, in chapter 10, verses 24 and 25a, said,

***And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another . . .***

This understanding creates a desire in us to go to church on Sunday and worship together in a way that not only recognizes and worships the glory of God, but encourages each other as well!

I spent too much time, this past week, staying up late into the night watching the NBA (National Basketball Association) finals. I caught the last quarter of two games. What a great match between two talented players, Akeem Olijowan and Shaq O'neal. I was personally hoping Shaq would have the air let out of his tires, so to speak, and he did. One thing that I never saw, and I believe I am safe to assume it was like this throughout the entire series, was Akeem say to Shaq, “Great shot, man!” or Shaq slap Akeem on the back and say, “What a great move back there! You completely faked me out! I'd like you to teach me that move some time.”

No. They were not on the same team. Rivals never reinforce one another. Companions encourage one another!

Browne Barr, of San Francisco Theological Seminary, wrote of research that he was doing. He gave an illustration from nature that I found fascinating. He wrote,

Next fall, when you see geese heading south for the winter, flying along in “V” formation, you might be interested in knowing what science has discovered about why they fly that way. It has been learned that as each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a “V” formation, the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front. When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point. The honking of geese is perhaps meant to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. Finally, . . .

(I want you to get this),

. . . when a goose gets sick, or is too weak to continue, two geese fall out of formation and follow him down to help and to protect him. They stay with him until he is able to fly again, then they launch out with another formation to catch up to their original group.

While Solomon’s temple was not a church, and the New Testament church is not even seen in the Old Testament economy, the attitudes found in the workers of Hiram-abi; that is, the craftsmen, the skilled workers, and the sacrificial contributors, are the same as is needed today.

After this gold saturated temple was completed, and the glory of God had filled the holy of holies, Solomon gave a benediction. With his hands raised toward heaven, Solomon said these words in I Kings, chapter 8, verses 56 through 61. If your temple is in need of spiritual repair; if you need the Holy Spirit to perform some interior decoration, take heart from these words. Begin with verse 56.

***Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.***

Skip to verses 58 and 59.

***that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances . . . And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, . . .***

(note this),

***. . . as each day requires,***

Now, what is the result of allowing God to have you as His holy temple? Continue to verses 60 and 61.

***so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no one else. Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.***

May I ask you a question? What kind of temple are you? Are you marked by excellence and holiness? Are you balanced by joy?

The words of C. H. Macintosh are copied in my journal. He was a prolific writer, who lived more than one hundred years ago, and had keen insight. He wrote, “. . . though we cannot be great, let us be honest; and though we cannot be brilliant, let us be genuine.”

Frankly, the temple of God is now in motion. It is no longer massive stone and inlaid gold, that was the temple then. Now, the temple of God is a living breathing body. The temple of God is you.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/18/1995 by Stephen Davey.

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