

1 Kings 5-6

Chapter 5

The Construction of the Temple

Chapters 5 and 6 describe the process of the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. This dream of King David would be realized by his son according to Nathan's prophecy of 2 Samuel 7. Solomon, now that his kingdom is established and he has removed the potential of opposition both foreign and domestic, is ready to focus his attention on this great building project. He begins with an alliance with Hiram, king of Tyre who will provide the cedar logs necessary to construct a building of this size and grandeur. Solomon provided for Hiram agricultural products for his central government in the form of wheat and olive oil. This economic treaty was beneficial to both parties. Tyre was famous for its skilled builders and timbers while they lacked sufficient agricultural production for their nation.

Solomon then conscripts thousands of people to work in the preparation and transport of the massive amounts of materials needed for the construction of the temple and later the palace complex. This includes the transport of the timber from Tyre and the quarrying, dressing and transport of the cut stones for the construction of the buildings. The use of forced labor is an indication of the power of Solomon over his own people and it is also a fulfillment of the consequences of having a king, like all of the other nations. The builders of Tyre provided the skilled labor while the Israelites provided the grunt labor. This was beneficial to both kingdoms from an economic standpoint as Israel is developing as a nation and coming into its place as a power in the region.

Chapter 6

The Temple and the Covenant

This chapter begins with the a chronological marker stating that the temple was begun 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt. This reference is theologically significant because it links the House of God in Jerusalem with the great founding event of redemption and constitution of the people of God. This temple is an expression of the covenant of God with his people, a progression of what he began in Exodus. Remember the first sanctuary, the wilderness Tabernacle was constructed during that period and now it is given its permanent expression in the Temple. When you compare the little we know about the dimensions of both worship centers, the Temple is two times as large as the tabernacle. The temple follows the plan of the Tabernacle, which was mandated by God. But 480 years ago the people of God were living in tents in the wilderness so their worship center was a very elaborate but mobile tent. Now the people are finally established in the promised land and have gained control and peace of the borders that were promised to Abraham way back at the beginning of the covenant. Therefore an elaborate, permanent House for God is appropriate because the people are permanently established. The Lord speaks in 6:11 and his focus is not on the building but on keeping the covenant – both king and people. That is what is most important, not a building.

The rest of the chapter is dedicated to a description of the detail and the quality of the temple construction. It is not a blueprint for people to follow in the future but a description of the beauty and value of the workmanship and materials that is fitting for a glorious God. Probably the most important description is the inner sanctuary known as the Holy of Holies. It is a cubed space – as wide as it is long as it is high. The interior is covered in gold and there are two large cherubim that are crafted to dominate the space. They amplify the cherubim that are on the mercy seat or lid of the Ark of the Covenant which sits below the cherubim. This is a picture of heaven, the throne room of God himself. It is interesting that the city of the New Jerusalem described in the book of Revelation is a perfect cube as well. In other words the city in which we will live the place where God dwells is the fulfillment of the picture created by the Holy of Holies.

What should we learn from this section?

What should we, as the people of God, learn from this description of the Temple and its construction? How do we apply it to our lives? Does this mean that we should build an extravagant building to honor God and house our worship of Him? No. Steven in his sermon in Acts 7 make this clear. God does not live in houses made by human hands but his throne is the heavens and the earth his footstool. So what is our “take-away?”

First, GOD DESERVES A PLACE OF PROMINENCE IN OUR WORLD. Solomon turns his attention immediately to the construction of God’s House – he makes the honoring of God and worship of him the very center of his kingdom. This is the place that God requires of us. It was never about the opulence but about the covenant of love and obedience. Worship of God must be central to our lives. He is the reason for our health, wealth and success.

Second, GOD DESERVES THE INVESTMENT OF OUR RESOURCES. Solomon spared no expense to make the temple of God a place of beauty. He understood that the resources that had been given to him came from God, they did not need to be hoarded for the future, but rather they should be spent on the glory of God and his Kingdom. Our money is not ours, it is a gift from God, and our future is in his hands not dependent on our money. We can give freely to see His Kingdom advanced and that brings glory to him.

Third, HE DESERVES THE FOCUS OF OUR ATTENTION, CREATIVITY AND TALENT. Solomon planned the temple, he used his creativity, the gift God gave him, to build a spectacular house for God. God did not make Solomon a giant slayer like his father David, he made him a songwriter, an administrator, a planner, a builder, a deal negotiator. The text makes it clear that Solomon used all of these talents to honor God. God wants us to focus on him and not just use the gifts he gave us to better ourselves and increase our wealth and comfort. He wants us to use the variety of talents represented in the people of God to advance his cause, his kingdom, his glory in all of the earth so that the world will know him and worship him.