

1 Kings 7-8

Chapter 7

The Construction of the Palace

Chapter 7 begins with the description of the Palace of the King. Much like the White House in Washington DC is the center of the executive functions of the central government, so operates this palace. What stands out the most in the description of the structure is the amount of Cedar that is used. It is a luxury to have so much wood used in the construction and is therefore a testimony to the wealth and power of the king and his government to all who visit the palace. Four parts of the Palace complex are described, the Throne Hall, the Hall of Justice, and the Residence, where the King lived. There is also the residence of the Pharaoh's daughter, who was his first wife. The Assembly Hall contained the king's throne and was also an armory (1 Kings 10:17). Thus it has storage rooms built around it to hold the weapons of the army. Together with the Temple, these buildings now make Jerusalem the permanent and glorious capital of Israel as an emerging regional power. The connection between the house of the king, the houses of the people and the Lord's House is important. In 2 Samuel 7 when David built his palace, he said, "I live in a house of cedar but the Lord is living in a tent." This is not right, I will build him a house. Now Solomon builds a Temple for the Lord but he also builds a glorious house for himself. Jeremiah will stand at the entrance of the temple and later at the entrance to the palace and bring words of judgment on the worshipers and on the royal family. Finally in Haggai, the prophet will tell the people that they are busy putting cedar paneling on their houses while the LORD'S House is not yet completed!

The Temple Furnishings:

Solomon brings in a skilled craftsman from Tyre to do all of the bronze work in the temple. He casts two huge pillars, which are probably part of the entrance into the temple courts. Their names have to do with "firmness and strength." He then builds a huge bronze basin that is supported on 12 bulls that are facing outward. This basin holds 11,000 gallons of water and is really a symbolic feature rather than a practical one. There are large bronze tanks that are made as well that are used for ritual purification but this larger basin is known as the great sea. It represents God's control over the sea, which is the symbol for Chaos in the creation stories of the ancient near east. In Revelation, before the throne of God there is a crystal sea – the antitype of the bronze sea of the temple and the laver of the tabernacle. He also makes a great deal of shovels and pots and sprinkling bowls that will be used in the outer courtyard for the burnt offerings. Notice that bronze is the metal used in the outer court and as we get closer to the inner court and the presence of God, the metal changes to Gold!

It says that Solomon made the gold implements – probably referring to Israelite craftsman under his supervision. These include the 10 Lampstands and 10 tables. In other places the number of tables is specified. He then brings into the temple and its storage rooms all of the holy implements from the original tabernacle and the additional pieces that David had commissioned.

Chapter 8

The Dedication of the Temple

Solomon summoned all of the elders of Israel to a great festival for the dedication of the Temple. He has the priests and Levites dismantle and pack up the Tabernacle as is prescribed in the Law of Moses and it is carried in procession into Solomon's Temple. The furnishings and implements are stored in the Temple treasury and the ARK OF THE COVENANT is placed in its spot, under the giant golden cherubim in the Holy of Holies. Once the priests completed this and left the room, the glory cloud descends upon the temple and fills it to the point that the priests are unable to perform their tasks in the sanctuary. This is just what happened when the Tabernacle was completed in the wilderness. God gives his seal of approval to the Temple in Jerusalem in the presence of all the tribal leaders of the people of Israel so there is no doubt that this is the official place of worship of the Lord God.

Solomon now gives a long and important dedication speech. Most importantly, he speaks of the covenant between David and God and then of the Covenant with the people who were brought out of Egypt. In verse 22 he begins a prayer of dedication. He praises the great God of heaven who has made and kept his covenants with his people. Verse 27 states that God dwells in the heavens and cannot be contained in the Temple that has been built. This is an important point because the Israelite will lose sight of this. He prays that God will turn his ear toward this temple and hear the prayer of the king and the prayers of the people. Hear and bring justice (31-32) hear and bring forgiveness (33-34) hear and bring deliverance (35-40) Hear the prayer of the foreigner (41-43) hear and bring success (44-45) hear and return them from captivity (46-51). Solomon rises from his prayer where he was kneeling before the altar and then he turns and blessed the people.

Then the king and all of Israel offered sacrifices to the Lord. 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats are offered on that occasion to the Lord. The festival lasted for 14 days and then all of the people left Jerusalem for their homes throughout all of Israel content with what God had done for David and his people.

This is a highpoint for the Nation of Israel. They have peace on their borders, unity among their tribes, a strong and godly king, and the approval of the Lord. The people and the King have put God first and have honored him with worship and therefore everything else is going well in the land. This is the promise in Deuteronomy. If you obey... then I will bless you in every way. Let us take a lesson from this part of the life and reign of Solomon. Keep God in the center, honor him with worship, invest in his Kingdom first and all of these things will be given to you. Jesus said, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. Jesus is the fulfilment of Solomon – the ultimate Prince of Peace. He gives us the same instructions.