

3. Building the temple of God

December 20, 2007

From high school or college or even from the Discovery Channel, we get to see many temples around the world – the temples of the kings on the River Nile, Asshur of Nineveh, Marduk of Babylon, the ziggurats in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, Baal of the Phoenicians, Athena of the Greeks and in Athens the Parthenon, Jupiter of the Romans, the Aztec temples of Mexico, mammoth buddhist temples in Japan, Thai, China and South Korea.

All of this temple building stems from the Tower of Babel, which was a monument to man's arrogant resistance to God. Pagan temples have always been the highest architectural expression, but the pagans who have attended, both civilized and uncivilized, have been on the lowest spiritual level.

Romans 1:21-23 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Pagan temples might have been intended by their builders to be the actual residence of their god, but Solomon knew that the heaven of heavens could not contain Jehovah God, much less this house which he was about to build. They put their gods in a box like a jack-in-the-box. In our case, we happen to have a pair of Jacks-in-the-box here tonight.

However, the temple Solomon built was never considered in Scripture as a house in which God would live.

2 Chronicles 6:18 "But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!

It was in David's heart to build the temple. He was given the blueprint of the temple even though God did not permit him to build it.

If we read these three chapters as a simple historical fact, there is nothing much for us to learn. But it is very important for us to learn the reasons for building the temple and how to maintain it well and what needs to be done to keep the temple from being defiled by corruption with in and with out.

A. PREPARATION FOR THE BUILDING MATERIALS

1 Kings 5:1-12 Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, because he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always loved David. 2 Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying: 3 You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side, until the Lord put his foes under the soles of his feet. 4 But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. 5 And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to my father David, saying, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name." 6 Now therefore, command that they cut down cedars for me from Lebanon; and my servants

will be with your servants, and I will pay you wages for your servants according to whatever you say. For you know there is none among us who has skill to cut timber like the Sidonians. 7 So it was, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly and said, Blessed be the Lord this day, for He has given David a wise son over this great people! 8 Then Hiram sent to Solomon, saying: I have considered the message which you sent me, and I will do all you desire concerning the cedar and cypress logs. 9 My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon to the sea; I will float them in rafts by sea to the place you indicate to me, and will have them broken apart there; then you can take them away. And you shall fulfill my desire by giving food for my household.

10 Then Hiram gave Solomon cedar and cypress logs according to all his desire. 11 And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand kors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty kors of pressed oil. Thus Solomon gave to Hiram year by year. 12 So the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty together.

According to 1 Chronicles 22 and 29, king David secured an enormous amount of gold, silver, bronze and precious stone for his son Solomon to use in building the temple.

During Solomon's time, the cedar trees of Lebanon were legendary for their excellent timber and the Sidonians were noted as timber craftsmen in the ancient world.

We can't say if king Hiram was a saved man, but he certainly respected the God of Israel. This was no doubt due to David's godly influence on him.

B. THE WORK FORCE FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE

1 Kings 5:13-18 Then King Solomon raised up a labor force out of all Israel; and the labor force was thirty thousand men. 14 And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts: they were one month in Lebanon and two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the labor force. 15 Solomon had seventy thousand who carried burdens, and eighty thousand who quarried stone in the mountains, 16 besides three thousand three hundred from the chiefs of Solomon's deputies, who supervised the people who labored in the work. 17 And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, and hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple. 18 So Solomon's builders, Hiram's builders, and the Gebalites quarried them; and they prepared timber and stones to build the temple.

King David's incomplete census had revealed that there were 1,300,000 able-bodied men in the land and Solomon used only 30,000 to labor on the temple, about 2.3 percent of the total available labor force.

Even though the construction involved a very small portion of the male citizens, the Jewish people resented Solomon taking 30,000 of their men to work in Lebanon four months out of the year. This critical attitude helped to strengthen the people's revolt against Rehoboam and to precipitate the division of the nation after Solomon's death.

One thing we can not miss is that to build this temple, the Jews and the Gentiles worked together. It is because the temple was to be "a house of prayer for all nations" Even Herod's temple had a special area for the Gentiles. Sad to say, some

of the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' earthly ministry period turned the court of the Gentiles into a market for selling sacrifices and changing foreign money into Jewish currency.

The church today is a temple of God composed of believers in Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles. It is being built up to the glory of the Lord as Living Stones – both Jews and Gentiles – are added to the temple by the Holy Spirit.

The majority of dedicated Christians will fight to their death to honor their God's name and to keep their faith in their hearts if someone tries to take their faith away from them. That would be an attack from the outside. But the same majority of the believers are not prepared for the internal attack as much as they are for an outside attack. What do I mean? Corruption from within, compromise to allow outside temptations to reside inside of the temple of the Holy Spirit.

One of the most impressive structures humans have ever engineered is the Great Wall of China which even can be seen from the space ship. It was built to keep the enemy at bay. But the two times when the enemies of China invaded her, they came through without bringing down the wall. Because they were able to bribe the gate guards.

How painful it is to realize that Solomon, the man who constructed the temple, was the man who married a multitude of foreign wives and encouraged idolatry in Israel, the very sin that turned the nation away from God and brought upon them the fiery judgment of the Lord.

Having a massive and impressive temple should not be the final goal of the believers of God, rather how to maintain it well and exalting God is.

Apostle Paul mentioned about the believers of Jesus Christ as the temple of the Holy Spirit on two occasions in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

1 Corinthians 6:18-19 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

In context, we learn that God is speaking to us about keeping our bodies and hearts pure because we – individually and corporately as the church – are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

I asked you to underline 'costly stone' in v17. This is literally "quality stones," showing that Solomon used high quality materials even in the foundation where the stones could not be seen. This speaks to the way we should work for God. We don't work for appearance only, but also to excel in the deep and hidden things. It also speaks to the way God builds the church. He wants to do a work of deep, strong foundations instead of a work a mile wide but an inch deep.

C. GOD'S GRACE IN BUILDING THE TEMPLE

If I ask you what two greatest sins of king David are, you would say, "His adultery with Bathsheba and his taking a census of the people," and your answers are correct.

As a result of his sin of numbering the people, David purchased property on Mount Moriah where he built an altar and worshiped the Lord according to 2 Sam. 24. David married Bathsheba and God gave them a son whom they named Solomon in 2 Sam. 12:24-25. Now we have Solomon building a temple on David's property on Mount Moriah. God took the consequences of David's two worst sins – a piece of property and a son – and built a temple.

Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more

This isn't an encouragement for us to sin, because David paid dearly for both of those sins, but it is an encouragement for us to go on serving God after we've repented and confessed our sins. Satan wants us to think that all is lost, but the God of all grace is still at work.

One cubit is equivalent to 18 inches. With that in mind, we can see that this temple was ninety feet long, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet high. A porch thirty feet wide and fifteen feet deep stood at the front of the temple, and a courtyard for the priests surrounded the sanctuary. It was exactly twice as big in length, width and height. I don't consider it as a massive structure, but very expensive one.

D. GOD'S SECOND WARNING TO SOLOMON

1 Kings 6:11-13 Then the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying: 12 "Concerning this temple which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, then I will perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David. 13 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel."

We don't know who brought this message or when it was delivered, but the Lord sent His Word to the king at a time when he was either discouraged with the building program or starting to become proud of what he was accomplishing.

The Lord reminded Solomon, as He must constantly remind us, that He's not impressed with our work if our walk isn't obedient to Him. What He wants is an obedient heart. God would fulfill His promises to David and Solomon, not because Solomon built the temple but because he obeyed the Word of the Lord.

A similar warning was included in the covenant God gave Moses in Deuteronomy 28-30, so it was not a new revelation to Solomon. This was the second time God spoke to Solomon about obedience.

E. MORE BUILDING PROJECTS

1 Kings 7:1 But Solomon took thirteen years to build his own house; so he finished all his house.

1 Kings 6:38 tells us that Solomon spent 7 years building the temple, but here we learn that he spent 13 years building his house. The temple was glorious, but it seems that Solomon wanted a house that was more glorious than the temple.

In chapter 7 we learn that not only did Solomon build the temple, but he built his own palace, the house in the forest of Lebanon, and a palace for the daughter of

Pharaoh. Also in this chapter we have details concerning the construction of the porch of the temple, the molten sea for the temple, the ten lavers of brass and the ten golden lampstands for the temple.

It was a good thing that he didn't build a palace for all wives and concubines, otherwise he would have had to build 1000 palaces.

When Solomon made his palace more spectacular than the temple, it said something about his values. Our most magnificent buildings in the modern world – usually given over to business, shopping, or entertainment – say something about our values. I am not saying that we need to build our churches in the most magnificent way. But we should value more the true temple of the Holy Spirit and the way we exalt the Lord.

Haggai 1:3-10 Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! 6 "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes." 7 Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the Lord. 9 "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Having a massive and impressive temple should not be the final goal of the believers of God, rather how to maintain it well and how exalting God is.
- 2) The Lord is not impressed with our work if our walk isn't obedient to Him. What He wants is an obedient heart.
- 3) We should value more the true temple of the Holy Spirit and the way we exalt the Lord.