

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

BIBLE TEXT : I Kings 5:1-18; 6:1-38

LESSON 257 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Kings 5:1-18

¹ And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David.

² And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying,

³ Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.

⁴ But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, *so that there is* neither adversary nor evil occurrent.

⁵ And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name.

⁶ Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that *there is* not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.

⁷ And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people.

⁸ And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: *and* I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir.

⁹ My servants shall bring *them* down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there,

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

God's Plan

With a command from the Lord to carry out a duty, there always comes the needed wisdom to fulfill that command. When God told Noah to build an ark, He also gave the plans for that great ship. When the Lord commanded Moses to erect a Tabernacle in the wilderness, He gave detailed instructions for the same. Now when a Temple was to be built in Jerusalem, the same God gave the pattern to David, who said, "The LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern" (I Chronicles 28:19).

David's Last Days

One day David said to Solomon his son, "It was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God" (I Chronicles 22:7). Then he told of the gold, silver, brass, iron, timber, and stone that he had prepared. "And," he said, "thou mayest add thereto." Then, like the Godfearing father that he was, he said, "Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee" (I Chronicles 22:14, 16).

David well knew that the task was by no means a small one. He asked the people, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?" Surely David's last days were his best. How happy he now was when "with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy" (I Chronicles 29:5, 9). Let us listen to a few words taken from David's prayer just before his death: "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: . . . thine is the kingdom, O LORD, ... all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own" (I Chronicles 29:11, 16). Does this not remind you of the prayer our Savior taught us to pray?

In answer to David's prayer that the Lord would give Solomon a perfect heart, "to keep thy commandments,... and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision" (I Chronicles 29:19) and also in answer to Solomon's request of the Lord, God gave Solomon wisdom, knowledge, riches, and honor.

The Time and Place

After the death of David, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, in the second month, he began to build the House of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah.

Had we lived in those days of long, long ago, and had stationed ourselves upon one of the four mountains on which Jerusalem is built, and had looked to the east, we could have seen the distant windings of the Jordan River and the gray of the Dead Sea. Looking to the south, we could have viewed the hill country of Judea and Bethlehem; and looking to the west, we may have seen a haze on the distant horizon which marked the line of the Great Sea. Just below lay the valley cut by the Brook Kidron, over which our Savior passed the night He was betrayed

and thou shalt receive *them*: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household.

¹⁰ So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees *according to* all his desire.

¹¹ And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat *for* food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year.

¹² And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together.

¹³ And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men.

¹⁴ And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, *and* two months at home: and Adoniram *was* over the levy.

¹⁵ And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains;

¹⁶ Beside the chief of Solomon's officers which *were* over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work.

¹⁷ And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, *and* hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.

¹⁸ And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew *them*, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

1 Kings 6:1-38

¹ And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which *is* the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

² And the house which king Solomon built for the LORD, the length thereof *was* threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty *cubits*, and the height thereof thirty cubits.

³ And the porch before the temple of the

in the Garden.

Willing Skillful Workers

Shall we turn back the pages of history and briefly follow the construction of Solomon's Temple? There were no labor troubles — a job for every man and a man for every job. Just as David had said, "There shall be with thee for all manner of workmanship every willing skilful man,..." (1 Chronicles 28:21). Huge stones were excavated from limestone quarries, then chiseled and cut to size before taken to the Temple site. Some stones have been found at the Temple site which are 40 feet long and five and six feet thick, weighing more than 100 tons. The top of the mountain was greatly enlarged, in order to accommodate the Temple and surrounding courts, by placing these stones around the sides of the mountain, and supporting them with immense pillars. Thus were formed terrace upon terrace and huge underground caverns. We read that Solomon owned 40,000 horses. The remains of underground stables for horses and places for chariots have been uncovered. Double doors gave access from the street to rows of stalls, paved with rough stones to keep the horses from slipping. Holes to halter the horses, hitching poles, and stone mangers have been found.

The Ceders of Lebanon

Off to the Lebanon forests went the woodcutters. There they cut the mammoth cedars, a very valuable variety which could be beautifully carved. There was no power equipment, so the work was done by hand, which accounts for the great number of men needed to do the work. There must have been great joy in the hearts of the woodcutters as 10,000 axes swung back and forth; 10,000 men with hearts beating as one man, with but one objective — building the Lord's house. Then they Cry, "Timber!" as a giant cedar crashes to the earth — another beam for the Lord's house. After a month of hard work they returned home for a period of two months, to be replaced by another 10,000. Thus 80,000 workmen and 3,300 officers were responsible for this part of the work. Then to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea some of the 70,000 burden-bearers carried the cedars. Huge rafts floated down the sea to Joppa, from where the cedars must be taken across country to Jerusalem. There, without axe, hammer, or any tool of iron, each piece was put into place (**1 Kings 6:7** ⁷ And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe *nor* any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building). Much fir was also needed, for the floor was planked with fir.

Solomon's navy brought gold from faraway Ophir, which meant a three-year voyage for the ocean-going vessels of those early days, for the Suez Canal did not then exist.

The Holy Place

The Temple proper was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 30 feet high, all of cedar overlaid with gold. The Oracle, or Holy of Holies, was separated from the Holy Place by the blue, purple, and crimson veil (**2 Chronicles 3:14** ¹⁴ And he made the vail of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon). The Oracle was a perfect cube, 30 feet each way. Inside this room were two cherubims of olive wood, overlaid with gold, each 15 feet high, and from tip to tip of wings also measured 15 feet. Can you imagine the breath-taking beauty of this scene, the wing of the one touching the wing of the other

house, twenty cubits *was* the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; *and* ten cubits *was* the breadth thereof before the house.

⁴ And for the house he made windows of narrow lights.

⁵ And against the wall of the house he built chambers round about, *against* the walls of the house round about, *both* of the temple and of the oracle: and he made chambers round about:

⁶ The nethermost chamber *was* five cubits broad, and the middle *was* six cubits broad, and the third *was* seven cubits broad: for without *in the wall* of the house he made narrowed rests round about, that *the beams* should not be fastened in the walls of the house.

⁷ And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe *nor* any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

⁸ The door for the middle chamber *was* in the right side of the house: and they went up with winding stairs into the middle *chamber*, and out of the middle into the third.

⁹ So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar.

¹⁰ And *then* he built chambers against all the house, five cubits high: and they rested on the house *with* timber of cedar.

¹¹ And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying,

¹² *Concerning* this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father:

¹³ And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.

¹⁴ So Solomon built the house, and finished it.

¹⁵ And he built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, both the floor of the house, and the walls of the cieling: *and* he covered *them* on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir.

and their opposite wings touching the wall, their faces looking down upon the spot where the Ark was to be placed? The walls had carved figures of cherubims, palm trees, and open flowers, covered with gold. Even the floor was overlaid with pure gold, as was also the altar of cedar, in the Holy Place. David had provided pure gold for the Temple; and is it not interesting to note that for the altar of incense, which is a type of sanctification, he had provided refined gold? (**1 Chronicles 28:18** ¹⁸ And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out *their wings*, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD).

According to Plan

Solomon built also the court which contained the brazen altar which typifies salvation. Everything was made according to the plan of God, and very much like the Tabernacle in the wilderness. However, the Temple was much more costly and its dimensions were double those of the Tabernacle. Its value has been estimated at between two and five billion dollars.

Two huge pillars stood just outside the Temple, with chains on the top from which hung 100 pomegranates of brass. Let us consider for a moment the porch in front of the Temple. It was 30 feet long and 180 feet high, the inside of which was overlaid with pure gold. Imagine a church tower about as high as a 15-story building — all gold within!

The Temple was not an edifice like our present churches that accommodate a congregation, but was for the purpose of conducting the worship service; and the congregation was on the outside. (See Lesson No. 70, Book Six, for worship service.) The Temple proper was completed in seven and a half years but an additional 13 years was required for the completion of Solomon's house, the magnificent galleries, courts, porches, and halls. Only if we had lived in the days of Solomon, and, like the Queen of Sheba, had seen the House of the Lord, could we fully comprehend the beauty of the Temple, the size of the stones, the elaborate carvings and decorations of gold.

The Old and the New Jerusalem

Not only in Palestine, but in all the then-known world, the Temple in Jerusalem was the center of Jewish worship; and every synagogue faced toward the Temple. Daniel, while in captivity, many years later, opened his windows toward Jerusalem and prayed, although at that time the Temple lay in ruins.

Today, are the windows of your soul open toward Jerusalem? Not toward the city that has been three times destroyed and rebuilt, but toward that heavenly Jerusalem? Are you looking, as Abraham of old, "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11: 10)? Are you longing to see that City of pure gold which John saw, "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Revelation 21:2)? If so, you must prepare for that place. If you expect to fit into that beautiful Temple above, you must be shaped and tooled here below in order that you may be placed into that structure without the sound of a hammer. How do we receive this shaping and cutting and refining? "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29). God's Word can burn out of the heart all undesirable substance; and its hammer can chip away here a little and there a little, if one will but yield to it.

¹⁶ And he built twenty cubits on the sides of the house, both the floor and the walls with boards of cedar: he even built *them* for it within, *even* for the oracle, *even* for the most holy *place*.

¹⁷ And the house, that *is*, the temple before it, was forty cubits *long*.

¹⁸ And the cedar of the house within *was* carved with knops and open flowers: all *was* cedar; there was no stone seen.

¹⁹ And the oracle he prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

²⁰ And the oracle in the forepart *was* twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof: and he overlaid it with pure gold; and *so* covered the altar *which was of* cedar.

²¹ So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he made a partition by the chains of gold before the oracle; and he overlaid it with gold.

²² And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house: also the whole altar that *was* by the oracle he overlaid with gold.

²³ And within the oracle he made two cherubims *of* olive tree, *each* ten cubits high.

²⁴ And five cubits *was* the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other *were* ten cubits.

²⁵ And the other cherub *was* ten cubits: both the cherubims *were* of one measure and one size.

²⁶ The height of the one cherub *was* ten cubits, and so *was it* of the other cherub.

²⁷ And he set the cherubims within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubims, so that the wing of the one touched the *one* wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house.

²⁸ And he overlaid the cherubims with gold.

²⁹ And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without.

³⁰ And the floor of the house he overlaid with gold, within and without.

Our Building

Another word picture we find in the Bible shows you and me each erecting a building. We need not go to the Lebanon forests for cedar, the quarries for stone, the plains of Jordan for brass, nor to Ophir for gold. Instead, we **dig** into the Word of God. There we find our building supplies and at the altar of prayer God provides our needs.

The very first step in the construction of our temple is to go to Jesus Christ, who is the Foundation: "But let every man take heed how he build- eth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:10, 11). Through His Word we learn that the most important parts of the temple are the three experiences of Justification, Sanctification and the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. These experiences were represented in Solomon's Temple by the brazen altar in the outer court, the golden altar in the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies behind the veil, or curtain.

After these spiritual experiences have been received let us carefully select only the best materials for the interior decoration. Just as Solomon brought pure gold to the Temple at Jerusalem, we must place the very best substance in our building. Much prayer and consecration are needed in our structure, also obedience and love, mixed with the substance of faith. We learn that the trial of faith is much more precious than gold (I Peter 1:7), and we decorate our temple with "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." Another improvement is wisdom, called "an ornament of grace" (Proverbs 4:9).

Let us continue to improve, polish and decorate our hearts with indestructible materials. Then, when the fire comes that shall try every man's work of what sort it is, our "building," unlike the Temple in Jerusalem that was thrice destroyed, will abide, and we shall receive a rich reward (**1 Corinthians 3:13-14** ¹³ Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.).

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why could not David build the House of the Lord?
- 2 Did King Hiram co-operate with Solomon?
- 3 How did King Solomon pay Hiram's men?
- 4 How many hewers in the mountains did the king have?
- 5 How long had Solomon been king when he began to build the Temple?
- 6 What was the size of the Temple?
- 7 Describe the Oracle, where the Ark was to be kept.
- 8 Do you think Solomon used any inferior materials?
- 9 What may we learn from this?
- 10 How long was Solomon in building the Temple?

³¹ And for the entering of the oracle he made doors *of* olive tree: the lintel *and* side posts *were* a fifth part *of the wall*.

³² The two doors also *were of* olive tree; and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid *them* with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubims, and upon the palm trees.

³³ So also made he for the door of the temple posts *of* olive tree, a fourth part *of the wall*.

³⁴ And the two doors *were of* fir tree: the two leaves of the one door *were* folding, and the two leaves of the other door *were* folding.

³⁵ And he carved *thereon* cherubims and palm trees and open flowers: and covered *them* with gold fitted upon the carved work.

³⁶ And he built the inner court with three rows of hewed stone, and a row of cedar beams.

³⁷ In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the LORD laid, in the month Zif:

³⁸ And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which *is* the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it.