

“MY FATHER’S DREAM COME TRUE”

1 Kings 6:1 – 7:51

Laurel Porro April 28, 2004

As I prepared the lessons last summer for this year’s study, I came to these two lovely chapters of 1 Kings and thought, “who am I going challenge to lecture over this material?” Not an easy assignment! So I started to go through some old files and came across the lecture that Laurel Porro did for this lesson April 28, 2004. In my opinion, she did an excellent job . . . so why “recreate the wheel” so to speak. I asked and received her permission to present her lecture to you. So here it is, just as relevant as it was 13 years ago.

It took young king Solomon four years of preparation to dispose of potential threats to the throne, to consolidate his rule and set up his administration, to prepare the materials, and hire and train the construction foremen before the temple construction could begin. It’s obvious that the hand of God was on the entire project as we read of no problems or delays with the building of the temple. It was started on time and was completely finished and furnished in seven years; the number indicating perfection.

Now who ever heard of a construction project being completed without hassles? Just the logistics alone was enough to boggle the mind: All the stones were prepared before leaving the quarry so that they each fit into the foundation without any construction noise. That alone was a miracle! The transportation of the stones, each of which was larger than a mid-sized car, from the quarries worked by the men of Gebal required incredible manpower.

The logging and transportation of the cedars, a fragrant, pest-resistant wood, from Phoenicia to Joppa by the sea and then overland to Jerusalem required coordinated transportation schedules as well as cooperative animals.

The hiring and training of the metal workers and craftsmanship required expert skills and leadership. The rotation of the work schedules of 70,000 workers, 80,000 stone cutters as well as the feeding and housing of them, and the communication between 3,300 foremen would have required nothing less than the wisdom of Solomon. Fortunately, God had given it to him, but still seven years can wear on the nerves of even the best king, so we read in chapter 6:12-13, that God sent Word to Solomon of His favor and encouragement. He reminded Solomon that He was indeed looking forward to taking up permanent residence with the Israelites, and promised to dwell among them as long as they followed His commands.

Solomon must have been pumped! He had heard from God twice since becoming king, with an assurance of not only His choicest blessings, as we heard about in lesson 25, but also His abiding presence. What more could a man or a nation have needed? Well, as we began to see in our last lesson in 1 Kings, despite all that Solomon had, what Solomon still needed was a heart totally devoted to the Lord; and what Israel needed was a king whose heart was completely devoted to the Lord.

What the nation received instead was a peace from her enemies, national pride that came from economic prosperity, a new capital city with beautiful buildings, and a temple with such beauty, intrigue, and prophetic speculation that people are still writing and talking about it 3,000 years later. But were these things enough to keep the king and his people faithful to the Lord?

Well, we already know the rest of the story and it's a sad timeline of a people who had it all and squandered it all for the pleasure of idols. The temple itself, the focus of so much attention that it takes up to more than two chapters just to describe it, would not be enough to keep the people faithful. At that time, they believed that if they had a temple, they had everything. Let's look at it more

closely and see why they put so much attention in this building, and more importantly, why it is worth our attention three thousand years later.

After reading several commentaries on these chapters, I let my computer mouse do the work and was surprised that a search of “Solomon’s Temple” showed that over 5,000 sites exist. Fortunately for you, I did not have time to read them all; but I read enough to open my eyes to far more than we will read from just these two chapters. I have eight points to share with you, so I’m calling this a crash course on Temple 101.

1. Religious Significance

In Deuteronomy 16, the Lord reminded His people that they must not sacrifice for the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Feast of Weeks except in the place He would choose as a dwelling for His name. For over 400 years, no permanent dwelling place for His name had existed. The tabernacle had been carted around through the desert and through Israel, resting for a time at many different locations, and most recently was stationed in the southeast section of Jerusalem on Mount Zion. A permanent location for the Ark of the Covenant was the most definitive step for Israel in establishing Jerusalem as the Lord’s dwelling place and the permanent site for worship and celebration of the entire nation. Even though in exile, the hope of the reconstruction of the temple continued to occupy the dreams of all Jews, and even today, without a temple for two thousand years, they still look forward to a time when they will once again worship in their own.

2. Political and Economic Importance

The city of Jerusalem was already a strategic location for commerce; which is one reason that David selected it for the place to build his city. Many trade routes passed through the city on their way to Egypt, Phoenicia, India and the Far East. The king was able to tax the commercial traffic, while the people prospered from the ready exchange of goods and money, providing hospitality for travelers

and most importantly, they had the opportunity to share the testimony of the living God with the ancient world. The concentration of sacrifice and ritual at the temple would now make Jerusalem an important site for pilgrimage as well.

An impressive palace and governing complex was an important indication of the wealth of a kingdom. Every king wanted beautiful buildings to outlast his lifetime and they often carved their life stories and conquests on the walls of their palaces for all to see. A king was hardly to be recognized without a palace from which to govern. When Hiram, king of Tyre, offered to provide materials to help build David's palace, this indicated the Phoenician king's acknowledgement of David's power and his desire to be an ally rather than an enemy. Since Israel controlled the trade routes by land and Phoenicia controlled the routes by the sea, this was an important economic alliance.

When Solomon was designated the new king, Hiram wanted to make sure this alliance with Israel was secure, which is why he was so eager to supply Solomon with the materials necessary for his new governing complex. Solomon's building activities including his palaces, Court of Justice, and several public buildings that converted the City of David into a royal capital of international renown. Solomon's temple was by no means the largest, oldest or most unique temple in the ancient world. In fact, the temple had many features similar to others in the ancient world, but its architectural integrity and magnificence did enhance Israel's reputation in the eyes of those in the Near East, and for the first time in history gave Israel status as a nation to be reckoned with.

3. The Significance of the Temple Location

Where the temple was built was considered of utmost importance for several reasons. You'll recall from lesson 23 that as a result of God's displeasure with the census that David undertook, that David had accepted as punishment a plague that killed 70,000 people throughout Israel. When the plague was halted in Jerusalem,

the angel of death was standing on the property of Araunah, the Jebusite who was using the site as a threshing floor. It was at that exact location that God through His prophet Gad, told David to build a stone altar to atone for his sin. As king, David could have confiscated the property from Araunah, but instead he chose to purchase it and the surrounding area for 15 pounds of gold.

Why was that particular spot so important? Well, what appeared to be a good location to thresh wheat, a windy high point of the city where the wind would blow the chaff away from the wheat kernels, was a site with a rich holy tradition. Legends told of a creation story that originated on the smooth bare surface of stone, which would soon become the temple mount. Known also at Mount Moriah, it was thought to be the place that Abraham sacrificed a ram instead of his son, Isaac. Jacob had his famous dream of a stairway to heaven at this place and named it Bethel, meaning House of God. Araunah may not have been fully aware of the importance of this site, but he was ready to hand it over to David when he wanted it. In a few short years, it became the focal point of Jerusalem and remained the worship center for Jews of the world until the Babylonians destroyed it 374 years later. After its rebuilding in 586 BC, the location alternated between Jews and others until 70 AD. At that time, Israel lost control of the temple site and it continued to be a source of conflict among Christians, Turks, and Ottomans, continuing until 638 AD, when the Muslims built a mosque there because of their claim that Mohammed ascended to heaven from the spot.

Today the famous Dome of the Rock still stands on the same site and is probably the most easily recognized landmark in the city. But there are many who claim that the coming end times will be preceded by an effort to rebuild the temple on the same holy site where it stood in Solomon's days.

4. Temple Design

The tabernacle designed by Moses was precursor to the temple in design and function. God had given Moses detailed instruction for building the portable Tabernacle to house the Ark of the Covenant and other sacred items before Israel settled down in the Promised Land. He also placed in the heart of David the desire to build a permanent location of worship and sacrifice, as well as the plans for the design.

The temple consisted of both an exterior and interior space. Outside was the altar for the animal sacrifice, ten portable basins for washing the sacrifices, the Bronze Sea, resting on the backs of twelve sculptured bulls to be used by the High Priest for purification. This basin held over 11,000 gallons of water and may have been supplied by an underground spring near the Pools of Solomon. There were also two famous pillars named Boaz and Jakin, which means the Lord is Strength and Stability. This outside area was as close as most of the people would come to the temple.

Only the priests could enter the temple, a 90 x 30 foot space where they brought the sacrificed animals to eat. It wasn't particularly large, only 2700 square feet, and was divided into two sections. The first section was called the Holy Place. It contained the lamp stands, tables with the Bread of Presence and the altar of incense, which led up to the steps into the cube-shaped Holy of Holies.

You may recall from previous study that only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, which contained the Ark of the Covenant, the tablets of the Ten Commandments and the staff of Aaron. Solomon's plan called for two huge angels to fill the space as a symbol of their protection as well as holiness.

Surrounding the sanctuary were three levels of side rooms, which were used for storage of wood, sacred vessels, priestly garments, temple records, donated food for the support of the poor, and sleeping quarters for those who served in the

temple. From outside to inside, the temple was designed specifically to represent the ultimate sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God, Who was yet to come.

5. Temple Construction Materials

The large white limestone blocks were shaped perfectly so that they would neatly fit together without mortar, and then polished so that they sparkled. Then the stones were moved to the building site on sledges and rollers pulled by oxen, and then carefully positioned by skilled stonemasons. All the furnishings outside the temple, the altar, the Bronze Sea, and the movable basins were bronze. From the polished limestone to the burnished bronze, the exterior of the temple was apparently dazzling.

The entire sanctuary would remind one of heaven in all its glory. The gold alone used in the temple weighed almost 50,000 pounds, and would have been worth 2.5 billion dollars in today's money. Clearly, Solomon was determined to give the Lord the best he could.

6. Temple History

The first temple, built by Solomon in 966 BC, was finished in 959 BC (7 years). Jeremiah predicted the destruction of the temple and a 70-year period of captivity. Soon after, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon torched the city, destroyed the temple, taking the contents and the people into exile. The first temple had lasted 374 years.

While in exile, the prophet Ezekiel received a vision of a new temple. Some thought that Ezekiel's vision would guide the building of the second temple when the people returned from exile. However, the second temple, built under the leadership of Nehemiah, did not follow the blueprint of Ezekiel. Perhaps that's why it took 20 years of delays and setbacks before the second temple was finally finished in 515 BC. Many people today believe that Ezekiel's temple will be built during the millennium kingdom.

After the second temple was built, the Jews continued their on-again/off-again love affair with the Lord, during the 400 years that are called the “silent years” of the Bible. Persian rule was later replaced by Greek control in 332 BC. It was during this time that the Syrians, under Greek influence, placed a statue of Zeus in the temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar. The Maccabbean revolt followed and after the cleansing of the temple and the miracle of Chanukah, Israel enjoyed a short period of independence until Roman Julius Caesar conquered them in 53 BC. The temple had fallen into disrepair and was patched up as necessary until King Herod sought a way to gain favor with the Jews with a major remodeling project. Well-known for his master building projects, Herod enlarged the temple to double its size and added external walls, part of which is still standing today. The project, which began in 20 BC was stopped in 63 AD, but never actually completed. When the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 AD after years of conflict with the Jews, the temple was completely destroyed for good. The only part left was a part of the Western Wall, to which Jews and Christians alike still flock today.

7. Symbolism of the Temple

Because much of ancient history is rooted in pagan practices and superstition, it is not surprising that many see cultic and pagan symbolism in some of the writings concerning Solomon’s Temple. Some writers have made the temple a sexual symbol, and connect diagrams of the temple floor plan in the shape of a human body, with the two columns as giant phallic symbols, with the decorative pomegranates loaded with seeds, as testicles. There is a strong link regarding Solomon’s Temple between the craftsman Hiram from Tyre and the Society of the Freemasons. The Freemasons, who call themselves a Christian society, is actually a cult, and they have since the 1700’s connected Hiram Abi, as a legendary mason who used his secret skills for the masterful construction of Solomon’s Temple.

Today, the Freemasons are actively planning the construction of the third temple in Jerusalem. I did not want to spend too much time on their web sites because I sense that it is the work of the enemy; but I think we need to be aware so as not to be deceived when the prophecies and their counterfeits begin to come to pass.

8. Spiritual Reality of the Temple

In past studies, we've looked at several ways that the Old Testament is a metaphor or a preview of the reality of the New Testament.

- The Exodus is a symbol of freeing us from the bondage of sin
- The Ten Commandments were a blueprint for the law that is now written on our hearts.
- The sacrificial system of animal killing pointed the way to Jesus as the perfect and final sacrifice
- The constant warfare that was required to take over the Promised Land is a foreshadowing for the spiritual warfare that the Christian must engage in.

And the temple? It was a preview of our New Covenant lives and our place in the body of Christ. Let's take a closer look at it.

Unlike all other temples in ancient times, Solomon's Temple was unique in that it did not contain an idol inside the Holy of Holies. The Ark of the Covenant with its mercy seat overshadowed by Cherubim declared to everyone that even without an image, God was present to His people. But the temple could never contain God; and as Solomon himself would declare at the dedication, which we will look at next week, 'even the highest heaven cannot contain Him' (1 Kings 8:27.) God authorized the building of the temple as a concession to the needs of His fickle people who wanted to be like everyone else. All the nations had a king and all other nations had a temple building as the source of their pride.

God mercifully allowed His people a manifestation of His glory from time to time in the temple so that His people would know that He was present, but He removed His glory from the temple at the peak of His frustration to indicate His displeasure with their idolatry. The temple itself became a sacrificial lamb of sorts, a symbol of God's mercy when instead of destroying the people who had committed spiritual adultery, the building itself, the pride of Judah, was destroyed by the Babylonians as judgment for their sin.

When Jesus entered the history books, He gave temple a new meaning: the building itself He called a house of prayer for all nations. But more puzzling to the people was the reference to Himself as the temple, which would be destroyed and raised after three days. When the temple curtain was torn in two at the moment of Jesus' death, it was tangible evidence that the Old Covenant with its sacrifices and its priesthood were now irrelevant and had been replaced by a New Covenant through Jesus Christ.

The ensuing spread of Christianity, as well as the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, showed everyone that the real temple resides within the Body of Christ. Consider what Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:20-21 – “We are members of God's household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.”

Today we are the temple, the visible manifestation of God's presence among His people and a people of distinction among the pagan culture of our day. The Holy Spirit does not need a church building, and in fact, the building itself often becomes a source of disunity in the Body of Christ. Emphasis on where one attends church, rather than Who one worships, detracts from the real mission of

the Church with its emphasis on programs and performance rather than on discipleship. It is not surprising that the Body of Christ is growing more rapidly in those places in the world where there are no church buildings as a rallying point. The Holy Spirit is instead moving like wildfire among the people within the 10-40 window, some of the poorest areas of the world, transforming hearts of stone to hearts of flesh and using people as His dwelling place instead of buildings made of stone or other temporary materials.

We, who know Christ, are the spiritual reality of Solomon's Temple built on the strong foundation of Jesus, having our unrighteousness cleansed with a perfect sacrifice, and walking into the Holy Place with our prayers and intercessions. You'll recall that only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, but now, we have our own Holy of Holies, where Jesus has entered: God's dwelling place – our heart. But our heart must be wholly His in order to enjoy unbroken fellowship with the God of the universe. And that is where Solomon made his biggest mistakes. Solomon said the right things, built the right buildings, and had it all, but his heart was not wholly the Lord's. In order to please others, he worshipped other gods, and that was his eventual downfall.

The Israelites thought that if they had a temple and a king, that they would be like everyone else; their king's wisdom, his leadership, his beautiful building, and his reputation would make them a proud people. But alas, the kings were always human; and the buildings, well, they didn't last. Instead God has chosen each one of us as His dwelling place, to manifest His glory so that we can reach out with the love of Christ to a lost world. And Solomon's Temple, for all of its study and past significance, it's really only an interesting place in ancient history. For we know the rest of the story as written in Revelation 21: Behold, I saw a new heaven and a new earth; I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

That's the end of Laurel's lecture. Wasn't it a good one? I'd like to add just a personal thought on our memory verse for this week's lesson – 1 Kings 6:19 “He prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the ark of the covenant of the Lord there.”

Most of us have had a cause for celebration at least once already in the first four months of the year . . . a birthday, an anniversary, or at least an Easter dinner. It seems special occasions always take a lot of preparation on the part of the host or hostess.

The obvious application of today's memory verse is preparation. We can apply this to the inner sanctuary being our heart and the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Laws of God, as the Scripture from God's Word that we intend to put there. Question 7 in today's lesson already asked you to consider how you've prepared your “temple” and I'm sure you answered like I did – with prayer, confession, repentance, faith and joyful anticipation.

But let's also think about our preparation for the time we come together to glorify God. Without prayer, without contemplation of the beautiful opportunity before us, many services consist of just a rote following of our worship leaders. Too often we're just observers – just here to receive our blessing from the preaching of the Word, to spend an all too brief quiet time in partaking of Communion. Weeks of rote become nothing more than a rut. Tim Hansel said that, “a rut is nothing more than a grave with both ends kicked out.” Those in a rut soon begin to rot.

In worship, God is our audience (our guest) . . . we are the performers (the host/hostess). Have you prepared for Him coming this week? Is your heart clean like a house expecting company? No one waits until the day of the event to begin preparation. We shouldn't wait until just before service when we're rushed just to get here on time. The preparation begins on Monday and is ready

for presentation by Saturday evening. Worship is the joyful giving of our very best self to God. Need encouragement . . . Listen to Psalm 63:1-5:

“O God, you are my God, earnestly I see you; my soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen You in the sanctuary and beheld Your power and glory. Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name will I lift my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.”

David’s words still stir our souls and make us want to shout with joy for being God’s child. Let’s make the preparation for worship a very special thing we do for the Lord.

Just as Solomon covered the inner sanctuary with gold and rich embellishments, let’s prepare our hearts with the gold of pure motive to make each worship experience a beautiful offering of the sacrifice of praise and adoration. Let’s pray.