

Lesson 87

Solomon Builds God's Temple

Solomon fulfilled David's desire when he completed the temple in Jerusalem.

Overview

Lesson Focus

David helped his son Solomon by giving him plans and gathering materials for the temple. Solomon completed the temple building in seven years. When the ark of the covenant was brought to the temple, God sent his cloud to signify his presence dwelling at the temple.

Key Passages

1 Chronicles 28:10–12, 28:19; 1 Kings 6:1, 6:9–14, 8:10–13

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Compare the tabernacle and the temple.
- Explain the importance of God's temple to Israel.

Memory Verse

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

You might be able to imagine how David felt. He was living in an opulent palace as king while God's presence was in a tent (2 Samuel 7:1–7). He wanted to honor God by building a temple where God could be worshipped. But God had other plans—David's son Solomon was to build the temple (2 Samuel 7:12–13). David had shed much blood in many wars. Because of this, God did not want him to build his temple (1 Chronicles 22:7–8). However, David did have a part in the building of the temple; he collected gold, silver, and bronze (1 Chronicles 22:1–6). God gave David the understanding and instructions in writing on how to build the temple, and David passed the plans on to Solomon (1 Chronicles 28:11–19).

Like the plans for the tabernacle God gave to Moses, the instructions that David received from God described in amazing detail every pattern and design to be included in the construction of the temple and its fixtures. Take a few minutes to read through 1 Kings 6 and 7:13–51. Imagine yourself walking through this majestic building and examining all the ornate details described. How would you feel standing in a place that was designed by God for his own worship?

The tabernacle was temporary and portable. It was used for worship by the Israelites while they were wandering in the desert and for another 440 years after that. The temple, however, was a permanent structure built atop a mountain (2 Chronicles 3:1). All the details of the temple, from the towering pillars in the front to the large cherubim in the inner sanctuary, pointed to a God who was majestic and worthy of praise. Stone walls replaced the fabrics and skins that composed the tabernacle, and the interior was paneled with the finest cedar and sculpted with exquisite reminders of God's providence. Rather than one table and lampstand, the temple had 10 of each made of solid gold (2 Chronicles 4:7–8). The altar of incense, also made of solid gold, stood outside the doors to the Most Holy Place. The temple was a constant reminder that God's holiness and majesty demanded a very specific pattern of worship.

Imagine the splendor of the massive rooms, their walls completely covered with gold, carvings, chains, pomegranates, and palms. The light from the 10 lampstands would have danced around the room in brilliant splendor. But that was not so in the Most Holy Place—the only light there would have come from the presence of God dwelling above the ark of the covenant.

When the temple was finally dedicated, the ark of the covenant, containing only the two tablets of the law given to Moses, was placed in the shadow of the wings of the cherubim (1 Kings 8:6–9). After the priests had placed the ark in the Most Holy Place, God's presence was seen as the cloud of his glory filled not only the space above the mercy seat but the entire temple (1 Kings 8:10–11). God was pleased to dwell among his people in this temple.

For now, this would be the center of worship for the Jews. Here, they would celebrate the feasts, offer their gifts and sacrifices to God, fulfill the national sacrifice on Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement), and worship God with songs of praise and thanksgiving. Sadly, all of this came to an end 424 years later when God sent Nebuchadnezzar's army to sack Jerusalem in 588 BC because of Israel's sin. The Babylonians leveled the temple, taking its great wealth as a trophy back to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:17–19).

So, despite all the pageantry and majesty of this first temple, it would not last forever. In fact, the temple would be rebuilt by the exiles under Zerubbabel and completed in 515 BC and then rebuilt again by Herod around 17 BC. The temple that existed during Jesus' ministry was the one restored by Herod, but it was destroyed in AD 70. But God does not demand ornate temple worship today. Jesus made this point clear when he spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. He told her plainly that the place of worship would no longer be in Jerusalem, but true worshippers—those who worship God through his Son, the Savior Jesus Christ—would worship in spirit and truth (John 4:20–24). In fact, the New Testament teaches that we—the church, Christ's body—are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; Ephesians 2:19–22).

So, rather than trekking to Jerusalem, Christians are privileged and invited to approach God's throne of grace with great boldness (Hebrews 4:14–16). Because of Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead, all believers may offer prayers directly to God and receive the grace and mercy he promises. What a glorious truth to share with the whole world!

Historical/Apologetics Background

Four hundred and eighty years after the Israelites left Egypt (1 Kings 6:1), Solomon began building the temple. The foundation was put in place in the fourth year of his kingship and the work was completed seven years later (1 Kings 6:37–38). The temple was constructed of the finest stone. Lumber was imported from around the region, and the finest craftsmen were employed in the work. Nothing less would be worthy of use in the temple of the Most High God.

Many critics of the Bible suggest that there is no way that Solomon could have amassed so much wealth. Just the amount of gold needed to plate all the walls and ceilings of the temple is staggering, and that is not to mention the tables and lampstands. The amount of bronze for the pillars, tools, and other furnishings was so vast that its weight was not even recorded (1 Kings 7:47). Skeptics reject the Bible as a source of truth and as a revelation from God, so they naturally discount things they think are absurd. But that is just the point—it is just their opinion. They have no evidence to support their claims apart from their own conjecture.

But those of us who believe the Bible is God's infallible Word can simply turn there and read that God gave Solomon both riches and honor that exceeded any other king (1 Kings 3:13). In addition to that, when we consider the friendship between David and Hiram of Tyre (2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Kings 5:1), the treasures that David intentionally stored up during his reign (1 Kings 7:51), and the opulent gifts given to Solomon by the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:10–12), we see that there was enough wealth at Solomon's disposal to accomplish the task. God wanted the temple built—and he orchestrated history so that the supplies would be available when the time came. His sovereign hand was at work to supply everything needed to fulfill his plans.

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