

Building a House for God - 1 Kings 5-7

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[0 : 0 0] 5, which I think is on page 340, 1 Kings chapter 5.

What we've been doing over the last number of weeks is, our practices is to work through a book of the Bible, and we've been looking at Kings, which, well, it's all about Kings.

And we're in chapter 5, we're going to look at chapter 5 to 7 this morning. We're just going to follow along and see what the Bible, what Scripture, what God's Word has to say to us and how it applies to us. And this morning, we're going to need to put on hard hats. So if you've got hard hats and a trowel and working boots, because we're going to go into a construction site. I don't know if there's any builders here, but we're going to go walking through a construction site. And you go, well, that sounds a bit boring. Well, I'm going to do my very best to show you that it is not boring, but very, very exciting. So let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at God's Word, 1 Kings chapter 5 to 7. Let's pray and ask for his help.

Father, we thank you for all that you provide, and we thank you that we have your Word, the Bible, in our own language that we can read. Thank you that we have the freedom to meet as we are right now in this building. And we ask that you would pour out and give to us your Holy Spirit's power so that the words that we read and look at together would be life-giving words, life-changing words. And help us to see the wonder that God lives with us and we can live with God. We ask for your help in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, you may be familiar with the television program Grand Designs. It follows the stories of those who plan to build their dream home. So whether it's a glass house in the middle of a forest or a wooden dome that's perched on the edge of a cliff, we get to see the design and the decor and then finally we get a visual tour through the finished construction. You see, when the building is all done, the building becomes a home for a family. That was always the plan. It might start off with measurements on paper, but it was always meant to be a home, a place to live. Well, in 1 Kings chapters 5 to 7, which are really quite long and lengthy, it might seem like an early version of Grand Designs. We even get to go through a visual tour because Solomon, who's the king, is about to build a temple. Look at chapter 5, verse 5.

[3 : 5 7] Solomon says, I intend therefore to build a temple for the name of the Lord my God. And for three whole chapters we go into construction overload. We're even told all about the workforce.

So chapter 5, that's where it's got a big 5, and then to verse 15, little number 15. It tells us there that Solomon had 70,000 carriers and 80,000 stonecutters in the hill, as well as 3,300 foremen who supervised the project and directed the workers. What a lot of people are, of course, of course, of course. And if we're not bored already, we get bamboozled with all kinds of measurements. So look at chapter 6, verse 2. The temple that King Solomon built for the Lord was 60 cubits long and 20 wide and 30 high. Down at verse 6, the lowest floor was 5 cubits wide, the middle floor 6 cubits, the third floor 7. He made offset ledges around the outside of the temple so that nothing would be inserted into the temple walls. Still with me? And then the decorators arrived.

Look at verse 29 of chapter 6. On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and the outer rooms, he carved cherubim, which were like angels, palm trees and open flowers. And then he's getting so excited and thinks everybody loves architecture that we get a detailed tour of the whole entrance to the temple. So look at chapter 7, verse 15. Chapter 7, verse 15. He cast two bronze pillars, each 18 cubits high and 12 cubits in circumference. Verse 18. He made pomegranates in two rows encircling around these great big pillars. And then verse 21. He erected the pillars at the portico, that's at the entrance of the temple. And then he gets really excited and really passionate because he starts giving them names. The pillar to the south he named Jachin and the one to the north he named Boaz.

Well, if you've managed to get to chapter 5 and you're still awake, you're doing really well. All this talk of cubits and cherubs and pillars and pomegranates, what's it all about?

Well, behind all the design and all the detail, we must not miss the purpose. When all the building is done, it becomes a home. That was always the plan. It might start off with measurements, but it was always meant to be a home, a place to live. Here's the first thing we're going to learn about this great big construction. First, God longs to live with us. It's a promise to dwell with his people. Let's go to chapter 6, verse 1. Chapter 6, verse 1. In the 480th year, after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, anybody birthday here in Ziv? The second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord. Now, dates may seem very unimportant and all may sound very tedious, but these dates act as promise reminders.

[8 : 11] You see, 480 years ago, God had rescued the people of Israel from slavery and when he rescued them, he made this promise. Here it is. You can read it on the screen. Here was God's promise. He said to the people, let them make a sanctuary for me and I will dwell among them. This was God's desire, God's longing to be with his people. He had delivered them from slavery so that he might dwell with them.

Now, we might be very familiar with the month of Ziv or have any anniversaries in Ziv, but it's a reminder. It reminds us that God made a promise to live with his people and when God makes a promise, he always keeps his promise. This might be a 480 year old promise, but it's a promise and God keeps his promise to his people. So, under Solomon, God's dwelling place, the temple gets built.

So, it's a promise to dwell and therefore it's a place to live. Look at chapter 6, verse 2. The temple that King Solomon built for the Lord was 60 cubits long, 20 wide and 30 high. Now, we'll come back to that structure in a minute, but let's not miss the point of what verse 2 tells us. This was a building, verse 2, for the Lord. A place for God to live. Could you imagine a house?

Where God could live? Now, that might cause us a little bit of difficulty. How could God live in a temple?

How do you squeeze God into a temple? Remember what God had said through the prophet Isaiah. Again, you can read it on the screen. God said, heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool.

[10 : 31] It's like you can picture God in his greatness, resting his feet, as it were, upon the world. Where is the house that you would build for me? And where is my resting place be?

Has not my hand made all these things? I've made the world. I've created the world so that they come into being. You see, it's actually impossible to contain the creator of the universe into a man-made temple.

You can't squeeze God down and push him into a box. God doesn't live in temples or in any other building.

So why on earth is Solomon building a place for God to live? Well, it's God's means of making himself accessible to the people.

The redeeming God longs to reside with his people. It's God's way of saying, I want to be with you.

[11 : 36] It's like when we got married and Kirsty and I moved into our house together.

You can't get a stronger statement of saying, I want to be with you. I want to live with you. I want to dwell with you. You see, Jerusalem was at the very centre of Israel, the centre of the country.

And the temple was at the very centre of Jerusalem. And God was setting up his home in the temple. And it's like God is saying, I can't get close enough.

I long to live with my people. So I'm going to have a temple made so I can dwell with my people. So God longs to live with us.

That's the first thing we learn. The second thing we're going to learn is that God's presence makes everything new.

[12 : 43] So when God comes to live with us, he makes everything new. First, eat and remember.

Let's go back and look at the design of the temple. Chapter 6, verse 2. Okay, they were told that Solomon built the temple. It was 60 cubits long, 20 wide and 30 high.

So that's about 24 metres long, 9 metres wide and 14 metres high. So we've actually got a visual. I did it myself. We've got a visual demonstration for you.

It's this building we're in right here. I provided it for you. Wasn't that good? It's roughly, what, 24 metres long, give or take 9 metres wide, 14 metres high.

This is what the temple shape was kind of like. And in terms of its dimensions, look at chapter 6, verse 3. The portico, the entrance to the front of the main hall of the temple, extended the width of the temple.

[13 : 49] So kind of think down that end. The other side, you've got a great big entrance, which is about 9 metres wide and about 4 metres out.

So a lovely big entrance. And inside the main hall, which is this area here, there was a smaller hall, which we read about in verse 19. He prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord.

The Ark of the Covenant was symbolic of God's presence. So see where these screens are here. This was kind of like the inner sanctuary, where the Ark was, which was symbolic of God's presence.

So this was the big temple, the outer hall, the inner hall. This is what it was like. But what I want us to do now is, I want us to look at the decor.

Look at the decoration of this temple. Look at verse 19. Sorry, verse 18.

[14 : 55] Chapter 6, verse 18. The inside of the temple was cedar. Beautiful carved wood. Carved with gourds.

Anybody grow any gourds? You probably don't know what they are, but I think you do know what they are. They're things like pumpkins and marrows and squash.

Those kinds of fruits and vegetables. And open flowers. Everything was cedar. No stone was to be seen.

Now look down at verse 29. On the walls, all around the temple, in both the inner and the outer rooms, he carved cherubim, which were like little angels.

Palm trees and open flowers. He also covered the floors of both the inner and the outer rooms of the temple with gold. So here we are.

[15 : 52] Can you imagine this room? Covered in panels all the way around in beautiful cedar wood. And everywhere you looked around inside this room, there were these elaborate, beautiful carvings of fruit and vegetables and trees and flowers everywhere, all over the place.

It was like an artistic garden show. And then to display their full glory, it was all overlaid with gold. And in case we miss the point, look at verse 31.

The entrance to the inner sanctuary, he made the doors out of olive wood. Verse 32. And on the two olive wooden doors, he carved more cherubim and palm trees and open flowers and overlaid the cherubim and palm trees with hammered gold.

And he did the same with the main entrance. Verse 35. He carved more cherubim and palm trees and open flowers and had them overlaid with gold hammered evenly over all the carvings.

It's a magnificent work of art. You could imagine as you came to the entrance of this temple and all the carvings.

[17 : 17] It was literally like walking into a garden. And once you got inside, everything you saw, all the decoration, all the carvings, was everything that you would find in a garden.

Trees, flowers, fruits. All these open blossom flowers, all carved beautifully on the walls. The beauty of creation on display.

It was just like the Garden of Eden where God first walked and dwelled with his people. Paradise itself.

Now the Garden of Eden was not only a place of God's presence, but the Garden of Eden was also a place of peace.

It was beauty and harmony. There was no chaos and disorder in the Garden of Eden right at the very beginning. And the temple that Solomon was building was to reflect it.

[18 : 26] So outside the temple, so if you can imagine here we are in the temple, outside in the car park area, was this huge basin of water.

Could you imagine like a mini swimming pool? And it was called the sea. Look at chapter 7, verse 23. Chapter 7, verse 23.

He made the sea of cast metal, circular in shape, measuring 10 cubits from rim to rim, 5 cubits high. And it took a line of 30 cubits to measure around it.

So you imagine this great big metal basin sitting outside there in the car park. It goes 5 metres from one side to the other, 3 metres deep, and 14 metres all the way around.

Now look at the end of verse 26. We're told at the end of verse 26 that it held 2,000 baths.

[19 : 31] That's a measurement. That's about 44,000 litres of water. So you can imagine it's like a swimming pool. But no wonder it was called a sea, because it was like a mini little sea.

But why on earth? Just think about it. Why would Solomon, after he's built this temple, then build this sea out in the middle of the courtyard, outside?

Why build a sea? Well, the sea in the Bible is often associated with evil forces of chaos and destruction.

And outside the temple, the place of God's presence, it's like the sea is now contained in this great metal basin.

All the forces of destruction and chaos, as it were, have now been calmed. That was the symbolism. There was now peace. You see, the temple that Solomon was building was to demonstrate what life would be like when God lives and dwells with his people.

[20 : 46] It will just be like what it was in the Garden of Eden, a beautiful new creation where everything is wonderful and good.

The absence of all evil, like paradise itself. God's presence, when he comes down to live with his people, makes everything wonderfully new.

So God lives with us. God's presence makes everything new. But God has demands when we're going to live with him.

He has demands if we're going to live with him. Let's look at these conditions. As we take this visual tour through the temple, God suddenly interrupts and speaks.

In fact, over the course of these three chapters, we don't see God directly speaking, but only once. And it comes in chapter 6, verse 11. Have a look in your Bible, chapter 6, verse 11.

[21 : 55] So we're getting all this construction design. It's all very elaborate. And then God suddenly speaks into the middle of it. Look what he says, chapter 6, verse 11.

The word of the Lord came to Solomon. As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws, and keep all my commands, and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father.

Here it is. And I will live among the Israelites, and I won't abandon my people Israel. It's only a two-letter word, but God's promise depends on it.

If you follow my decrees, if you observe all my laws, if you obey my commands, if, if, then I will live among you and I will not abandon you.

It sounds so easy, doesn't it? Do what I say, says God, and you will experience my promise. I will live with you and I will dwell with you, and everything will be put right.

[23 : 13] Everything will be beautiful and everything will be good. Just simply obey. Forget all the decor and all the gold and all the carvings.

Look at your heart. Just obey me, says God, and you will experience my presence. Sounds so easy.

Well, let's see how Solomon got on. Look at chapter 6, verse 37. Here we come to the end of the building project. Chapter 6, verse 37, the foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid in the fourth year in the month of Ziph, in the eleventh year in the month of Bull, the eighth month, the temple was finished.

Forget the dates, we just want to know that the temple is finished. And all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.

What a mammoth construction. Seven years. All those people building this great big temple. But let's not stop there. Let's keep reading.

[24 : 23] Chapter 7, verse 1. It took Solomon 13 years, however, to complete the construction of his palace.

Something doesn't seem right, does it? Seven years to build a home for the Creator, the Redeemer of the world, and yet Solomon needed 13 years to build his own home.

It says something about his priorities, doesn't it? Look at verse 2 of chapter 7. He built the palace. What a wonderful grand title for your house.

The palace of the forest of Lebanon. What a title. What a place this must have been. We can look at the measurements. 45 metres long, 23 metres wide, 14 metres high.

You know what? It's double the size of the temple that he built for God. And then we look in verse 6. The entrance that he made to his palace was even bigger than the temple itself.

[25 : 30] It seems that Solomon is more interested in building a palace for his name and making his name great and God is clearly taking second place.

This reminds me of all the many, many promises that I was made as a kid. My parents would say to me, Johnny, you can stay up later if you clean up your room.

Johnny, you can watch TV if you first do your homework. Johnny, you can have dessert if you finish up all your dinner. But I never got to experience the promised blessings because I could never keep the ifs.

And that's what happened to Solomon. He messed up his priority. They were a sign of the disobedience to come. He couldn't keep the ifs. And God withdrew his presence and as we read on in the story, in time to come, the temple would actually get destroyed, obliterated.

And instead of everything being made new, it all descended into chaos and disorder. God's promise to be with his people, it didn't happen.

[26 : 55] You see, God has demands when it comes to knowing and enjoying his presence. But the problem is, the same with Solomon, it's exactly the same with us.

We've got hearts that are more interested in building up our own lives and building up our own name. And God comes a very, very distant second.

You see, unless we love and obey God with all our heart, we will never ever get to enjoy his presence. What are we going to do?

Well, the good news is, God makes it possible for people like us to live with him. look at our history.

I want you to imagine for a minute, put on your thinking caps here, that you're standing outside, this is this temple, all the carvings, all the gold, all the beauty, the big swimming pool outside, the sea out there, the entrance, you're at the entrance.

[28 : 08] And as you come up to these great big doors to come into the temple, remember the temple is where God is, where God's presence is, this is where you come to meet God. The design is so important.

As you come up to the temple, you discover, have a look at chapter 7 verse 21, you're reminded that we need to get our heads around this now, a little bit of thinking, chapter 7 verse 21, we're told that one of the pillars is to the south and one is to the north.

That simply means that the temple is facing in an eastwardly direction. Now you're going, Johnny, what are you going on about? I've followed you so far, but what's all this about the temple being in an eastwardly direction?

What's so important about that? Well, think back to the Garden of Eden, where God walked and talked and dwelled with the first people, Adam and Eve.

But because of their disobedience, what happened? they got removed from the garden, they got removed from God's presence and this is what it says in Genesis, you can read it here on the screen.

[29 : 21] After God drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

So God was saying to them, because you've rebelled against me, you can't be in my presence, you can't be with me, you can't enjoy me, you can't know me. Now go back to the temple that we were thinking about.

There you are at the entrance and as you come from the east, you're coming up to the temple and on these great big double doors, what's carved on the doors, do you remember?

Cherubi. Those angels and you're reminded you cannot enter the presence of God, you're not allowed in.

Everywhere all over the door are these symbols, these cherubim which is telling you you can't get in, you can't live with God, you can't be in his presence.

[30 : 33] Now we mightn't have any cherubim as you came in the doors this morning but you know what? It's telling us the same thing. This is our history, this is our story.

God has made it crystal clear that when we turn against him we cannot live with him and enjoy his presence. So how do we?

Well, it's all because of God's stubborn grace. Go to chapter 7 verse 21 again.

There we are, picture yourself at the temple doors, the cherubim telling you you can't come in, you can't come into God's presence and then either side, what's either side of the doors?

These enormous great big pillars, eight metres high, five and a half metres in circumference, huge big pillars supporting the entrance.

[31 : 32] But you see what they're called, they're given names aren't they? The pillar to the south is named Jachin and the one to the north is called Boaz.

Now these aren't the names of his pet hamsters. This is God's stubborn grace. You know what Jachin means?

You might have a little footnote in your Bible. it means God establishes. And you know what Boaz means? God is strength.

So as you look at one pillar, it reminds us of what God said he will do. I will establish my promise to live with my people. And they look at the other pillar and it reminds them of how God will do it.

I will fulfil my promise by my power. So in the face of all the rebellion that is going on, we have God's stubborn grace as if God is digging his heels in and he's saying I will dwell with my people and not even sin is going to stop it or get in the way.

[32 : 50] My promise to live with my people will be fulfilled by my power. well we are living a long long ways from the temple of Solomon aren't we?

How does this promise ever come about? Well the beauty is God's promise to live with his people becomes a reality with the coming of Jesus Christ.

through Jesus God now lives with us. Let me show you I want to show you as we bring this to a conclusion how we can experience God's presence ourself.

Have a look at Ephesians chapter 2 it's in the New Testament Galatians Ephesians if somebody's got a page number please shout it out for me loud and clear Ephesians chapter 2 thank you very much 1 1 7 4 Ephesians chapter 2 and we're going to look at verse 21 1 1 7 4 is that right?

Yep 1 1 7 4 Ephesians chapter 2 and again okay don't take off your hard hats put them back on again put on your building shoes and your trowels because there's more building going on here okay it all fits in with the imagery verse 21 in him that is it's talking about Jesus in Jesus the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord so what it's telling us here is that Jesus has come and Jesus is now himself is like the builder and Jesus is building a new temple not a physical temple made of wood and stone but Jesus is building a living temple a temple whose stones are people people like you and me look at verse 22 and in him in Jesus you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which

[35 : 35] God lives by his spirit so here's the picture that I want us to get as we come to Jesus as we repent of our sin and our rebellion as we trust in Jesus as we build our life on the foundation of Jesus Christ he takes us and he builds us together to be a dwelling place in which God lives by his spirit he takes all our mess and all our brokenness and as he died on the cross he takes the blame for the things that we have done wrong and he makes us wonderfully new people and he builds us together piece by piece so that God could dwell and live amongst his people so as the temple and that is what we're looking at here right now not the concrete walls around us here but the people the temple are the people those who trust in

Jesus Christ God is here the creator of the universe is present by his holy spirit now as you come here into this temple of God's people as you look around you're not going to see carved wood and trees and cherubim and gourds and pomegranates and all of this stuff but you know what you're going to see you're going to see new people new creations people who are being restored and made more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ that is the new creation that God is bringing about and God is saying I am living amongst you and I am dwelling amongst you but there's one last piece of construction that I must show you because even as we dwell together and God is present by his spirit there is still chaos and disorder around this world isn't there there's still broken lives there's still things that go wrong but one day God has promised that he will come again and we will be able to enjoy the fullness of his presence for all eternity go to the very last book of your Bible

Revelation chapter 21 and here's where all this construction that we've looked at comes to its finished design and wonderful conclusion it's a building project that is still going on as it were but one day we will get to experience it and we will know it fully and completely Revelation chapter 21 at the very end of your Bible let me read Revelation 21 verse 1 it's like a picture of Eden Eden restored everything put right here's the picture then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any what any sea the chaos the disorder the evil the destruction it's all gone it's no longer there and verse 2

I saw the holy city the new Jerusalem now we're talking temple language again coming down from heaven from God prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying look God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away and he who is seated on the throne said I am making everything new the finished construction project of God's new world where we can dwell with him forever and forever this is

God's stubborn grace he made a promise I will dwell with my people he has done that through Christ and his promise keeping power will ensure that if we trust in him we will live with him forever and forever and forever do you know God's presence with you today are you sure that you will dwell with him for all eternity in God's new heaven and new earth what an amazing prospect that lies ahead for all who love him let's pray father father father god we thank you for that promise that god would dwell and live with his people and we thank you that because of Jesus we can say that god is present here now by his spirit with his people and yet we long for that day we look forward to that day when god will come again in all his fullness and we will dwell with him in the new creation father keep us until that day we pray in Jesus name amen we're going to sing name of all majesty there's a line in it somewhere if I could find it savior of Calvary costliest victory darkness defeated and Eden restored born as a man to die nailed to a cross on high cold in the grave to lie Jesus is Lord this is our wonderful truth that we can sing about let's stand together as we sing music so you