

# The builder of the Temple

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Date: 12 July 2015

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[0:00] And Ben, I would be very grateful if...! So please turn to 1 Kings 5.

And it's not possible to say everything about it this morning.

In fact, we just sort of begin to scratch the surface. You might be thinking, what on earth is the relevance of some ancient king chopping out blocks of stone and transporting them and cutting down trees and building something a long way away a long time ago?

Well, what I want to say is that I fully understand your caution, but the subject that we are looking at is absolutely central to Christian faith and Christian life.

So here's some questions. Seeing as I'm such a rubbish Christian, is it likely that God would want to live anywhere near me?

[1:28] I'm sure not everybody is thinking that, but I wouldn't be surprised if some of us at some time don't think exactly that. We're told by various preachers that God delights in us.

I think that always needs some qualification, what that actually means. But we think to ourselves, well, I don't delight in myself, and I really don't see how God could delight in me.

Well, I've moved the question a little bit. About living in proximity, living with, living in. So this is a question this time.

Seeing as I'm such a rubbish Christian, what does the Bible say about God living with me, living in me, me living with God?

Here's another question. Sometimes God feels far away. How am I supposed to live the Christian life? It's a question, isn't it?

[2:34] It's a question that I'm sure we don't all come across all the time, but some of us come across it some of the time. What we're going to look at gives an answer to that.

It won't necessarily give an exact answer this morning, but it tackles that question. And here's another question. What will be the best thing about heaven, about the world to come?

What could I have in my mind to look forward to? And the answer to all those questions, and many questions like that, is what we're looking at, the temple.

The dwelling of God. How God lives with people. What he does to make that possible. What's his policy about it. What's the future of it.

And so on. So we'll dive right into the text, and then we'll pop out of it in a few minutes. But let's just dive right into the text. This is the story of Solomon building the temple.

[3:36] There's Solomon. Solomon. And we have in chapter 5 verse 1, well actually we have in the previous chapter, last verse, men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

So that's what we were talking about last time, the greatness of Solomon. Kings hear about him, and they make their approach to him.

He's the great king. Messiah is the king who attracts all the other kings to him. The kings hear.

There's some kings. They're hearing. And Hiram.

Let's call him Hiram. Hiram, king of Tyre. Chapter 5 verse 1. He hears that Solomon has been appointed, anointed king to succeed his father David.

And he sends servants to Solomon. There's Hiram. It says that he, because he had always been on friendly terms with David. Can I tell you the exact translation?

[4:40] It says because he loved David. Which teaches us one thing, that love isn't always romantic love. And it does teach us that this sort of relationship that we're going to be finding out about is rightly described in the Bible as love.

Hiram had loved David, and so he sent messengers to, he sent his servants to Solomon. And now we begin to build up a relationship which turns out to be very significant. Let's read on. And Solomon sends back a message to Hiram.

So this is what's happening. This is the message. 3, 2, 6.

This is what Solomon says. You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the name of the Lord his God.

[5:44] Let me just stop on the word temple. Because when you say temple, you're thinking perhaps of Hindu temple. Perhaps you're thinking of, I don't know, temple.

Very ornate. The word is simply house. And all the way through here, when you read temple, the literal word is house. And everybody knows what a house is like.

You live in a house, almost certainly. Not everybody lives in a house, but most people live in a house, or something like it. And you can understand the idea of God.

Well, this is the idea. God wants to live in a house. And this is what this is all about. He could not build a house. He could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God until the Lord put his enemies under his feet.

But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side. And the word rest is a very significant word in the Bible. Jesus promises rest, doesn't he?

[6:46] I will give you rest for your souls. There remains a rest for the people of God. Rest meaning a sort of arrival where God has promised.

God has given me rest on every side and there is no adversary or disaster. I intend, therefore, to build a house for the name of the Lord my God as the Lord told my father David when he said, your son, whom I will give on the throne in your place, will build the house for my name.

So give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours. I will give you for your men whatever wages you say.

You know that we have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians. So let's just go through that a bit at a time. There's the king, King Solomon. And he has in mind to build a house for God. Because his father before him, David, had that in mind too. This is the subject. A house. Now notice, it doesn't actually say a house for the Lord.

[7:53] It says a house for the name of the Lord. This is to do with this whole question of whether God would fit in a house. And that's what Solomon comes on to later.

So I don't want to spoil it for later. But this is the question. If God is so big that the heaven and the highest heavens cannot contain him, how on earth can God fit into a house?

So he doesn't say it's a house to contain the Lord. He says a house for the name of the Lord. And the name of the Lord is everything that makes the Lord the Lord.

His character, the way he responds to things, the way he creates things, the way he relates and so on. And in some way, the name of the Lord is going to live in this house.

Well, David wanted to build, but he couldn't build it because of the wars. So, and until the Lord put his enemies under his feet. So let's put the enemies under the feet.

[9:00] And putting enemies under the feet is another big biblical theme. That this is what's promised to the Messiah that his enemies will be put under his feet.

And in 1 Corinthians 15, 25, it quotes that. He will reign until he put all his enemies under his feet. Does anybody know what the last enemy to be put under his feet is?

Death. Death. All his enemies under his feet, including our greatest enemy, death. Well, at this point, Solomon could say, as far as we can see, God has put all his enemies under his feet.

And we know, actually, that's still to be done in its fullest sense. He's been given rest on every side, verse 4. And can I give you the literal translation of the next verse?

It says there is no adversary or disaster. In Hebrew, it says there's no Satan or evil happening. But that's an interesting thought, isn't it?

[10:10] That Solomon could say, we've got to a point where there is no Satan, no adversary. That would be a great point to come to, wouldn't it? To be able to say, the adversary is finished.

Still to happen, but it will happen. And those things being the case, Solomon says in verse 5, I intend, or quite literally, I say, I say to build a house for the name of the Lord my God.

And it's all according to what God had said. As the Lord told my father David when he said, your son, whom I will give on the throne in your place, will build the house for my name.

The son of David is the house builder. And we can't help but have in mind Jesus, who is the son of David. The house builder, the builder of the house.

Let's... So, he says, in verse 6, get building. So, we're going to need, it sort of seems to change gear between verse 5 and verse 6.

[11:33] Verse 5 is also very theological, and then verse 6 gets very practical. Get the saws out. Get the requisitions running. Get the lists of trees.

Give orders that the cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours. I will give you, for your men, whatever wages you say. For you know, we have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians.

Come to that bit in a moment. Now, we're going to backtrack now and just think a little bit about this business of a house. A place where God and humans meet. A place, well, there it is as a picture.

Let's just look at that picture. So, it's somewhere on earth. And it's some sort of construction. And as we'll see, there was a time when the construction in which God lived was a tent.

It's called the tabernacle. I don't know why we call it why we call it the tabernacle in English. It's a very strange word. But it was a tent. It had certain constructional features which we won't go into now.

[12:48] But it was the place on earth where human beings meet. And isn't that a fantastic thing?

A place where heaven and earth meet. if you were a science fiction fan you would call it a portal. A portal has opened.

There's all sorts of science fiction things about a stargate where it's a place where the distant parts of the universe meet here and now and you just step through and you're in another world.

And the temple is like that. It's it's like the place where heaven and earth meet. And if you wanted to go back into the book of Genesis I think the very first occurrence of this in certainly no there is an occurrence of this where Jacob do you remember in the story Jacob went to sleep put his head on a rock dreamed that he was in a place where there was a staircase linking heaven and earth.

Do you remember that? I don't remember that story and do you remember that he called that place Bethel and does anybody know what Bethel means?

[14:13] Bethlehem is bread and the Beth bit is house. Bethlehem is house of bread Bethel is house El is God Beth is the house bit Bethel the house of God so I think that that incident there gives us the idea of a staircase a place where God comes down or certainly the angels of God came down didn't they what an amazing thought that there should be a way of linking heaven and earth a house for God now what it says is a place for his name to dwell a place where God lives and I think if you ponder that you think wow that's an amazing thing that there should be a way of accessing God from here on earth isn't it an amazing thing that God has made this part of his project part of his salvation project to say

I'm interested in those people meeting me I'm interested in meeting them let's go back into some more detail on this so this is going to take us right the way through the whole Bible to the end thinking about the temple so first of all think about creation in the beginning there wasn't a constructed building was there in the beginning there was a garden but in the garden God met people remember Adam hearing the voice of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day cool of the evening cool of the day so there in the garden there was it was like living in the same house if you see what

I mean God was just there how fantastic that there was no barrier God was accessible God was there garden has trees and it also has security guards the security guards came in useful later anybody know who the security guards were when this bit happened not angels let's be more specific cherubim and we'll find those cherubim cropping up later the cherubim are like the security guards that guard the presence of God they're there in the presence of God like his minders do anybody here have minders if you were if you were if you were Madonna you'd have minders or if you were some if you were I expect David Cameron has got minders God has got people with him that act for his security and the cherubim are these people and they at the fall they guarded the way back to say to people you can't come this way so the fall is about the separation from the presence of God that we're not close to him that we don't have easy access to God and then

God begins this project of restoring that relationship so please look at Exodus 29 44 to 46 because it's well worth having this in your mind Exodus 29 now bear in mind they were a rough old lot the Israelite nation described as being stiff necked and they're extremely fickle and in some ways they're rather obnoxious like us Exodus 29 44 to 46 so just to make sure that it's not me putting this one on you Ross could you read that out in an extremely loud voice thank you very much okay if I was

Ralph Davis then I would say it something like this they will know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them that's what he does he just raises his voice like that and everybody gets shocked but do you notice what a sentence that is why did God bring his people out of Egypt why did God well to set them free from slavery that's very good to set up a franchise for the prince of Egypt probably that's not the reason get them out of Egypt give them a promised land yes but what it says here is I brought them out of Egypt so that I could live amongst them that's incredible God says I've planned all this so that

[20:16] I could be with them so that every day I'd be in the same place that they were in that I'd just be you know at most sort of half a mile down the road they could easily pop in and talk to me well I say easily it's not quite as easy as that but you get the point this is what it says I've done this so that I might dwell among them and it does slightly answer that thing about being a rubbish Christian doesn't it because if God did all this in the book of Exodus so that he could be with those people it makes it tantalizingly believable that the same God might actually want to live with even with us even with you he's gone to a lot more trouble in the gospel but

I think his purpose is the same I've done this I've brought them out so that I might dwell among them if we move on through history so God lived in a tent and then there becomes a step change in the time of David where David says I have this idea I'd like to build a house for the Lord so instead of God going around in a floppy tent I'd like to build him a grand house and God says that's a great thought however you're not going to do that but I will build a house for you and there's a play on words of house because a house can be something made of bricks or stones it can also be a household a family and without referring back to it that's what God says you want to build a house for me I really appreciate that but you're not going to do that I'm going to build a house for you and David is gobsmacked he says is this your usual way of dealing with people God's extreme generosity in that matter and then if we were to follow!

it on in the story 400 years God is patient with his people but there comes a point at which awfulness the temple is destroyed the land is invaded the people are taken away the temple is destroyed boo hiss!

But that is an awful thing it seems as though all the plans of God and the promises of God have been derailed by human sin which would be very understandable God's presence goes away God says okay I don't want to live with you anymore you're so awful I can't stand it anymore I'm going away however that is not the end of the story because the Bible then changes gear and says actually God will not let human sin derail his plans the temple will be rebuilt and the promises will stand up and get active there's a whole set of prophets and discussion in the Bible about the rebuilding of the temple and let's go on even further in time to Jesus please turn to

[24:03] John chapter 2 verse 20 so if you can find a Bible and you can reasonably look that up please do so John 2 verse 20 somebody give us a page number 1065 so John 2 this all takes place in the temple the last

half of John 2 remember Jesus knocks over the tables of the money changers and there's a quote in verse 17 zeal for your house will consume me and in verse 18 the

Jews ask of him what miraculous sign can you do to show your authority to do all this and this is Jesus answer destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days and his opponents look round and say we've built this magnificent temple prophesied in scripture that the temple would be built here we're actually in a magnificent temple who's going to what are you talking about verse 20 it has taken 46 years to build this temple and you're going to raise it in three days speaks of its destruction and its raising and then look at this sentence but the temple he had spoken of was his body and if you think about it we probably haven't got time to think about it deeply enough he's not saying the old temple will be great as long as you can get people to fill in their

VAT returns properly he's not saying that he's saying the old temple has had its day it's finished what there will be in its place says Jesus is me that all the things about the temple will be fulfilled in me the temple will be destroyed or you're going to destroy it you're going to kill me and I will raise the temple the place where God meets man the place where the name of the Lord dwells this container in which the infinite God is found there that will be me says Jesus the temple he had spoken of was his body what a hugely significant statement and just to conclude or to continue our quick whistle stop tour through the whole of the Bible on this because

Jesus is the temple in a sense we become the temple please look at Ephesians 2 19 to 22 the idea of the place where God lives becomes transferred to well to us Ephesians 2 verse 19 20 and would he give us a page number on that 11 74 so!

I'll read on so he's talking to his readers Jews and Gentiles consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens but fellow citizens with God's people and 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 that's to say the community of people the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord and in him you too you lot in Ephesus and you lot in Brighton you are becoming are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit he's talking about the group of people the community of people he's saying here's an amazing thing because of

[29:02] Jesus Christ you are becoming the place where God lives you are becoming in some sense the portal between heaven and earth if you go and assemble together heaven comes down and meets you guys that's an amazing thing isn't it who would have thought it even with a new carpet do you see what I mean the carpet isn't the thing the people are you have the people of God together whatever sort of carpet they've got wherever they're meeting that is a place where God lives by his spirit that's what he tells the Ephesians anyway I don't think they were that different to us and if you were to flip on right to the end in Revelation 21 you would find there's another step change Revelation 21 22 which says that in the final end of things

Revelation 21 22 I did not see a temple in the city because the Lord God almighty and the lamb are its temple in other words you don't have a special smaller place to go to where God is particularly present that's what a temple is to go there from somewhere else because in the world to come the whole of everything will be the temple there'll be no place where God isn't there'll be no place where you're not at home with God no place that isn't God's house God will live everywhere in all creation well that was a we stood back and took a look at the story of the temple from beginning to end let's go back to our text oh isn't it amazing that God would actually want to live in closeness with us and make provision for it to happen it is one of the amazing things that there is such a thing as a temple in the

Bible let's go back to 1 Kings 5 then and follow the text so there's a map a little bit of Hiram is king of Tyre up there in the north and Sidon is this area up here and he verse 6 so we've gone back to the text now give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me and the cedars of Lebanon were wonderful trees so long and straight you could use them for building great big buildings and here are Mr.

Cut cedars of Lebanon and the arrangement is that Solomon gives the wages and he says no one can do it like you guys I don't think he's just being I don't think he's flattering them I think he's being

honest we cannot do this without the Sidonians it's an interesting thing isn't it that the Gentiles are an indispensable part of this project even then you needed Gentiles and how much more well how much more today are you not glad about that you're not glad that God has this wisdom in his plan to build his temple using well actually most of us are Gentiles and he's interested in involving us in this project I think that's pretty amazing Hiram certainly did because he says in verse seven when Hiram heard Solomon's message he was greatly pleased and he said praise be to the Lord today he has given David a wise son to rule over this great nation so I think it's good news Hiram did I don't know whether you think this is good news I think it is it's amazing let's just take a look at what's happening here so there's Tyre and Sidon up in the north and there are the cedars of Lebanon and let's go through the text of what Hiram says to Solomon I have received the message you sent me and will do all you literally I will do your delight!

[33:34] I will do all you want but it uses the delight word I will do all your delight in the cedar and pine logs my men will haul them down from Lebanon to the sea I will float them in rafts by sea to the place you send specify then I will separate them and you can take them away and you are to do my delight by giving food for my royal household so there's the little picture of who does what that's where they're chopped down and they're floated along there presumably not as far out as that they've floated them right close to the edge and there is a place where archaeologists say that would be a really good place for unloading logs and taking them up to Jerusalem and it's it's a rather brilliant project isn't it delight is involved that's the word you do my delight by giving my food for my house

I'll do your delight for by giving you the timber and we're both delighted and we both give something we both receive something and everybody's happy there's lots of situations where oh dear nobody's happy with this third runway no I'm not happy with that Gatwick's not happy with this Heathrow's not happy with that people who live in Windsor aren't happy with that in this one everybody's happy it's rather brilliant so I put at the end God's work is not a zero sum game I even wondered myself what I meant by that but a zero sum game is something where you have a fixed amount let's say a fixed amount of money and if it's a bit like monopoly I suppose and if somebody wins they get all the money and then the other person goes home in tears have you ever played monopoly like that we used to I got so upset we didn't bother doing it you think

I'm winning I'm winning I'm winning then somebody lands on ah no but isn't it great that God's work is not like a game of monopoly where there are winners and losers you know that's a zero sum game here it's not a zero sum game it's set up so that Hiram is delighted Solomon's delighted everybody everybody's a winner that's rather a rather a nice touch I think here let's look at this a little bit about the way the project works God and Solomon and Hiram and there's a lot of giving going on God gives well verse seven the Lord has given David a wise son and somewhere it says God has yeah verse 12 the Lord gave Solomon wisdom so it starts off with God giving and then it proceeds with Solomon giving let me just see verse 11

Solomon gave Hiram 20,000 cores of wheat as food for his house that's what it says there so he gets something for his house and of course Hiram verse 10 is giving to I don't know why it comes in so slowly this one Hiram kept Solomon supplied he gave the cedar and pine logs that was his delight so it's all done by giving and it says he gave verse 11 says Solomon continued to do this for Hiram year after it's sort of a recipe for good relations isn't it giving consistency it just seems like a key ingredient in a good relationship this is a good relationship he does it year after year and let me say if I may good relationships work like that it isn't that

Hiram says I don't feel like doing this today I'm not going to do this today he just does it that's the way he does it and Solomon does it oh I don't did we agree to that oh I don't fancy doing that he does what he said it's just the wisdom of Solomon that that's how good relationships works and it has the Lord's word verse 12 the Lord gave Solomon wisdom just as he had spoken the Lord's word is there and we're told in verse 12 there was peace which is a very rich word shalom there was good relationship it's a good project good things happening there was peace and the crowning statement at the end of verse 12 the two of them made a treaty literally they cut a covenant and a covenant's a great thing you can have different sorts of covenant but this is a covenant sort of between equals where they say we are in an agreement together we're going to work together

we're going to do what we said together and the way they would cut a covenant was take animals cut them into half put half the animal there half the animal there so you've got this sort of butcher's counter on a very large scale and the two people making the that's why it's called cutting a covenant because they cut the animals up they walk between the two sets of halves with the idea if I break this covenant may I become like these animals so if I break this covenant then I can which really saying it's the equivalent of signing and witnessing a document that's a little bit more graphic and a bit more difficult to clear up afterwards but they cut a covenant and here is a project of peace and that is yeah what happens next the building team we'll go on for the next few verses where it tells us the personnel involved

[40:05] Solomon conscripted laborers from all Israel this is the word for forced labor I'm very uncomfortable about this word there's the people who are feeling uncomfortable about doing the forced labor because they're up there with the trees and they're being not told you can do this if you want to they're told you must do this they get one month one month on and two months off is that right he sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of ten thousand a month they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home and Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor so I think there's something here that is not really the way it would be in the kingdom of Jesus Christ I think there's a little bit of snakishness about that verse 15 Solomon had seventy thousand carriers that's the showing that they could have a month off and go home they had seventy thousand lost my place carriers burden bearers and eighty thousand stone cutters they're up in the hills and there are thirty three hundred foremen who had dominion over the project and directed the workmen and at the king's command they removed from the quarry large blocks of quality stone to provide a foundation of dressed stone for the temple so breaking that down a little bit there's a building work going on with stones and it says there are three things they are large some of them are large they are precious presumably precious not because they're gold or diamonds or onyx or something but because it really requires a lot of work to find a good strong stone without bits flaking off it and to get it really flat so that it will match up against the next stone exactly it's not cheap not cheap stuff did you see the thing about the pavement that they put up by Brighton station and they took it all up again and the construction company said it was not up to the high standard that we normally achieve so we ripped it all up interesting this temple work is done to a high standard it doesn't say anything about ripping anything up it just says they got it right the first time they took a lot of effort to get it right the first time a lot of effort to get those stones into shape and they're built up and whoops and it says at the bottom the crafts or the end of the chapter the craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram and the men of Gebal cut and prepared the timber and stone for the building of the temple they got on with that work so that's the end of the text and let's look at one thing before we close because I think the building project of the temple is actually still unfinished

I think that's the work that God is still doing is building the temple not with stone and timber but as Peter says in the New Testament as you guys come to Jesus the living stone Jesus was the living stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him the most precious stone of all if you like it says you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house isn't that an amazing thing they're still doing it God's still doing this he's still taking quarrying stuff out knocking the edges off getting it right it's what he's doing to you you say why does God keep on having a go at me with a hammer and a chisel why does he make life so difficult and this is the answer it is he's getting you ready he's preparing you he's knocking the rough edges off it's jolly hard work takes a long time takes a lifetime actually to shape you up to the shape that he wants you to be to be a living stone built into a spiritual house it's an amazing thing isn't it this is what he says in

Ephesians which we read before you are no longer nobody but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's house built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone and in him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord and you that's what he's doing to you you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit what an amazing thought I keep on using that word I try and stop myself repeating myself so here are some answers to those questions we asked at the beginning where is God where can we find God here on earth where is any sort of access to heaven and here's one answer it's not the only answer but it's one answer in the community of God's people now let's be honest you probably well maybe you don't

I sometimes do find it difficult to focus on God on one's own how helpful it is to be together like we are now singing his praises thinking about his word interacting with one another praying it's a place where God lives if you want to avoid God then don't come to church if you want to draw near to God this is a very good place to come whether you feel like it or not where is God here in the community of God's people does he want to live with me and the answer is yes that is one way of describing the whole project of salvation he wants to live with his people that's exactly what he's doing that's exactly what it will all look like in the end and you if you're a believer are part of it and you might say well I can't be part of that because

God is only interested in spiritually minded people if you're a believer this is you and the Bible keeps reminding of it you are being built he's doing this for you and the last question which I've already answered really well why is life so difficult answer one answer of this because he's shaping up the stones to make a house for him to dwell in he's knocking the edges off getting us into shape and if I was a stone in a quarry I think I would find it fairly uncomfortable most of the time being blasted out of the wall and then hacked at and all that sort of stuff that's what God's doing to us those he loves he disciplines you could almost turn it on its head and say do you know if you have a remarkably easy life I'd worry a bit about that because it's

[48:17] God's plan to keep on working on us until the day he says you're going to fit come and be with me forever let's close by singing this song so this is a song by Emma Turll it's actually from the to