

Induction Service

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 March 2016

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 01] Let us pray. Gracious and almighty God, bless to us now thy word that is open before us, that as we read and as we think upon, Lord, what we have read, we pray that thou wouldst open it unto us by thy Spirit, and thou wouldst grant us, Lord, thy grace and understanding, for without thee we can do nothing, but we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

So bless thy word, for it is holy, anoint it richly, and anoint the ears, hearts, and eyes, and minds, Lord, of we who stand under it, that we would be instructed hereby and blessed herewith. Continue with us now, then, we pray, and open thy word, we pray, for without thee, Lord, we are helpless. We are the clay, and thou art the potter. Fashion us, we beseech thee, into vessels fit for holy use.

We ask it all in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. 1 Kings chapter 7 and verse 13. And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre.

Now, despite taking this verse as the text, we might say, for what follows, in reality, I would like us this evening to consider not so much any single isolated verse in this chapter, but rather to consider the sweep of the whole and the levels of context in which it is set.

[1 : 27] To get the context in which King Solomon sends for Hiram, we must first go back a little. We see from the earlier chapters of 1 Kings that Solomon begins well.

Solomon's succession and coronation. His succession and coronation represent a success snatched from the jaws of disaster. A final and decisive intervention by the true king, the old king, David, which, had it been delayed for even a day, might have allowed the whole course of Israelite politics and thereafter of salvation history to have been irreparably altered.

Solomon at that time was a latecomer. Solomon, the younger brother, a seeming lamb about to fall under the power of his elder brother Adonijah, and the strong men who backed him, the movers and shakers of David's long reign.

Solomon of himself had neither the means nor the authority to stall the juggernaut of Adonijah's coup. Adonijah presented as the new, strong, modern, up-and-coming face of the monarchy. And almost everybody who was anybody had backed him. And they did so believing that there was no power left in David to do anything about it.

[2 : 59] How wrong they would prove to be. And what a difference a single day would make. When at last the king took rightful control of the day's deliberations and events.

The difference a day makes when the Lord's anointed acts. The counter-stroke worked because despite the fact the king was old and ignored now by many people, he still had the power and the authority and he still had servants who were loyal to his commands and prepared to act upon them, whatever the cost.

So Solomon was enthroned and the rebels fled or threw themselves on his mercy. But the fact remains, it had been a near-run thing. And he could not have done it without his father.

However, when the larger catechism talks about scripture, it speaks of their majesty, the scriptures, their majesty and purity, the consent of all the parts and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God.

In other words, all of scripture fits into one overall complete picture. And it glorifies God by pointing us to his anointed son, Jesus Christ.

[4 : 23] The early days of Solomon's reign demonstrate in historical truth, what is likewise the spiritual truth, that the enemy of the Lord's anointed is an imposter.

He is strong, powerful, plausible, appears to have so many on his side and causes even the Lord's chosen people to wonder if maybe this new worldly regime is indeed the Lord's will because after all, he hasn't done anything to prevent it yet.

So the devil usurps a throne in the heart of each sinner, a throne to which only the Lord's anointed is entitled.

And until and unless the king himself should intervene, even the child of God is helpless, a lamb to the slaughter.

But the king acts. This is the message of salvation history, that the king is ready and prepared to act. When the king acts in Solomon's time, it seems late in the day, but he is perfect in his timing as always.

[5 : 39] And in the course of a single day, the child of God has their life turned completely around. And instead of running, they are reigning. In this turnaround of events, David yet lives.

He is able to do this because he yet lives. But his chosen heir sits upon his throne. Christ lives. Yet it is the same reason Christ who says in Revelation chapter 3 at verse 21, To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my father in his throne.

Like Solomon, we had no power of our own, but we receive power as we follow and obey the Lord's anointed.

So Solomon begins well. He is conscious of the near miss he has had. He worships the Lord in reverence. He encounters him in the tabernacle in Gibeon, and he humbly asks for wisdom to rule the Lord's people well, and God grants him that wisdom.

He begins on the temple, and we read in chapter 6 of the many details of the work that is done. And we read in chapter 6 at verse 14, So Solomon built the house and finished it.

[7 : 06] And at the end of chapter 6, we read that he was seven years in building it. So far, so good. But many a believer begins well.

But their spiritual lives so often follow a pattern as we have here with Solomon. Things are going so well that the cracks begin to appear.

To read chapter 6 at verse 14, So Solomon built the house and finished it. You would think perhaps that Solomon did it all himself, with no help from anyone else. No acknowledgement here of what we read in the latter chapters of 1 Chronicles, of all that David had prepared in advance for the work, of all that went before.

And despite some acknowledgement in chapters 5 and 6 of those who labored with the raw materials in the quarries of the mountains or the cedar forests of Lebanon, it is all very much Solomon, his work, his achievement.

And if that seems a little harsh, the contrast between chapter 6 verse 38, the last verse, and between chapter 7 verse 1, could not be greater.

[8 : 21] So was he seven years in building it, the Lord's house. Chapter 7 verse 1, but Solomon was building his own house 13 years. And he finished all his house.

nearly twice as much time, and presumably twice as much effort, and labor, and expense, into his own house, as into the house of God.

Is this not what can happen to the believer when he or she has begun? Well, the world, its distractions, the sheer busyness of life, the attention of our own work, and home, and comfort, and effort, can take our eye off the ball, and our focus away from the Lord.

And although chapter 11, verse 4, tells us that it was not until Solomon was old, in inverted commas, that some people turned his heart away from the Lord, the distractions, and the world, had obviously gotten there, many years earlier.

And the rot, we must assume, had started long ago. It is a danger for Solomon. It is a danger for every believer, no matter how well they begin.

[9 : 39] Vigilance is a necessary part of our Christian walk. But as though the very subject of declension was distasteful to the inspired writer, he turns back in chapter 7, the chapter from which we read, away from the descriptions of Solomon's personal extravagance, and back again to the detail of the house of the Lord, and specifically to the master craftsman who labored in it, and oversaw the detail of the work.

And King Solomon sent, and fetched Hiram out of Tyre, verse 13. It is abundantly clear from all that follows, that Hiram is the man for the moment.

He had connections with Israel through his mother, but he was not sent for because of his bloodline, or his ethnic ancestry. It is rather his proven skill, and abilities, and experience, which Solomon now requires.

And given that the building of the Lord's house was so much dependent, humanly speaking, on the goodwill and cooperation of the king of Tyre, and his own master craftsman, it speaks volumes that this man was the very best that Hiram, king of Tyre, not to be confused with his own master craftsman of the same name, the best that the king of Tyre had in his entire kingdom.

This was a big job, yes, seven years in the doing of it, seven years worth of the most challenging work, with the finest of materials, and no expense spared. Whether or not Hiram would end up regarding the Temple of Solomon as the pinnacle of his professional career, we do not know.

[11 : 30] What we do know is that he clearly finished the work to the very highest level of quality, to a standard, which caused the Temple to be the focus of Israelite devotion for centuries to come.

Not just anyone could have done it, but the Lord's own time was perfect, and in the Lord's own time and place, the Lord had prepared his own man for the work that was to be done.

And as the focus in Solomon's life and kingship moves in this chapter away from himself and his own comforts and achievements, and back to the recognition of the part played by others and their input and their contribution, so a sense of proportion and humility returns.

And the chapter ends where it ought to, with the focus upon the Lord. In verse 51, So was ended all the work that King Solomon made for the house of the Lord.

And Solomon brought in the things which David, his father, had dedicated, even the silver and the gold and the vessels that he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord.

[12 : 46] There are some things which we should notice about Hiram the craftsman, things which perhaps we can see reflected in our purpose of gathering this evening.

First of all, Hiram was certainly used of the Lord for the furtherance of his kingdom, but Hiram would not have been there to do it if others had not asked for him and sent for him.

If others had not asked for him and sent for him. The work of the temple was certainly of God. It was such that it would speak not merely of Solomon's kingship, but of God's kingship over Israel.

In her better days, Israel would throng and gather to the temple for devout worship and rededication of herself to the one God, Jehovah. In her worst days of idolatry and declension, the temple itself would stand as a silent witness that once there had been a time when Israel loved and served the Lord enough to build such a structure.

And in its different manifestations and rebuildings and redoings, both in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra and then under Herod the Great and so on, the temple would continue until the coming of the Messiah would make it superfluous.

[14 : 15] But for all that he was used of the Lord in this work, Hiram would not have been there if others had not asked for him, if he had not been sent for.

For divine work, the Lord makes use of human instruments and Hiram had to be called. One might feel that he himself didn't have a lot of choice.

Solomon called for him and Hiram's king just sent him. But that is how it is too with the king of kings. At the end of the day, he puts it in the hearts of men to send for the workman and whatever the workman's own thoughts or feelings or preferences, the king commands and the true servant obeys.

And here, storn away may call, but in the end, it is the king who sends his servant to the task.

Secondly, Hiram is certainly the man for the task in hand, the man for the hour.

The nearest Old Testament parallel to the building of the temple was of course the construction of the tabernacle in the days of Moses. And we read that for that purpose in those days, the Lord called by name or set apart or we might even say ordained Bezalel the son of Uri of the tribe of Judah and Aholiab the son of Ahisamath of the tribe of Dan.

[15 : 48] And we read, Exodus 31 at verse 2, that the Lord, quote, filled them with the spirit of God in wisdom and in understanding and in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship, unquote.

Brilliant. Only they were long gone and Solomon could not call upon their services. But the Lord had provided.

Verse 13, King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. There is an inclination with most of us, perhaps understandable, the very human inclination with most of us to look back to a former age and compare ourselves unfavorably with those who labored before us.

Lamenting that whilst they were very obviously filled with the spirit of God, we feel ourselves by comparison to be empty and dry and unfit for the task.

In answer to such a tendency, it was Solomon himself who was inspired to write in Ecclesiastes chapter 7 at verse 10, Say not thou what is the cause that the former days were better than these, for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.

[17 : 09] Humility is good, but there must also be a recognition that the Lord had his servants for his task at his time then, and he does the same now.

Bezalel and Aholiab were God's chosen instruments for the work of the tabernacle, for that work then. But this was the temple.

Nothing like this had ever been done before, a totally different task, in a totally different setting. Hundreds of years later, a different generation, a different day, a different work with different people.

Bezalel and Aholiab are not fitted for this task that Hiram has been called for. They served faithfully their day, but this, in 1 Kings 7, this is not their day.

And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. Giants of the past can inspire and cast a long shadow.

[18 : 25] Kenneth Macrae, Murdo MacRitchie, Murdo Alec MacLeod, and others we could name godly and faithful servants of their day, remembered with love and intense affection, but no longer here, no longer with us.

This is not their day. The gospel task may be essentially the same, but it is a different day, a different world, and a different servant who is needed.

And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. to the ability now were under God, due entirely to the skill and expertise acquired and the experience built up elsewhere.

for the king of Tyre to recognize this craftsman as the best man he had for this job. Hiram must have labored with faithfulness and distinction in other fields, other projects, other places, and the exercise of his gifts there, and the experience and knowledge built up in these other places, were all now going to be utilized and applied in what was arguably his greatest challenge.

to date. It is not the case that all of those previous employments counted for less, or were somehow worth less than the present task.

[20 : 12] It was rather because of all the work done, all the skills acquired, all the experience built up elsewhere, that Hiram was now the best man for the job at hand in Jerusalem.

With the Lord, nothing is for nothing, and nothing is ever wasted. There will not be a single one of us here tonight who does not have sympathy tonight for the people of Nock, but they too will know. There was an evening once when they rejoiced, and the people of East Kilbride were sorrowing.

Now it's not that what goes around comes around, nor does anyone suggest that the work beginning here tonight is somehow more important than the work in those congregations was.

It's rather that those years in Nock and East Kilbride have all been fulfilled, completed, and not one of them has been wasted.

Every one of them counted. They counted in and of themselves, and they counted as the means used of the Lord to prepare his servant for his work in his time and place, and now that time and place is here.

[21 : 54] And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. Fourthly and finally, the chapter that we read details many of the tools and items and furnishings that Hiram made, and if we'd read all the other verses in between, we would have encountered an awful lot more as well that he made during his workmanship there.

But he himself would not actually wash at those lavers. He himself would not make use of the brazen sea with the twelve oxen beneath it.

He would not stoke the fire under the altar, or offer up the sacrifices, or himself use the flesh hooks or basins or incense burners or pots or shovels that he had made.

Others would do that. Others would receive and use and serve with all that Hiram had made and done.

And they would still be using all these things in the temple long after Hiram had gone. His duties would not be primarily for his own benefit, but for that of others who would benefit from his labors.

[23 : 16] And long after he was gone, there would be those serving in the house of God who would keep on using the tools that he had provided for them and laid before them.

Hiram's work was to labor in such a way as to ensure that others, perhaps multitudes, would be equipped and enabled to serve the Lord in his house and elsewhere in fulfillment of their calling,

serving in their place in their time.

He wasn't just laboring for himself and for his own day, but rather there would be a lasting legacy for all the work that Hiram would do.

The parallels should be clear enough. if all of scripture points us to Christ, then it points us not only to his life and ministry upon earth, but it points us also to the work that Christ is engaged in now in the present day.

We believe that our gathering and our work here tonight is a work of Christ. It is to the glory of Christ that weak and sinful men, as we all are, are used of him to proclaim his unsearchable riches, and that the foolishness of preaching is still used of the Lord to build up living stones into his spiritual temple.

[24 : 54] If the old temple was of God, as it certainly was, the new spiritual temple is even more so.

And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. King Jesus, too, has sent for his servant because he has a work for him to do here.

And whilst of that work only the king can say when it is finished, we may at least say that tonight it has begun.

Let us pray.