***Vol 3***

*Session 6*

***The Temple is Built***

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Introducing the Study

After God granted his request, Solomon’s wisdom became known far and wide. He was renowned for his ability to judge and rule his people. God was generous with his wisdom toward Solomon, and as God’s children, we are promised that He will be similarly generous with us when we humbly ask for wisdom.

**What are some practices you can incorporate into your life that will help you live with wisdom?**

One of the lasting contributions Solomon would make to God’s people and the story of redemption would be the construction of God’s temple. Solomon was careful to obey the instructions for building the temple in a way that magnified the greatness of God. And yet, this physical structure was only a shadow of God’s true dwelling place that was to come—Jesus Christ.

**How do you think the temple points us to Jesus?**

Setting the Context

Solomon’s fame soon spread throughout the earth. He was regarded as the wisest man in the world, and emissaries from all over came to Israel to seek his counsel. Solomon’s kingdom grew with his prestige, and as God had promised, Solomon grew in wealth and power. His kingdom was one of excess and prosperity, and that prosperity extended to everyone in the kingdom. What’s more, Solomon was a prolific student and writer. He

studied zoology, biology, and botany as well as recording thousands of proverbs and songs.

**Why does God’s wisdom have an impact on fields of study beyond just theology and ethics?**

Solomon had in mind one particular task with which to utilize his wisdom. Years earlier, Solomon’s father, David, had endeavored to build a house for God—a temple as a tribute to God’s great name and renown. But God told David that this task was not meant for him; instead, his son Solomon would be the one to build the temple. Solomon found himself in a position with near unlimited resources at his disposal, and so it came time for him to fulfill what God had told David his son would do. The king set about building the temple of God. “The Temple” (p. 71) explains how this structure served God’s will for His glory and His mission.

**Why do you think it’s important for Christians to know about and understand the building of the temple in the Old Testament?**

CHRIST Connection

The temple was to be a place where the name of God would be upheld and the presence of God would be experienced so that the nations would know the Lord is God. Jesus spoke of Himself as God’s Temple, and in His life, death, and resurrection, He upheld God’s name, embodied God’s presence, and extended God’s mission.

Continuing the Discussion

**What are some ways the temple communicated the holiness of God?**

**How should our knowledge of Christ change the way we think about the temple?**

***As a group, read 1 Kings 5:1-5.***

**Why, according to these verses, was Solomon going to build the temple?**

**How would the building of the temple magnify the name of God?**

Solomon knew that his father, David, was unable to build the temple because of the warfare that surrounded his life. Instead, because Solomon’s reign was marked by peace and prosperity, he would engage in this work. The temple was meant to be a structure that paid honor to God. It was intended to be a place where people from all over the world would come to meet with and worship the one true God.

***As a group, read 1 Kings 8:10-14.***

**What does this description of the temple dedication remind you of from earlier in the Old Testament?**

**What attributes of God do you see magnified in this description?**

**What are some proper ways to respond to the glory of the Lord?**

It would be a mistake to think that the temple could fully house the presence of God. After all, the universe itself cannot contain all of God’s glory because He is infinite and omnipresent; how could He possibly live in the temple that was so small by comparison? The temple was only a shadow of what was to come. God was not going to dwell ultimately within a temple built by the hands of humans; He was going to dwell on earth as a human being, as a descendant of David himself.

***As a group, read 1 Kings 8:54-61.***

**What stands out most to you from Solomon’s blessing?**

**How does this blessing and the construction of the temple remind us of God’s promise to bless all the nations of the earth?**

The temple was to be a beacon for all nations, not only for Israel. Solomon desired for all nations to hear of the glory of God, and he hoped that all nations would gather and worship the God of Israel. The message of the greatness, mercy, and power of God has always been for all nations. God wanted all those who live apart from Him to call on the name of the Lord.

MISSIONAL Application

Record at least one way you will apply the truth of Scripture as a temple of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

Personal Study 1

**The temple bears God’s name.**

***Read 1 Kings 5:1-5.***

Names are powerful. Mention Adolf Hitler, Steve Jobs, Justin Bieber, Barack Obama, Tiger Woods, or Warren Buffet and you’re likely to start an interesting conversation in the break room of your office. King Solomon knew the power of names too. He knew the esteem and honor that certain names deserve. This was one of the main reasons he wanted to build a house for the Lord.

Up to this point in redemptive history, Israel’s God was not associated with any particular place. He had manifested Himself in visions, in a burning bush, in a pillar of fire, on the mountaintop, in the tabernacle, and with the ark of the covenant. But until now, there was no established place where His people could point and say, “This is the house of our God.”

The moment was right because God gave Solomon rest on every side. God did this, not Solomon. God worked and moved to expand the kingdom of Solomon. At this point, unlike in David’s time, there was rest and peace all around. God had subdued the enemies of Israel and established them on every side.

The temple was a tangible reminder of what the Lord had done for the nation He loved. He was the One who brought Israel from Egypt. He was the One who gave them His law. He was the One who brought them through the wilderness into a land flowing with milk and honey. He was the sovereign God who saved and established His people. Solomon responded to this sovereign work by erecting a building worthy of the God of heaven.

Another reason—the chief one—Solomon built the temple was because God promised King David that he would (v. 5). Before Solomon was ever born, God declared to David that He would put his son on the throne and establish his kingdom. This promise was now coming to fruition in Solomon’s day.

The temple was not only evidence of God’s work; it was evidence of God’s keeping His word. We serve a God who keeps His promises. God does not play games with His people. He does not string us along only to leave us in the dark. Rather, He is the promise-keeping God who never fails.

In the New Testament, Jesus spoke of Himself as the temple—the embodiment of God. Jesus not only bears God’s name, He is God (John 1:1). He accomplished all the work that the Father had given Him to do (John 4:34), and all the promises of God find their yes in Him (2 Cor. 1:20). He came to radically redefine how Israel understood the temple and its place among God’s people.

All that God intended to show with the temple, He would show even more so with His own Son, who claimed that He was the true temple (John 2:12-25). For this reason, the name of God is no longer localized to a place—it is found in a Person. We go to Jesus and see the work and promises of God on full display.

**What ideas and beliefs do you think were communicated to the Israelites when they visited the temple?**

**What ideas and beliefs do you think were communicated to people outside Israel when they saw the temple?**

**What purposes of the temple are fulfilled in Jesus?**

Personal Study 2

**The temple hosts God’s presence.**

***Read 1 Kings 8:10-14.***

After Solomon completed the temple, he gathered all Israel, along with the priests, Levites, and leaders, to bring the ark of the covenant to the Lord’s house (vv. 1-9). On that day, God displayed His glory among His people. Just imagine standing among the assembly witnessing this spectacular display of God’s glory!

This event further established and confirmed Solomon’s kingdom and reign, and it showed yet again God’s love and commitment to His people, Israel. Normally, God dwelled in thick darkness (v. 12), in a place where no one could see Him. But now, God had come down to be with His people in the place built for His name and presence. God was so near and real that day that even the priests had to stop what they were doing!

On that day, Israel received the blessing of God Himself. This is the greatest blessing that God can give to His people—Himself. In fact, we see all throughout the Bible that God’s intention has always been to dwell among His people. We see this theme from the beginning to the end of Scripture.

• God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden before their sin resulted in banishment from His presence (Gen. 1–3).

• God gave Moses intricate details for the tabernacle and the ark to establish His presence among Israel and meet with them regularly (Ex. 29:42).

• When Israel failed in their faithfulness to God’s covenant, the most severe judgment from the Lord was removing Himself from the temple (Ezek. 10:18).

• God’s promise to revisit His people and establish them once again was fulfilled in Jesus, who is called “Immanuel,” which is translated “God is with us” (Matt. 1:23).

• At the end of history, when all things are set right, we read this promise from Revelation: “God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God” (Rev. 21:3).

The great hope of the Christian life is not getting things from God; it is getting God Himself. We have a God who wants to be known and who wants us to experience and enjoy His presence.

The New Testament teaches that Jesus is the true temple of God and that as His followers, we also are the temple of God. God dwells in His people through His Holy Spirit. Consider what Peter said about this: “As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God—you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:4-5).

Many of us gather for worship and never truly recognize the greatness of the God we are worshiping. Our hearts are filled with distractions, other duties to get to, and anxiety about the week ahead. But if what Peter said is true—and it is—then when we gather with God’s people, we are engaging in the most climactic event of our week.

**When have you sensed the reality of God’s presence? What was it about that time that convinced you it was the Spirit working?**

**What is your attitude toward gathering for worship with the church?**

**What are some things you can do to prepare for worship to make it more meaningful and edifying?**

Personal Study 3

**The temple advances God’s mission.**

***Read 1 Kings 8:54-61.***

We don’t generally associate the nation of Israel with the term mission, especially when it comes to the temple. But a phrase that we tend to gloss over in this passage is perhaps the most important thing Solomon prayed here. He blessed the people and offered a prayer for the nation that “all the peoples of the earth know that the Lord is God” (v. 60).

This was one reason God chose the nation of Israel. He did not choose them for their own sake. He chose them for the sake of the nations. He is a global God who desires all the nations to be glad in Him (see Ps. 67). Israel was to be a particular people with a universal purpose—to extend the name and glory of God to the ends of the earth (Ex. 19:5-6).

We see how this plays out in the story of Jonah. God called him to go to the hated and wicked city of Nineveh. Of course, Jonah rebelled and went to Tarshish instead before God sent a great fish to lead Jonah to repentance and back on mission. The book ends with these words from the Lord: “May I not care about the great city of Nineveh, which has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot distinguish between their right and their left, as well as many animals?” (Jonah 4:11).

This last statement was not only an indictment of Jonah; it was a wake-up call to the nation of Israel. God chose them for the sake of mission—for the sake of blessing the entire world. His choice of Israel did not mean the rejection of other nations but their inclusion through His chosen people (see Rom. 11:11-32)!

The temple in Israel represented what God wanted to do across the whole earth. He wanted to spread His name and fame, not only to Israel but among all the nations so that Habakkuk’s words might be fulfilled: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord’s glory, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).

The urgency to live on mission is even greater for us as Christians. We are now the temple of God on the earth. God indwells us and fills us as His missional people (see Eph. 2:18-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5). God called us and chose us for the purpose of representing Him on the earth and spreading His fame to the nations.

As we think of this great task before us, we must understand that it starts with ordinary Christians having ordinary conversations with ordinary people. It starts with you choosing each day to live your life on mission and being available for whatever God wants to do through you. It is virtually impossible to talk about following Jesus without also talking about how to help others follow Him. Following Jesus by necessity means helping others follow Him and obey Him.

As Christians, we are a saved people. But we are also a sent people. We are sent into the world to bear God’s name and make Him known to all people. And one day we will gather around the throne of Jesus Christ and sing, “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and you purchased people for God by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9).

**What should our identity as God’s temple, His representatives in the world, communicate to the nations today?**

**What is your greatest fear when it comes to living on mission for the gospel?**

**How does God’s heart for the world help you overcome these fears?**