

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

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THE BUILDING AND DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

Reading: 1 Kings 5

Today I want you to use your imagination and try to comprehend the greatness of the temple we are to look into. Firstly, let us remember the background. David had wanted so much to build God a house but it was not allowed and it was left to Solomon, his son, to build the great temple which was to stand for 350 years before being destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

Materials for construction

For a moment put yourself in the position of Solomon, after peace had been established in the kingdom he began the preparatory work for constructing the temple. Like all buildings much thought had to be put into this project. Solomon was helped considerably because much of the reassurance and material to be used in the temple had already been collected by David years before. Also we have heard in the reading from chapter 5 that Hiram, king of Tyre, was only too pleased to send cedar trees from Lebanon because of his affection for David. As a result a league or treaty of peace was made between Hiram and Solomon and so a supply of timber was guaranteed. Solomon was to supply the labour in Tyre and so a workforce of 30,000 men was organised for this purpose. The wisdom of Solomon was seen here because realising that the men would miss their families if they were away from home too long he arranged that they would work a month away and then be back for two months at home. So there were always 10,000 men working in rotation.

Besides these 30,000 men a further 70,000 were involved in bearing various burdens and another 80,000 were engaged in hewing stone out of the mountains near Jerusalem. This brings the number up to 180,000 workers; these were mainly strangers that dwelt in the nation so together with men of Tyre a great number of Gentile workers were involved in the building of this temple for the God of Israel. To keep all these men in order and see that they worked well, 3,300 overseers were appointed. These were Solomon's officers which brought the total to 183,300 employed in the work. Try to picture the hive of industry there would be with such great numbers of people working for the one project, it takes some comprehending.

The site chosen for the temple was Mount Moriah, this was special for many reasons. Look it up and let me know why. The work on the temple took 7 ½ years, it was not a large building compared with the buildings of surrounding nations, but the liberal use of gold which lined the entire interior and the many treasures which were placed inside gave it great glory and majesty.

In many ways the temple was similar to the tabernacle, but it was larger and grander and of course a permanent building and not portable as was the tabernacle. It was built with the priestly services in mind and so much of it showed forth the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Outer Court

1. The brazen altar on which the sacrifices were offered.
2. A molten sea supported by twelve oxen which was used for the washing of the priests.

3. 10 lavers of brass which were used to wash the offerings.

In front of the Holy Place stood two pillars of brass:

Jachin Boaz

Find the meaning of these names and tell me what you think the names imply.

The Holy Place

1. 10 lampstands of gold, five on each side.
2. 10 tables of gold, five on each side for the showbread
3. The golden altar of incense which most probably was placed in front of the veil before the Most Holy Place

The Veil separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy

Most Holy Place

There were two cherubim of gold which faced the veil and whose wings were outstretched so that they touched the wall either side. Beneath was the Ark which now contained only the two tables of stone with there commandments.

The only other furniture was various objects such as pots, shovels, flesh hooks, snuffers, basins and spoons all made by Hiram a skilled worker in brass and they were all used at some point in the temple service.

The seven and a half years passed quickly and now it was time for the temple to be set ready for the opening ceremony. After installing the various items of furniture Solomon then brought in the treasures which his father David had collected for the House. He then assembled the elders of Israel and all the princes to witness the wonderful scene of the Ark being brought up into its resting place in the temple. It was the 7th month at the Feast of Tabernacles when the priests took up the Ark, together with all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle and brought them to the doors of the temple, there Solomon and all the people sacrificed great numbers of sheep and oxen to Yahweh God of Israel and amidst all the splendour the Ark was taken into the Most Holy Place where it was placed beneath the overshadowing wings of the cherubim.

The climax of the opening ceremony had now been reached. As the priests retired to the Holy Place the singers of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun with their sons and brethren sang glorious songs of praise and thanksgiving, accompanied by cymbals, psalteries and harps and 120 priests sounding with trumpets. This is what they sang: *For He is good and His mercy endureth for ever....*

The temple was completely filled with a cloud showing God's glory, so great was that glory that the priests could not stand to minister in their services.

Solomon's prayer

No doubt Solomon was overwhelmed on this momentous occasion as he gazed upon the glorious structure filled with God's glory. With his heart full of joy he outstretched his hands to God in heaven before all the people and offered a prayer of thanksgiving and praise. In his prayer he praised God and thanked him for allowing Solomon to build the great temple. Yet Solomon realised that God could not really be contained in a small building when even the very heavens could not contain Him. Then Solomon went on to ask God to always look upon the House built for His name, to always hearken to the prayers of His people whether in prosperity or in adversity. Solomon must have feared that Israel would turn away from God so he prayed for forgiveness in such eventualities. We also notice that in his prayer Solomon makes special mention of the stranger who desires to worship the God of Israel. There is no hint of exclusiveness in Solomon's mind. He was anxious that the whole world might learn of Yahweh, Israel's God and worship Him in truth.

When Solomon had finished praying fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices. Here in a very dramatic way God was indicating to Solomon and the people that his prayer had been accepted. *The fire and the glory that filled the house* had a great effect on the people. They bowed to the ground and praised God saying *for He is good and His mercy endureth for ever.*

All this took place during the Feast of Tabernacles when vast numbers of people would have been in Jerusalem to watch the opening ceremony of the House of prayer. Solomon alone offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep besides the offerings of the people. This indeed was a wonderful place of worship, a temple fit for the great God of Israel and the crowning glory to the greatness of this great king of Israel.

As we try to visualise the greatness of the temple of Solomon it gives us some idea of the wonderful temple which will be built when Jesus returns and the temple which was shown in vision to Ezekiel and spoken about in his prophecy will be built. As people from all over the world came to see the glory of Solomon and the wonders of the great Temple so in the Kingdom Age men and women will come from all over to see the Lord Jesus Christ the great king and to worship God at the temple built in Jerusalem.

Well, what does all this mean to us?

There was one very important point concerning the building of the temple, all the stones had to be chipped and prepared away from the site so that when the building was started it just fitted together with ease without hammer or noise. Today we are in fact like the stones in God's House. We must be shaped and fashioned according to the pattern or likeness of the Lord Jesus who was the Chief corner stone in God's house. We must try to be like him in every way possible so that when the kingdom is established, we shall be acceptable to make up God's household or family because we bear the family likeness. This is not easy, it has to be worked at day by day. So when we read of the great effort and hard work that went into making Solomon's Temple, let us think forward, firstly of the temple that will be built in the kingdom. But also think of the men and women including ourselves who are being shaped by the problems of life now so that we will fit in to God's kingdom when it is established.

Extra work: Tell me what you can find about Mt. Moriah. What other incidents took place in this Mount? What do the meanings of the names Jachin and Boaz imply? In what way did the Temple differ from the Tabernacle?