

File No. 68

## **I KINGS 5:1 — 6:38; 8:1–66**

I Kings 7:13–22; II Chronicles 5:1 – 7:3

### **SOLOMON BUILDS THE TEMPLE — A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS**

(SBS Bk 2 Story No. 55)

*Story Notes*

#### **Chapter 5–6**

Hiram wanted friendly relations with David to continue (cf. II Sam. 5:11), and was delighted to discover that Solomon was eager for the same. The Gentile king recognised Solomon's wisdom. The biblical writer observed that this wisdom was the gift of God to Solomon. His wisdom still rested in the thought that his present peace and prosperity were the fruit of the covenant made with his father and of the battles his father had won. The heart to build the temple was Solomon's, but some of the skills required were from this foreign nation. Perhaps there is a suggestion that all nations will bring their glory for the building of the holy city (Rev. 21:24–26).

The temple followed the pattern for the tabernacle revealed to Moses but was double in size, and grander, and, of course, fixed. This was the place where the Lord would make his name to dwell (Deut. 26:2)—and so it did, for some 380 years.

A building site with no noise would have been awe-inspiring! (Was Solomon influenced by the need for unhewn stones as for an altar described in Exodus 20:25?) He 'finished' the building then covered it with cedar and added side chambers. God spoke to Solomon to remind him of what worship was all about, that is, hearing and obeying his statutes and receiving God's promises (Lev. 26:11–12). The building was 'finished' but he added more and overlaid the whole house with gold until it was 'finished'. Still, some furnishings and ornamentation were added until seven years had been spent building it. Then, it was 'finished'.

Kings of surrounding nations typically built a house for their deity, an idol that secured the unity of the nation. Other kings had claimed that God had revealed the plans for the temple. But the institution of this temple would do nothing for Solomon or Israel without the relationship of obedience described here.

The carved cherubim in the most holy place and the engravings of cherubim, palm trees and flowers on all the walls suggest that in coming to worship God, Israel had returned to the gates of Eden (Gen. 3:24), a sign of the coming restoration of all things.

In Israel's worship, cherubim guarded the throne of God (Exod. 25:18–22) and God was present between, or on, or above the cherubim.

#### **Chapter 8**

A new house had been made but not a new ark or copy of the law. God's covenant with his people, or rather, God himself, was central. The sacrifices God had prescribed Solomon supplied in abundance. God filled the temple Solomon had made, showing that it pleased him to be among them, and Israel's priests could not do their work because of God's obvious presence.

Solomon remembered God's word to his father: 'I have not sought a place for my name to dwell'. God had first sought out and prepared a person who would lead his people into their inheritance and in obedience to his ways. The temple was the result of what was in David's heart. He knew that worship was obedience before sacrifice (Ps. 40:6; Heb. 10:5, 8).

Jesus Christ would later come as King, purify his people and lead them in true worship. His flesh would be the temple for his people, torn down by man, raised up again by God in full glory (John 2:19–22).

Solomon, in what is possibly his greatest accomplishment, worshipped God and prayed for his nation and for the world. The coming of Jesus as King was an answer to this prayer (Isa. 56:7; Mark 11:17).

'Who can compare with you, Lord, a God who keeps his covenant with true worshippers? Lord, keep your covenant with my father! The universe cannot contain you, but you are here. Hear my prayer, and the prayers of your people always, and forgive their sins!

'Many would pray because of judgements on their sins or on Israel's sins. 'May they be forgiven and restored and taught the right way! Give them what they deserve, according to your right knowledge of all people, so that all may fear you! May the prayers of foreigners also be heard when they come to pray because news of your greatness has moved them! May Israel's armies be heard when they wage war. If, as is probable, they are given over to their enemies, even then, hear them when they repent and cry to you. May these enemies be kind and restore them to their inheritance! Lord, we are your inheritance according to your great deeds through Moses. Finish what you have begun!'

With such a prayer offered and heard, Solomon blessed the people. He confessed in their presence that God had fulfilled all that he had promised through Moses. He called on God to incline their hearts to his law. He asked God to continue his favour to them daily so the nations would know the one true God, and then called Israel to be devoted to God.

Then the worship began. Extraordinary measures were taken to accommodate the sacrifices offered and the people from all Solomon's dominions who wished to be present. These included the dedication of additional holy space and doubling the time for the feast. Being assured of God's forgiveness and of the blessing of fellowship that the sacrifices conveyed to Israel, the people of God returned to their tents with great joy.