

1 Kings 5
November 10, 2024

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Have you heard the motto, “If you want something to be done right, do it yourself?” Is that true or false – and why? [Let people engage]

Transition:

This motto doesn’t work well when it comes to doing the Lord’s work. Sometimes doing the Lord’s work well requires us to acknowledge that we don’t have all the skills to accomplish the job ourselves.

Today’s chapter describes how Solomon raised a labor force of 30,000 men comprised of Jews and Gentiles from all over Israel to build the temple. God has surrounded Solomon with the right people who had the resources and the talents to help him build the Temple.

As we read this chapter, consider the biblical idea from 1 Cor 3:9 that we are co-workers with different spiritual gifts being used in God’s service to build His Church. Let’s begin.

BOOK:

Preparations for Building the Temple

5 When Hiram, king of Tyre, heard that Solomon had been anointed king to succeed his father David, he sent his envoys to Solomon, because he had always been on friendly terms with David. ² Solomon sent back this message to Hiram:

³ “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 until the LORD put his enemies under his feet. ⁴ But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster. ⁵ I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God, as the LORD told my father David, when he said, ‘Your son whom I will put on the throne in your place will build the temple for my Name.’”

⁶ “So give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set. You know that we have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians.”

⁷ When Hiram heard Solomon’s message, he was greatly pleased and said, “Praise be to the LORD today, for he has given David a wise son to rule over this great nation.”

⁸ So Hiram sent word to Solomon:

“I have received the message you sent me and will do all you want in providing the cedar and pine logs. ⁹ My men will haul them down from Lebanon to the sea, and I will float them in rafts by sea to the place you specify. There I will separate them and you can take them away. And you are to grant my wish by providing food for my royal household.”

¹⁰ In this way Hiram kept Solomon supplied with all the cedar and pine logs he wanted, ¹¹ and Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand cors (125,000 bushels) of wheat as food for his household, in addition to twenty thousand baths (115,000 gallons) of pressed olive oil. Solomon continued to do this for Hiram year after year. ¹² The LORD gave Solomon wisdom, just as he had promised him. There were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty.

¹³ King Solomon conscripted laborers from all Israel—thirty thousand men. ¹⁴ He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of 10,000 a month, so that they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor. ¹⁵ Solomon had 70,000 carriers and 80,000 stonecutters in the hills, ¹⁶ as well as 3,300 foremen who supervised the project and directed the workmen. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ The craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram and the men of Gebal cut and prepared the timber and stone for the building of the temple.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Just as 30,000 men had to work together to build the Temple, God calls on every believer to be a co-builder of God's Church. (I Cor 3:9) God will supply all that we need to co-labor with other believers out of our love for His Church.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Kings 5)*. Victor Books.

I. Preparation (5)

David was the man who started the entire project. God approved the project but made it clear that Solomon would do the actual work. David had ready the plans (1 Chron. 28:11–21) and the costly materials (1 Chron. 22:5, 14–16). He encouraged his son in the work and assured him that God would faithfully assist him (1 Chron. 28:1–21).

Hiram, the Gentile king of Tyre, agreed to supply the wood and the skillful men to do the work. Solomon in turn paid him 130,000 bushels of wheat and 120 gallons of pure olive oil each year. See also 1 Kings 9:10–14.

Israel provided the manpower through a part-time enlistment or “draft.” The heavy “slave work” was done by the Canaanites, 150,000 of them (5:15; 9:20–22), while 30,000 Jews did the other work “in courses.” There would be 10,000 a month on the job, and then they would return home for two months. This levy represented about 1/40th of the available men in the land, so it was not oppressive, and the service was temporary.

The building of the temple represented the cooperative efforts of many people, both Jews and Gentiles. The materials secured were the very finest: great and costly stones that would endure, and precious metals that would give glory to the house. It reminds us of Paul's admonition concerning the local church that we build with “gold, silver, precious stones” and not “wood, hay, stubble” (1 Cor. 3:9–23). While God does not dwell in material temples today (Acts 17:24), this is no reason why the work we do for Him should be cheap or shoddy.

Constable, C.L. (1985). *1 Kings*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 498-499) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

1. BUILDING PREPARATIONS (CHAP. 5)

a. Solomon's request of Hiram (5:1–6)

5:1. Tyre was an important port city on the Mediterranean Sea north of Israel. It was one of the chief cities of Phoenicia, one of Israel's friendly neighboring kingdoms. **Hiram, king of Tyre**, had been an ally and friend of King **David** and had supplied materials and laborers to build David's palace (2 Sam. 5:11). Hiram **sent his envoys to Solomon** to pay his respects to the new **king**, the son of his friend.

5:2–5. David had shared with his friend Hiram his desires to build a temple. But **because of the wars ... David** had to fight, he was not allowed to construct it. **Now ... peace** prevailed (cf. 4:24–25) and construction could begin. Solomon's assurance of peace would have encouraged Hiram to cooperate with his plans. His intention was **to build** the **temple** God Himself had approved.

5:6. Solomon called on Hiram to **give orders** that his subjects provide materials and craftsmen for the project. This may have been done with the authority of a superior but, more likely, Solomon made his words the request of a friend. **Cedars of Lebanon** grew profusely on the western slopes of the Lebanon Mountains east of Tyre, though few remain today. They were

very old trees with hard, beautiful wood that was excellent for construction since it was not readily subject to decay or insect infestation. Solomon offered to supply workers to assist Hiram's men in felling the trees and to **pay** the Sidonian laborers **whatever** Hiram considered a fair wage. **The Sidonians** were indeed highly **skilled in felling timber**; doubtless Solomon's recognition of this ability impressed Hiram favorably. Sidon, another Phoenician city, was north of Tyre. Apparently Hiram hired workers from there.

b. Hiram's treaty with Solomon (5:7–12)

5:7–9. **Solomon's** suggestion met with an enthusiastic response. **Hiram** had regard for Yahweh, perhaps as a result of his contacts with **David**. Hiram perceived Solomon's wisdom at once. Apparently, Solomon's total message to Hiram (vv. 3–6) was not recorded by the author of 1 and 2 Kings since Hiram agreed to provide **pine** as well as **cedar ... logs**. Hiram suggested that the logs be transported to Solomon on **rafts** and offered to be responsible for this. However, Hiram wanted something in return: **food for his royal household**.

5:10–12. **Solomon** agreed to the arrangement and each year **gave him 20,000 cors** (about 125,000 bushels; cf NIV) **of wheat** and **20,000 baths** (about 115,000 gallons) **of ... olive oil**. Barley and wine were also included (2 Chron. 2:10). Obviously, **Hiram** had a large household, which no doubt included his courtiers as well as family members. Apparently, wheat and olive oil were not plentifully available in or near Tyre. Due to Solomon's wise initiative (**the LORD gave Solomon wisdom**; cf. 1 Kings 3:12, 28; 4:29) this **treaty** arrangement continued for many years and contributed to **peaceful relations between the two kings**.

c. Solomon's conscription of laborers (5:13–18)

5:13–18. Solomon's conscription touched the lives of many non-Israelite (cf. 2 Chron. 8:7–8) males in Israel (183,300 are referred to here). The **king** drafted them for temporary government service which they worked into their schedules along with their private responsibilities. This method of conscripting **forced labor** eventually proved exceedingly distasteful to the Israelites, perhaps because of the way it was administered (cf. 1 Kings 12:18). The **3,300 foremen** plus an additional 550 (9:23) equal 3,850 (cf. the 3,600 foremen in 2 Chron. 2:18 plus 250 in 2 Chron. 8:10).

Working under **Adoniram** (cf. 1 Kings 4:6), the **carriers** transported materials from place to place and the **stonecutters** cut massive limestone blocks out of **the quarry in the hills** north of Jerusalem. **The men of Gebal** (modern Byblos, 13 miles north of Beirut, and 60 miles north of Tyre) made a significant contribution by preparing **timber and stone** along with Solomon's and Hiram's **craftsmen**.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 136). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Temple Preparations (5:1–18). Like his father, Solomon was zealous for the reputation of the Lord. He allied himself with Hiram, king of Tyre in Phoenicia, and acquired from him building materials for the temple. When Hiram witnessed Solomon's wisdom, he praised the God of Israel. Solomon's laborers were drafted from among the Israelites. Samuel had warned Israel of such conscription under a king (1 Sam. 8:11–12, 16).

Tatum, S. L. (1972). 1 Kings. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (p. 196). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

King Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 5:1–7:51)

The passage—Hiram, king of Tyre, had built David's palace in Jerusalem. He established friendship with Solomon. Solomon told him of his purpose to build a house for the Lord. He asked Hiram for cedar and for laborers. The two kings made an agreement. Solomon also conscripted stonemasons and other workmen for the project. One of the greatest building projects in history was underway.

The dimensions of the Temple were 90 feet long, 30 wide, and 45 high. The vestibule was the same height and width as the main Temple, but was only 15 feet in depth. The inner sanctuary, later called the holy of holies, was a perfect cube of 30-foot dimensions overlaid with pure gold. The elaborate furnishings, carvings, overlays, and paneling are described in minute detail. The greatness of the building lay not in its size, but in its beauty and religious significance.

God made a covenant concerning the Temple. He promised Solomon he would bless him and Israel. He would dwell with them and never forsake them. They were in turn to obey his ordinances and keep his commandments (6:11–13).

Not only does this passage tell of the building of the Temple, it describes the entire complex of five buildings (7:1–8). All of these composed an impressive royal building program. The details of the metalwork, the symbolism of the pillars, the furnishings and fixtures of the various buildings and the significance of each could be the subject of a study requiring more space than is possible in a brief commentary. Many of our libraries have entire books devoted to a description of the Temple itself.

Special points—It is interesting to notice that chapter 6 ends with the statement that Solomon was seven years building the Temple. Chapter 7 opens with the statement that Solomon spent thirteen years building his own palace. This is a commentary on Solomon's changing character. Worldly power and a desire for comfort and luxury gradually overcame his primary zeal to do the will of God.

Truth for today—The elaborate and expensive furnishings of the Temple certainly justify our providing our best for the house of the Lord. Our dedication to God is often reflected in our devotion to his institutions. No institution should be wasteful, but if its existence is justified at all it should merit a quality in keeping with its relationship to our God.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Kings 5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.