

Building Project

1 Kings 5:1-7:51

(Show slide 1 as soon as Bible Reading ends)

Many years ago I used to love watching a TV programme called **Grand Designs**.

In every episode we are shown people with lots of resources pursuing the dream to build a magnificent place to call home. Not every story is a success. Some people run out of money, some end up living in small caravans in a muddy field, and some relationships break up because of the stress. However, there are countless success stories and these result in houses that leave you in awe of what has been constructed.

Change to slide 2 Today in this section of **1 Kings** we are presented with one of the **most significant building projects** ever completed on our planet; the building of God's temple by King Solomon around the year 967BC.

At this point I imagine some of us might be thinking, "Yes, but so what? Maybe that's interesting if you're into this **niche religious architecture** kind of thing. But what relevance does the construction of an ancient building have for my life in 21st century Scarborough?" To help us make a connection let me highlight **three places** in the New Testament that speak of the **temple**.

John 2:19-21, "Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' They replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?' But the temple he had spoken of was his body."

Jesus is the temple.

I Corinthians 3:16, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives among you?”

The church as it gathers is the temple. By faith we are united to him. We are the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:19, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?”

Individual Christians are temples.

All this means as we look at the temple in **1 Kings 5-7**, we are not just being presented with historical architecture, we are going to learn valuable and life-changing lessons about Jesus, his church and our individual discipleship.

My plan for today is to show us **six** truths that emerge from these chapters of the Bible. For each one I'll show us how this helps us understand more about Jesus and his church

What are the six truths?

- God's temple receives Gentile help
- God's temple is built wisely
- God's temple takes time to build
- God's temple needs the king to obey
- God's temple should take priority
- God's temple is beautiful

First, God's temple receives Gentile help

Change to slide 3 Look at 5:1. **Read verses 1 to 6.**

From one perspective it makes sense, get the best materials from the best people.

Solomon says, "We have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians."

However, it is clear in the Bible story that the Israelites are to be a holy people who serve a holy God.

They are a distinct people who are to avoid the lifestyle of the people around them who worship other gods.

Why is one of these Gentiles, that is a non-Jew, being allowed to participate in building the temple of the God of Israel?

It's preparing the way for the story of Jesus and the global temple that he is building today!

Or put differently, these opening verses of **1 Kings chapter 5** are sowing a seed of intrigue that only properly makes sense when we open up the pages of the New Testament.

What do we discover there?

First, Gentile permission is required to supply the wood that is necessary for Jesus to be the ultimate temple where the full atonement of sin would be paid for once and for all.

The Jews did not have the authority to carry out the death sentence. Only the Romans could authorise the taking of life and only they could carry out crucifixions.

As we read this happening to Jesus, **1 Kings chapter 5** reminds us that this is not the first time a Gentile has supplied the wood for God's temple.

Second, in the New Testament we discover the glorious truth that Jesus' global temple, the church, will be built with millions of Gentile hands.

Together, Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus will serve and participate in the greatest building project our world has ever seen.

All this makes sense because the temple of Jesus is greater than the temple of Solomon

But here's the thing. Gentile involvement in temple construction shouldn't surprise us. God has **deliberately** put the seeds of this possibility in the Old Testament story.

Second, God's temple is built wisely

Change to slide 4 Tucked away in all the construction details is a wonderful verse that highlights Solomon's involvement.

Look at 5:12. **Read verse 12a.**

The construction project went so well because King Solomon was active in making it happen. This worked so well because the king was filled with wisdom.

Is this the best way to do it? Trust the wisdom of the king.

What a vital principle to remember as we encounter temple building in the New Testament.

First, let's consider the wisdom of King Jesus as he chooses the path of suffering.

This is vital for the building of his global temple.

However, do you remember the reaction from one of his closest disciples as he reveals the architectural plans?

Mark 8:31-32, "Jesus then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."

If the temple is to be built the king must die.

Second, let's consider the wisdom of King Jesus as he builds his church today.

It's not wrong to have plans and strategies. We don't want to be aimless and without purpose. However, we must hold our ideas lightly because the temple will be built according to the perfect wisdom of King Jesus.

Is this the best way to do it? Trust the wisdom of the king.

When we are driving, our **Sat Nav** will sometimes change our route for us because of some **obstacle** ahead. We can't see it out of the windscreen. It all looks fine. But further ahead there is a problem and we must deviate from our planned course now. That's easier to do because the Sat Nav tells us the reason.

When it comes to building the church, let's be people of faith. Even when we don't know the reason for the deviation, let's trust the wisdom of King Jesus as he builds his temple.

Third, God's temple takes time to build

Change to slide 5 Look at 6:1. **Read verse 1.**

That's a long time to wait for the temple to be built!

It's not a long time for God.

We measure time using the units that reflect the shortness of our lives. We talk about seconds, minutes, hours, days, months and years. Now because we use these measurements, 480 years seems like a very long time.

However, God is eternal and he isn't counting the years before his final breath.

If God wore a watch, it would probably have centuries and millennia as the digital display.

We are a generation that expects things to be done immediately and instantly. We find delays very difficult to deal with.

We need to be careful to bring that sort of mindset into the building of the global temple of Jesus Christ.

God will do what he wants in his time.

When we are tempted to tap our watch and look towards heaven, let's remember that the construction timetable runs according to God's planning not ours.

Fourth, God's temple needs the king to obey

Change to slide 6 In the midst of lots of details about the different rooms in the temple and the material used in their construction we get a significant message from the Lord God Almighty.

We don't have time to look at all the details but as you read in your own time just keep an eye out for the number of times the word gold is repeated! Here is a temple fir for the glorious God

However, in the midst of the details, listen to what we are told in verse 11.

Read verses 11 to 13.

God's presence is linked with the king's obedience. He is their representative and what he does or does not do will impact their experience of the presence of God.

Fast forward to the New Testament and what do we discover? The same principle still applies but the good news is that we have a king greater than Solomon.

King Jesus is perfectly obedient and so therefore his people who are united to him by faith will always experience the presence of God in their lives.

Ephesians 1:13-14, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory."

The Holy Spirit will never be taken away from us because his presence is based on the obedience of King Jesus.

Our ultimate experience of God's presence forever is equally certain. Everything is based not on our own performance but on the perfect obedience of King Jesus.

Fifth, God's temple should take priority

Change to slide 7 There is a weird interruption at the beginning of **1 Kings 7**.

Suddenly the camera shifts from the construction of God's temple to the building of Solomon's palace.

The question is, **why?**

Let's compare a few details of each project.

Listen to 6:37. **Read 6:37-7:1.**

Ah, Solomon spends longing building his personal residence than he does on God's holy dwelling.

When we compare the dimensions it also turns out that Solomon's living quarters are bigger than God's.

This doesn't mean that Solomon isn't bothered by building God's temple. He does pour lots of time into that significant endeavour. And yet, there are signs in the story that his heart wasn't fully in the temple building task.

It was certainly important to him but it wasn't the top priority in his life.

By contrast King Jesus is much greater than Solomon.

Jesus is a king who sacrificed everything so his global church could be established.

What about us as we continue that endeavour? **Which palaces matter most to us?**

How convinced are we that building the church is the most critical project in the universe? It's more precious than our homes. More valuable than our careers.. More vital than our education. More significant than our hobbies. And, dare I say it, more important than our children.

Please don't misunderstand what I've just said. Living for God's temple as a first priority doesn't ruin all those other things. It actually allows us to put them in their proper position.

We need the Lord's help to live in this radical way!

Sixth, God's temple is beautiful

Change to slide 8 In the second half of 1 Kings chapter 7, we are introduced to a very skillful craftsman.

Look at 7:13. **Read verses 13 and 14.**

The rest of the chapter outlines the different items that he makes. Again and again we are supposed to respond, "Wow, that would have been beautiful to behold."

There are many reasons why God's temple needs to be beautiful and many applications of this principle. However, as we finish, let me focus on **two**.

First, it points us forward to the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is such a magnetic character who draws us towards him because of his compassion and love.

He is beautiful.

This shouldn't be a surprise to us because he is the true temple of the Lord God Almighty and we know from the Old Testament that the Lord's temple is beautiful to behold.

And so as we read the story of Jesus be prepared to encounter his beautiful character on display.

We see this most profoundly in perhaps the ugliest moment in human history, the crucifixion of Jesus.

As his appearance is marred beyond all human likeness, we look again and see the beauty of God's temple.

Second, the beauty of the temple points us forward to the beauty of the church

I'm not talking about the beauty of our worship spaces. No I mean the beautiful work of transformation that the Holy Spirit is doing in our **individual** and **corporate** lives.

As we gaze at the beauty of the temple in **1 Kings 7**, let's be encouraged by what the Holy Spirit is doing in the temple today. We are not trapped in the ugliness of the past and we are not destined for the same mistakes day after day. No, because of the presence of God in his temple, we can be different and we will be different.

Let's pray.