

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

## A House For His Name I Kings 5:1-18

**Intro:** We have come to the portion of I Kings where most people are tempted to check out of their Bible reading plan because it is difficult for most of us to get excited about 3 chapters of detailed temple construction. We usually treat it the same way as road construction: we endure however many miles it lasts just to get past it; just trudge on through. I imagine some architects or building contractors might enjoy this section but after a while, most of us start to wonder if Paul was really serious when he wrote Rom 15:4! Really, hope? I just hope I can stay awake! But here's the thing – Paul was correct! There is some real spiritual insight buried in this section of I Kings even though it may seem that the inspiration of the Spirit requires more perspiration from us.

As we make our way through the next few chapters, not only will we deal with individual texts and the information that is revealed therein but we will also take some time to look at the bigger picture. The building of the temple in Jerusalem wasn't just a big deal for Solomon or for Israel – it was a big deal for God! This temple wasn't just an architecturally significant building or even just religiously significant. No, the building of this temple, by Solomon – the son of David, was significantly important on a theological level as well. Solomon's temple will stand as a reversal of an ancient judgment and the symbol of God's desire to bring all nations back into a loving relationship with Himself.

Just in case anyone was wondering, the structure of the entire temple account reflects that of many extra-biblical building projects. From the decision to build; the gathering of materials; the actual building process with descriptions of the building and furnishings; the dedication of the building and the blessing of the king – all of this fits the pattern of a typical Near Eastern building project. Not only that but archaeological evidence suggests that this description of Solomon's temple bears all the marks of being authentic in that it fits with the times. What we are dealing with here is the careful, even meticulous, record of a serious observer not the imaginations of a fanciful propagandist. So, what can we learn about God from this account in ch5?

**1-6** – Since the days of Moses, the people of Israel had brought their sacrifices and offerings to the tabernacle but now they were no longer a pilgrim people but an established nation settled in their own land. The tabernacle was a fragile, temporary structure and the time had come for Israel to build a permanent temple to their great God. To that end, David had spent most of his reign preparing for it. He desired to build the temple himself but God said no, he had too much blood on his hands. But, that didn't prevent him from making great preparations for the temple.

David was a mighty warrior king who went to battle against the enemies of Israel and he was very successful. But, to his credit, David didn't automatically regard every neighboring nation as being an enemy. He wisely built alliances and friendships with some of his neighbors and just as Solomon benefitted from his father's military victories, so he also benefited from his father's diplomacy, as we see here. Hiram, the king of Tyre, sent his congratulations to Solomon upon hearing of his ascension to the throne of Israel. Since Hiram had an established treaty relation with David, he saw no need to change course with Solomon's new administration (**1b**).

Solomon responds to Hiram with a little theology (**3-5**) and a request (**6**); he makes reference to Yahweh's promise and then orders some lumber. In fact, Solomon repeats the very words of God's promise that He spoke to David in **II Sam 7:13a**. Of course, Solomon is speaking as though Hiram already knew all of this. Apparently, David had relayed this information to Hiram previously, which tells us that David was not hesitant to share spiritual information to his friends, even if they weren't spiritually capable of processing that information. Now Solomon does the same. What he's telling Hiram is that Yahweh's providence has prepared the way for His promise to be realized. God gave David military victory and has provided political security for Solomon. It's these very conditions that give Solomon the green light to proceed on what Yahweh had promised David. So, let's start cutting down some trees!

The spiritual principle here is this: it's Yahweh's promise that drives Solomon's project. This is important for us to understand. The real foundation of the temple wasn't the massive blocks of limestone; Solomon's temple will rest squarely upon the promise of Yahweh! This should be remembered by modern Christians who look down on the temple as merely

evidence of the “external” character of the OT religion or as a grand building that the more spiritual people would have avoided. This is completely wrong and short-sighted. The promise of [II Sam 7:13](#) shows that God wanted the temple in its time. It was the sacrament, the physical representation of His presence with His people!

Does not this principle of ministry apply to all of Yahweh’s servants? Doesn’t this teach us that kingdom promises encourage kingdom work? God’s clear assurances to David ([5](#)) not only justify Solomon’s launching into this massive building project – it actually stimulates his efforts! But, isn’t this the case for all ministry? Is it not because we have and believe God’s promises that we serve and labor for Him? It’s exactly because we have big kingdom promises that we continue to serve the Lord and not lose heart ([Hab 2:13-14](#); [Dan 7:13-14](#); [Mt 24:29-31](#)). Where would the energy for ministry come from if not from the solid promises of God’s own mouth? Yes, these are old promises but they are reliable. They may be distant but they will prove to be very accurate. That’s the foundation of kingdom labor.

**7-11** – It’s impossible to say if Hiram was a believer in Yahweh but it is clear that he had a high level of respect for the God of Israel. This was no doubt due to David’s godly influence on him. Hiram was willing to supply Solomon with timber for the temple and even though Solomon has offered him anything he wanted, all he asked for in return was food for his royal court. He didn’t attempt to take unfair advantage of Solomon’s good graces. Having said that, we saw last week how much food was required for Solomon’s own royal table per day so we can be sure Hiram’s request wasn’t insignificant. It comes out to about 125K bushels of wheat and 115K gallons of olive oil every year. But, is there more going on here than just a business deal? Is Hiram more than just an early version of Lowe’s?

If you go back and read from [4:34](#) straight into [5:1](#) you realize that Hiram is one of the very kings mentioned in [4:34](#). Here’s a pagan king praising Yahweh for giving such a wise son to David rule over such a vast people ([7](#)). We can assume that the author believed this praise in the mouth of a pagan king was significant enough to include in his record. Some even go so far as to say that Hiram’s assistance in providing materials for the temple is significant because it shows that even heathen nations took part in building the temple and as such, contributed indirectly to glorifying God. Their involvement reflects the truth of passages like [Ps 24:1](#), “The earth is

the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." Or **Ps 72:11b**, "All nations shall serve Him."

When the tabernacle was built by Moses in the wilderness, the materials were supplied exclusively by Israelites and the work was done exclusively by Israelite. But here, Hiram's workers in Lebanon weren't worshippers of Yahweh and the aliens in Israel that Solomon conscripted for labor weren't Jewish proselytes and yet, God used both of these outsider groups to assist in building the temple. Does this mean Hiram's involvement was a clear prophecy of God's future universal kingdom? No, not necessarily – but it is a subtle anticipation of it. Sometimes we are given glimpses of things to come, a foreshadowing of future realities. That's all we can claim for Hiram here. His praise of Yahweh and his lumber mills are small anticipations of God's firm and final decree that, "to Me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall take an oath (swear allegiance)" (**Isa 45:23b**). There's something exciting about these glimpses if we only have eyes to see them.

**12-18** – There's a whole lot of giving going on in vs9-12. Hiram's giving Solomon lots of lumber and Solomon's giving Hiram lots of food. The text indicates that they kept giving these things to each other, year by year until the project was completed. Then the writer emphasizes all this giving with another gift, a greater gift in vs12 – the Lord gave Solomon wisdom... This wisdom doesn't just refer to the business contract Solomon made with Hiram but to the wise use he made of all the talents and skills of his own subjects for this project. We are to see Solomon's raising and organizing his own labor force in Israel as further evidence of God's wisdom present in his life and decision making.

This arrangement makes many a commentator nervous because they see Solomon's labor solution as an example of what a harsh repressive regime does in not only enslaving its Canaanite subjects but also impressing their own Israelite subjects into a forced labor system. They see this as royal repression, trampling on the rights of its subjects with a policy of coercion. But, was it really as bad as that? Is this the seed bed that will foster a growing rebellion that will reap a harvest in later chapters? Not really.

At the end of II Sam, David took a census in Israel. It was never completed because God moved against David and Israel because of it but the incomplete census did render a count of 1.3 million able-bodied men in the

land and of this number, only 30K were conscripted to work – that’s just 2.3% of the total available work force. These men only worked 1 month out of each quarter so it’s not that the work was that stressful on their bodies or home life. 10K would spend 1 month in Lebanon and then spend 2 months at home. Furthermore, these men were Jewish citizens and weren’t treated like slaves. Nor should we assume this was a permanent arrangement. Conscripted labor such as is described here was common in that day for temple building or maintenance projects. After all, Solomon was running a royal monarchy, not a ballot-box democracy. This is how kings got things done!

But let’s get back to the main point: the accounts in v13-18 should be read in the light of vs12. All the administration, organization and delegation involved in assembling and directing the temple labor force, the arrangements for acquiring stone and wood – all these things flow from the wisdom God had given to Solomon. Sometimes in the Bible, wisdom is seen as the skill to get things done efficiently and effectively (Eccl 10:10). Our text is reminding us that true wisdom is a divine gift and not just a human aptitude. Wisdom is seldom flashy so it’s easily disregarded. In fact, it’s usually only appreciated the most when it’s missing

Despite the obvious spiritual applications of our text, there is a much deeper significance to the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Yes, it was the fulfillment of Yahweh’s promise to king David. Yes, it was the evidence of God’s wisdom operating in Solomon’s reign and the crown jewel and focal point of Israel’s spiritual consciousness. Each of these things were spiritually significant but the appearance of the temple in Jerusalem also had a great theological significance as well and the first clue we have of this significance is seen in v5 where Solomon says he’s determined to build a house for the name of the Lord my God...

Now, it’s probable that Solomon used this terminology simply because he wanted it to be clear that he wasn’t building this temple as a house for God in the same way pagans thought. Pagan temples were intended by their builders to be the actual residence of the false god they served but Solomon knew that the heavens of heavens couldn’t contain the God of Israel so how could He live in the measly building he was about to erect. But, even if that was Solomon’s intention, his use of that phrase points to a much greater and more exciting truth.

In the first 11 chapters of Genesis, we are treated to a double occurrence of the same wretched event: creation and communion with God; sin and expulsion from God presence; appearance of men of renown and explosion of wickedness; worldwide judgment by flood. After the flood there was, in effect, a re-creation – humanity was given a fresh start but sin was still the predominant characteristic so this clean slate was quickly followed by sin and a continual movement away from God's presence, culminating in humanity attempting to make a name for themselves by building a tower to heaven. The end result was a 2<sup>nd</sup> worldwide judgment when God confused their languages.

It's the story of Babel we want to focus on. Here is humanity at its worst: full of both fear and colossal pride (11:4). They feared separation because they desired a permanent dwelling in which they could pursue the immortality of vain-glory and self-preservation. They wanted to make a name for themselves (human glory) and banded together to accomplish it. Ironically, almost mockingly, we never discover the names of these builders. Their pursuit of immortality through prideful love of self was little more than trying to catch the wind. Their desire for a permanent home, an end to their wandering was also taken from them when their languages were confused. Everything they endeavored to accomplish was halted by God's judgment against them. As such, they were scattered even further apart and continued to wander over all the world.

But, here we see that the temple is to be erected for the name of the Lord – to glorify God. We can also see from the passages we have already read and from many, many more that the purpose of the temple was not just to magnify the name of the Lord but to be a rallying point for all those who love the Lord and desire to serve Him whether Jew or Gentile. With these 2 truths taken together, we can say that the building of the temple on Mt Zion was an intentional theological reversal of the Tower of Babel!

The anonymous builders at Babel built for the glory of humanity but the temple was built for the name of Yahweh, for His glory and reputation. Now, if the temple was intended to be the reversal of the Tower of Babel, then that would also necessarily involve the undoing of the various nation's exile. All those nations that were scattered by the confusion of the languages could now be drawn back to God through the temple for His name on Mt Zion. In

fact, the entire history of Israel is the saga of Yahweh's name. It's the declaration of His name through the fulfillment of His promises, the wisdom of Solomon and the joy of His people; this is what the kings of the earth was hearing about and responding to. In fact, some royalty even came to see for themselves and left with a greater knowledge of God which was a better gift than anything Solomon had stashed away in his royal treasuries.

When man sinned in the garden of Eden, the punishment was expulsion from the garden. Adam and Eve were shown the door and as they moved further from the garden they moved further from God. As they and their descendants continued to move further from God, they began to lose the knowledge of God and the less they knew about God, the further from God they moved. This is the true curse and punishment of sin, lack of knowledge of God.

It's this lack that leads humanity into self-destructive behavior and it's this lack that Jesus Christ came to remedy. He came to reveal the Father so that we might be drawn closer into His presence.

What the temple failed to accomplish, Jesus accomplished through His perfect life, His necessary death and His glorious resurrection and ascension back into heaven. Is your life characterized more by your lack of knowledge of God or do you have a relationship in which you are not only drawing closer to God but you are constantly and noticeably being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ by the power of His Holy Spirit? The vast majority of humanity is still wandering in the dark exile of sin but Jesus came to bring the light of God's truth, to make a way for us to return back to God in our own personal exodus, accomplished by the shed blood of the sacrificial Lamb of God.

The church frequently needs to be reminded that the kingdom of God is not "brick and mortar," that the kingdom of God is made up of the people of God. Still, our text shows us that even the "brick and mortar" (material aspects of the kingdom) can testify to the wisdom of God and teach us not to despise God's less spectacular, more mundane gifts. **Ch5** isn't exciting and it only records the preliminaries of the temple construction. But even in these simple preliminaries bear witness to His sure promises, His coming kingdom and His necessary wisdom. 😊