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Temple Blueprints

I Kings 6:1-38

Intro: If the initial preparation for building the temple in [ch5](#) was riveting stuff, I'll bet you can't wait to dive into all the details of spatial dimensions and interior decorating! Again, there seems to be quite a bit of unnecessary detail here that fails to stir our theological juices but the reality is that God has seen fit to communicate His word to us in the form of a construction report so we should pay careful attention to what He has to say to us in it. Ch6 and 7 both deal with similar material so it's possible to treat them together but ch6 has a unique structure in that it begins and ends with a date formula so it is appropriate to cover this chapter by itself.

Before we launch into the deep end of the details pool, I want to look at another important aspect surrounding the temple. In the biblical record of King David's life, what were his 2 greatest sins? Some would say his adultery with Bathsheba while others may point to his taking a census of Israel at the end II Samuel. Of course, both answers are correct. But, what were the results of these sins? As a result of numbering the people, David had to purchase a plot of land on Mount Moriah to build an altar and worshipped the Lord. Eventually, David married Bathsheba and the Lord gave them a son (Solomon). Now we have Solomon building a temple on David's property on Mount Moriah!

God has taken the results of David's 2 greatest sins – a piece of property and a son – and He is building a temple!

This shouldn't come as a surprise because we know, "where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." ([Rom 5:20](#)).

Now, this is in no way an encouragement for us to sin. Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Understand, we're just considering the ultimate results of David's 2 sins; we haven't discussed the immediate consequences of those sins in David's life. Because of these failures on his part, David lost 3 sons, a multitude of subjects and nearly lost both his kingdom and his own life. Personally, David paid dearly for these transgressions, and when the bill came due, it was almost more than he could stand. This is not an encouragement for us to sin but it should be an encouragement to us to go on serving God after we have confessed and

repented of our own transgressions. When we sin, Satan wants us to think that all is lost but we should know that the God of all grace is still at work in our lives.

1 – The chapter begins with a date stamp but this is much more than just a date stamp; it's a date stamp charged with theology! To better understand the significance of our text we need to look at the other landmark date stamp our text makes reference to (**Ex 12:40-41**). These 2 scriptures are often used to for calculating chronology of biblical events, which they do; but they also serve to teach us some important lessons on redemption. This is particularly true of our text. True, it is a chronological text but most studies of it get so tangled up in the chronology that they lose sight or simply ignore the theological significance. The author clearly holds the date in **vs1** as being highly important because he ties it to the date of Israel's exodus from Egypt; the premier "water-shed" event of their national history. Plus, he also highlights the 4th year of Solomon's reign, showing that this date was also a landmark event for him.

So, why is this date so important to the author? The simple answer is that it marks the beginning of a new era for Israel. The same is true of the passage in Exodus; the end of the 430 years in Egypt marked the end of Israel's national bondage and celebrated the gift of freedom. Our text today is both similar to the Exodus text and different. The end of the 480 years since the exodus marks the end of Israel's wandering and is celebrated with the gift of rest! This idea of rest is taken straight from the Davidic covenant passage in **II Sam 7:10-11**. Here, God declares that He intends to end Israel's up-and-down, insecure existence through David's victories over Israel's enemies. Only after this was accomplished would God allow a temple to be built.

The spiritual significance of this is that Yahweh would not rest until He had given Israel rest (**II Sam 7:6-7**). Now He has done just that (**5:4**); thus, Yahweh's "resting place" could now be built. You could say that the Exodus was now complete. God had not only intended to save Israel, He intended to settle her as well. In this He reveals Himself to be the God who both delivers and establishes. Theologians sometimes use the term redemptive history to refer to the time frame in which God brings His divine purposes to pass. That's fine as long as we remember its redemptive history – meaning God's work of redemption covers long stretches of time. Like 480 years!

That's a long time to bring Israel's exodus redemption to a close; yet it's so certain and definite that you can mark it on the calendar.

God does His redemptive work both certainly and deliberately. 480 years is the time frame between the Protestant Reformation and our modern era. Apparently, God is in no hurry when it comes to fulfilling His purposes. He is the God who perseveres, who slowly yet steadily accomplishes His redemptive work in the world, through the church and in our own personal lives. Our problem with this is we often desire a microwave god, someone who can get things done within our time table – but that's nothing less than a graven image. Don't get me wrong, there should always be an urgency about the gospel in our lives but, our text implies that there should never be any panic about the kingdom. God has His kingdom well in hand and He will see His purposes for it fulfilled, all in good time.

2-38 – There is an order to this detailed description of the temple. The author moves from a description of the exterior of the temple (**2-10**) to the interior (**15-30**) then the entrances (**31-35**) and finally the courtyard (**36**), or the portico (**front porch**). If we use the length of the common cubit (18") then the temple would have been 90 ft long, 30 ft wide and 45 ft high. This was not particularly large as ancient temples go but the glory of Israel's temple was not in its size. The dimensions of the temple tell us it was built on the same basic design as the tabernacle, just twice as large. This tells us that Solomon meant the temple to be a continuation of the tabernacle.

There's an odd blurb in **v7** that sheds light on the difficulty involved in building this temple. It seems that Solomon was one of those customers that didn't just know what he wanted the finished product to look like; he also had certain demands on how he wanted the work done. Solomon insisted that there be no sound of a hammer or chisel or any iron tool at the job site. This meant that all the stone and timber used to construct the temple had to be cut and prepared at another location and then carried to the temple site to be assembled. Apparently, if you're the king, labor was cheap! While this may seem like an unnecessary requirement, there's a lesson here on how God works.

This speaks to the way God wants His work done. The temple had to be built with human labor. God wasn't about to send a team of construction angels to complete the project. Yet, Solomon didn't want the sound of man's

work to dominate the site of the temple. He wanted to communicate, as much as possible, that the temple was of God and not of man. This also speaks to the way God works in His people. More often than not, the greatest work in God's kingdom happens quietly. Yet, the building site of the temple was only quiet because there was a lot of noise and diligent work back at the quarry.

Finally, this particular demand of Solomon's speaks to God's work in the church. Why does the author even mention this particular demand? It's because the temple serves as a "type" of the kingdom of God and the souls of men and women, God's children, are to be prepared here on earth for life there in eternity. In eternity, there is no preaching, no exhortation, no repentance, no tears, no prayers. All of that takes place here in order that we might be squared away and perfectly fitted for our place in the New Jerusalem!

Besides this little tidbit of information, what could possibly be the reason the author chose to include so much detail?

In fact, he spends considerably more space describing the interior of the temple than he does the exterior. Why? The answer is simple – the average Israelite would never have the opportunity to see the interior of the temple during their lifetime. The interior of the temple was only to be accessed by those members of the Levitical priesthood. So it's likely that the writers focus on the interior was simply intended to give the Israelite on the street a sort of audio tour of Yahweh's holy place, giving them a chance to imagine what it was like, to marvel at all the extravagant beauty.

He begins by describing all the cedar paneling in the main hall and inner sanctuary but then begins to insert that magic word into his description – gold! 6xs in 3 verses (20-22) and 11xs total in this section. Apparently both the main hall and the inner sanctuary were covered in gold – not just the furniture, the walls and the ceiling but the floor was made of gold covered fir planks and even the nails used in the holy of holies were gold plated! Imagine that! We used to think wall-to-wall carpeting was extravagant but this was gold plating from floor to ceiling and everything in between. There was nothing in the interior of the temple that wasn't covered in or plated with gold!

What are we to make of all this gold? Invariably, someone always complains

about such needless extravagance. Their question is always, “Why this waste?” Their argument is always, “Just think of all the good we could do with all the money spent on this?” Does this sound familiar? It’s the same argument Judas employed when Mary poured the alabaster box of costly ointment onto Jesus’ head. But, Jesus didn’t reprimand Mary – he reprimanded Judas. Mary’s actions were done in preparation for His soon coming death and burial. And because her motives were pure, her unusual and extraordinary sacrifice for Jesus’ sake has been remembered everywhere the gospel is preached.

So, why should we balk at all the gold in the temple? There’s no negative tone in the author’s description. If anything, there’s a sense of wonder throughout. Could it be that the splendor of the temple was meant to reflect the splendor of Israel’s God? The temple’s gold points to Yahweh’s glory! In this day, it was common for kings to build lavish temples to their pagan gods. In such a world, why should Yahweh look like a bargain bin deity in a government project house? It’s quite likely that the message of the temple’s gold is simply that nothing cheap should be offered to God, only that which reflects His splendor. This speaks to the quality of our commitment to Him. When we worship, is it whole-hearted or merely half-hearted? God deserves our best! When we read and study the Word are we rushed and bothered? God deserves our undivided and faithful attention. When we do our daily work, do we work for men or do we work for the Lord. God deserves our best efforts at all times.

Now, there are a few verses we skipped over that we need to go back and deal with. They appear to be an odd insertion in the middle of the temple description, even an intrusion. **11-13** – These verses are clearly different from the surrounding text. Right in the middle of our temple construction report we discover an revelation from Yahweh to Solomon, a word of both promise and admonition. This message must have come to Solomon while the temple was being built (**12**) but there is a sense in which it seems like they are intrusive. Now, Bible “critics” will try to make the case that since these verses seem so out of place, then they must have been added to the text at a later date and thus, are not part of the original text.

The problem with this assertion by the critics is that once they’ve determined something to be a later insertion, they disregard the text altogether. What if it was inserted at a later date? Does that automatically

negate whatever the passage demands from us or gives to us? Not at all! Its still part of God's Word and as such it should be treated with the same inspired regard. Not to be contrary, but I contend that the contention of the critics is misplaced. Sure, v11-13 are different in style and focus from the surrounding text but these 3 verses actually appear at a natural transition point in the chapter: 2-10 focus on the exterior; 14-38 deal with the interior. 11-13 appear in a natural division point.

But, what is the purpose for this intrusion? Well, the author has celebrated Yahweh's redemption in vs1 and has given a detailed description of Yahweh's splendor in the rest of the chapter but here, he shares with us Yahweh's priority. It's great to hear about all the intricacies of the temple construction but there's a far more important matter that preempts this description: there must be personal royal obedience to Yahweh's commands if Israel is going to enjoy all that the temple signifies. If the king and his people are unable to see this, unable to grasp this, the temple will be useless – just a magnificent building minus the divine blessing.

God alludes to His promise to David in v12b but v13 tells us that the total benefit He promises goes well beyond establishing David's dynasty. The message of the text is clear: Solomon must live faithfully under the covenant of God if he is to continue to enjoy the promise of God and the presence of God. As goes the dynasty – so goes the nation. Those second-person singular pronouns in v12 are very heavy and they are placed squarely on Solomon's shoulders. This means Solomon's personal faithfulness to Yahweh's covenant law is the condition for Yahweh's gracious presence among His people through the temple! Notice how critical one man's obedience is for the entire nation. No wonder God chose to interrupt the construction report to highlight this truth.

There are countless examples from history that illustrate the case of how the one affects the many, whether for bad or good. On July 2, 1863, General G.K. Warren was on the crest of a hill called Little Round Top, just outside of a small town in Pennsylvania called Gettysburg. This would be the site of one of the most pivotal battles of the Civil War and the battle was just beginning to heat up. General Warren was chief engineer for the Federal Army and his location was only used as a signal post and it was undefended. Warren could see Confederate troops forming up in the woods to take the hill and if they were successful, they would out flank and destroy

the left wing of the Union lines. Warren immediately sent for troops to defend and hold that critical position. One man's vigilance saved a whole army from disaster. Yet, there are just as many, if not more examples in history of one man's negligence bringing disaster on many others.

The point is, even though we are not covenant kings, the spiritual principle still applies to all who are entrusted with spiritual authority – whether it's in the church, the home, extended family, workplace or the community. Our individual obedience to God can bring blessing to a large collection of different people. On the other hand, our persistent, rebellious refusal to obey God can bring disaster and even destruction to a vast array of people. Robert Murray M'Cheyne grasped this concept perfectly and succinctly in a comment on pastoral theology when he said, My people's greatest need is my personal holiness. Your greatest need is my personal holiness! Parents, your children's greatest need is your personal holiness. Husbands – to wives; neighbors – to neighbors; workers – to co-workers... Our responsibility is to God, but how we handle that responsibility affects more than just our own personal lives.

I think it is important to reiterate here that God's promise to David, which was repeated to Solomon here, is not conditional to Solomon's obedience. The promise was firm, it was guaranteed by God and will ultimately fulfilled by God when Jesus Christ, the last descendent of David, returns to set up His eternal rule. What we need to remember is Solomon's obedience, as well as that of his descendents, was the required condition for their enjoyment the benefits of God's promise and the blessing of God's presence.

Some might be tempted to disregard this spiritual principle as just belonging to the OT dispensation. "We live under NT grace and Jesus promised that He would never leave us nor forsake us." That is true, and He will always keep His promises to us. But, if we persist in living our own way, in resisting the call of God's Word to live holy lives that are daily dependent on Jesus, while we may have the promise of His presence, we won't really enjoy the blessing of His presence. Christ's call to His people is for them to deny themselves, take up their own cross and follow in His footsteps. Only through complete surrender to His call will we be able to experience the full blessing and benefit of His presence. Disobedience to His will is marked by discouragement and despair. ☺