

1st Kings Chapters 5-6 – John Karmelich

1. In this chapter, we start a study of the first Jewish temple built to God. My title for this lesson is, "Why should I care" as I ask that question a lot in this lesson. First let me tell you what my goal is NOT for this lesson: To make us experts on architectural details. What I do desire is to have us understand how this temple and all its details is symbolic of our eternal relationship with God and fellow believers. When I say, "our", I am referring to Christians. The goal of this lesson is for each of us to have a better relationship with God and fellow Christians and this temple is a model of how that eternal relationship works. With that daunting task stated, I'm ready to start.
 - a) To begin it's important to understand the difference between the original Jewish structure called the tabernacle and the more permanent structure built in these chapters called the temple. Over half of the book of Exodus is dedicated to describing how the tabernacle is to be built and maintained. Consider that the book of Exodus has more text dedicated to the tabernacle than to the plagues and actual exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.
 - b) With that said, the important thing to remember is that the tabernacle was designed to be a portable structure that can be carried and set up anywhere. Now here in these chapters in 1st Kings, we are going to read of the first official Jewish temple to be built. We won't get as many chapters as say the Exodus construction, but there are a handful. Besides the fact that one structure is portable and one is permanent, they are similar in design but at the same time they are some differences that we'll discover are symbolically significant.
 - i) Here is a key difference: The tabernacle was completely built by Jewish people. Non-Jewish people predominantly built the temple. OK, so what? The point is the tabernacle represents how God desires that we worship Him here on earth. The temple is a model of how both Jews and non-Jewish people will worship God together in the heaven. Keep in mind that we non-Jewish Christians worship a Jewish God. It is the "God of the Jews" that the Christian church has adopted.
 - ii) Think of the tabernacle as coming from the Jewish people. Yet, there is coming a day in heaven when Jewish and Christian people together will serve God for all of eternity. That concept is modeled for us in this more permanent structure.
 - c) But John, didn't that "permanent" temple get destroyed? Yes. In fact, within five years of Solomon's death we will read of the first signs of its decline in use. A few hundred years later it was completely destroyed when Israel was defeated by the Babylonians (roughly the Iraqi's). The word picture for us is despite our faults, God wants us to work together to serve Him, not that He needs or desires it, but because it is the best way for us to live.
 - d) In summary think of the temple as a model of how God desires that we as people work as a team to make a difference for Him in this world. The rest as they say is the details.
2. With that speech out of my system, let me now talk about these two chapters. Think of Chapter 5 as the planning process to build this temple. Chapter 6 is then the actual construction chapter.
 - a) In Chapter 5, we mainly get a dialogue between King Solomon and a king of a city named Tyre which is north of Israel located in what is today Lebanon. The key point is Solomon pays the king of Tyre for the building materials and Solomon provides people to help cut down the trees and quarry the rocks to build the temple. There are also people from a city controlled by this Tyre king involved in this work as well.
 - b) While Chapter 5 focuses on how the materials were gathered, Chapter 6 focuses on how the temple itself was built. We get measurements and details. For someone like me who has a background in real estate appraising, it sort of reads like part a report I that I might prepare describing construction details. For those who like architectural details or details on engineering, this is your chapter. The key point is Jews and Gentiles worked together to build a temple to worship God. In Chapter 6, God will tell Solomon in effect, "if you all stick by Me and obey My laws, then and only then will I bless (respect) this temple".

3. Let me now approach these chapters from a different angle. Suppose you can care less about all of the details of this temple. Suppose you say, the Israelites built that thing a long time ago, and now it doesn't exist. Why should I care? Let me start by explaining why an official temple does not exist in modern Israel today. Most religious Jews will argue that the way they will recognize the Messiah when He comes, is that he will lead the Jewish people to rebuild that temple. They want it built on the same spot where the old temple stood. A significant problem is that there is a Muslim mosque there that is very important to Muslims. They believe that is where Muhammad was taken up to God. The destruction of that mosque would cause a huge war in that region.
 - a) My personal view of the end times when it comes is that the "false Messiah" will allow the Jews to build their temple next to this structure. However, the outdoor courtyard of that future Jewish temple can't be built (as predicted in Revelation 11:2) as the courtyard is in a location that doesn't disturb the location of this mosque. Again, just my theory on that.
 - b) With that said, I'm not here to give a prophecy sermon. As I stated in my title, my goal is to explain why we should care about all of these details about how this temple was built.
 - c) The key point is that God desires we worship Him not for His sake, but for our sake. The idea is the best way to live out our lives is to use our time to make a difference for Him in this world. The point is that this temple was built by both Jewish and non-Jewish people shows how God wants us as believers to individually and collectively seek Him so that He can be the central focus of our lives. The idea is we rely upon His power and not say our willpower in order to make a difference for God in this world. That's why we worship Him both individually and collectively to make a difference for Him in this world.
 - d) What if you say, "I've been doing fine as a Christian for many years without caring about how this temple was built. Why should I study about it now?" The answer is not to study it from an architectural perspective, but to think of it is a model of us working together to make a difference for God in this world. Remember that only the priests are the ones that ever worked in this temple. If we call ourselves Christians, then we're called to serve God. We Christians are also in effect priests as we should work to lead people to God and make a difference for Him in this world based on how we live out our lives. The rest as the say is the details. Speaking of those details, it is time to start my verse-by-verse commentary.
4. Chapter 5 Verse 1: 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:
 - a) The chapter starts by introducing us to a new character in the story. The king of a place called Tyre. The king's name is Hiram. A little background is helpful here.
 - i) Tyre is up the Mediterranean coastline from Israel. For centuries, this place was a leading city for trade among nations that bordered the Mediterranean. Tyre grew rich by trade. The key land trade route from Tyre to Egypt went through Israel. It is also important to state here that King Hiram was not just a king over one city. Tyre was the home of a nation called the Phoenicians. They controlled what we call Lebanon. This area also includes a city called Sidon, which we will read about in Verse 6. Key assets of Sidon were good building trees. Hiram wanted to keep his business options open with Israel. We'll read of Solomon asking the king of Tyre for Sidon trees, as it made better wood than what was available in Israel then.
 - ii) Even in these first few verses, we can already see how non-Jewish resources and people who prepare them will be used to build the first official Jewish temple.
 - iii) What this verse also shows us is that Solomon's father, King David did not kill everyone who was in striking range of Israel. Hiram, the king of Lebanon became friends with King David. Now that David was dead, this king sent messengers to meet David's son Solomon to check out the new king of Israel.
 - iv) Solomon then sent a return message to this powerful king that begins in Verse 3.

5. Verse 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.'
- a) Here Solomon is explaining to a non-Jewish king about God and what God desires of Solomon as a king. To paraphrase Solomon, "Your highness, you know how my father David loved God and you know how David killed all of his enemies. Well, now that I'm in charge, I am now at peace with everyone around me (because of dad's victories). Now I want to do what my father wanted to do, but God wouldn't let him: Build a temple to the "name" of my God."
 - i) Let me pause to make a quick point about the phrase "name of my God". When the nations around Israel built temples, they were designed to literally house the gods that they believed in. By Solomon emphasizing the "name of my God", he is teaching this king that God can't "fit" in a human temple. Solomon is teaching this king that God is "the" God. The purpose of this temple was for the Israelites to go worship Him and not a place for God to actually dwell.
 - b) Now notice how Solomon like his father David is being a witness to this powerful king of Tyre about God. It shows that when David was alive, he didn't just try to kill everyone in sight. David was actually a witness about God to a non-Jewish king. Here Solomon is trying the same diplomacy through messengers. Solomon is laying out for this king the whole story of how God spoke to David how a son of his would rule from this temple.
 - i) It may interest some of you that at the time of Jesus, there was a famous historian named Josephus. He wrote that he saw some of the actual documents that were sent back and forth between Solomon and the king of Tyre that existed back then.
 - c) With all that stated, the main point here is that Solomon is establishing a relationship with the king of Tyre. The point of this relationship is that Solomon wants to pay this king so that trees from the area can be cut down to be used to build this temple. Solomon is also going to provide labor (most likely non-Israelites living in Israel) to go work with the local labor of Lebanon, but I'm getting ahead of the story. The bottom line is Solomon is setting up a business deal. That is what Tyre is known for, trading with others in order to make themselves rich.
 - i) Why we should care about all of this ancient history is coming up in the story.
6. Verse 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."
- a) First notice the word "Lebanon" is mentioned here. This is our first clue that the king of Tyre controlled what is called Lebanon. The point is that Solomon is asking this king to have trees cut down in a forested area called Sidon. Solomon tells this king in effect that Sidon has lumberjacks there who are good at cutting down those trees. Solomon wanted to pay the king to cover the cost of cutting down the trees.
 - b) Now notice how Solomon butters up this king: First he says to name your wages, which means he is asking the king, name your price and I'll pay it. Now notice Solomon gives compliments the lumberjacks of Sidon saying, no one can cut wood like these men can.
 - c) I need to let my "real estate appraiser" hat come on for a moment. Let me tell you what is so special about these trees. They are cedar trees. The wood is very bitter and therefore insects don't like them. That means that type of wood lasts a long time. That is also why cedar wood cabinetry is popular in a lot of expensive homes. Now that you know about cedar wood, we are ready to move on in this story.

7. Verse 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."
- a) It may help to remember that Solomon and this king of Tyre are communicating back and forth by messengers. When the king of Tyre heard about this business proposition, that king said in effect, "Good deal. I'll have the lumberjacks living near that forest cut down those trees. I'll get the trees to you by floating them in rafts (made from those trees) down the Mediterranean Sea. My fee for this service is for you to provide food for me and those who live in my palace." Didn't Solomon also have to pay the lumberjacks? Of course, but this king of Tyre was focused on his profit from this business deal and his profit would be that Solomon had to provide food for that king.
 - i) Remember that the Israelites were mostly farmers. They not only raised animals, but also grew wheat for bread. This king was saying, give me some of that wheat for my house and that is my fee for me providing you with cut cedar trees.
 - b) An important point to consider is that I don't think this king cared about the God of Israel himself as much as he saw this as a profit motive. Tyre was a powerful nation in that part of the world for many centuries by trade. Unlike Egypt or even Israel under David, Tyre didn't become powerful by conquering, but just by trading with others. I suspect that this king had no interest in the king of the Israelites other than just another business deal.
 - c) Before I move on, I want to share something else from the bible about the "King of Tyre". In the book of Ezekiel, that takes place about 400 years later, when Tyre was at the peak of power, Ezekiel referred to another king of Tyre as the "Prince of Tyre". Ezekiel says the demonic power behind that king was literally in the Garden of Eden, making that entity Satan himself. (This is from Ezekiel 28.) My point is if one reads of the king of Tyre, one should not just see this man as a just friend of King David and now a friend of Solomon. I believe this king of Tyre had no interest in serving God, but just an example of someone doing a deal that is good for his own wallet.
 - d) All of this is just a reminder to us that "serving God" and doing things for profit are two separate things. There is nothing wrong with working for a profit. It just shouldn't be thought as our service for God if we are only doing something for the financial incentive.
8. Verse 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 of wheat as food for his household, in addition to twenty thousand baths 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.
- a) If I quizzed you in five minutes and asked, "How much did Solomon pay this king for his service? Odds are good you won't remember unless you have a photograph memory. The reason these verses are stated I believe is to show that both kings kept their word in order for the temple to get constructed. Israel provided what it grows well: Wheat and olives. The emphasis here is on how much the king of Tyre himself received for this deal and the fact that the two kings struck a deal and both kept their word.
 - b) The important thing for us is simply that it shows "Jews and Gentiles" working together in order to build a temple for Jewish priests to make the sacrifices to God that He desired of them in this temple. Keep in mind that Christians desiring to make a difference for God are in effect priests. I'm not necessarily referring to those in the professional ministry, but it does include them as well. Remember that the idea of "church" is where believers get together to collectively show our gratitude to God for our lives as well as confess our sins. This temple models that type of relationship God desires of us with Him and each other.

9. Verse 13: King Solomon conscripted laborers from all Israel--thirty thousand men.¹⁴ He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of ten thousand 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 seventy thousand carriers and eighty thousand stonemasons in the hills,¹⁶ as well as thirty-three hundred 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.
- a) One of the strange things that bible scholars debate over is whether or not the men that Solomon sent to Lebanon to do this work were Jewish or non-Jews living in the area that was controlled by King Solomon. Personally, I can care less. The point of these verses is God wants us to have a central place (think of one's local church) where we as believers can work and mature together to build up that church body in order to glorify God.
 - b) Throughout most of history of the last two thousand years, the greatest structures in most cities and towns are the local churches. One can see that traveling through just about any country influenced by the Christian church. I've always held the view that the people in the church are "the church" and not the building itself. These verses are a good example of having people work together to build something much bigger than any of them could do by themselves. That is an example of what God desires of us: Teamwork in order to do some God ordained work that is bigger than what any one of us can do individually.
 - c) That is how I think a healthy church should be built. Not just the physical structure, that is just an example of how a physical building is built. Remember what is Jesus' desire for all Christians, "to go out in the world to make disciples of people". (My loose paraphrase of Matthew 28:19). Think of what building a "church" is: organizing and gathering people in order to worship God so that together we can make a difference for Him.
 - d) Meanwhile, back to construction details: Whoever these men were that King Solomon did order to go to Lebanon, they worked in a three month cycle: One month in Lebanon and two months home. A lot of people worked cutting the stones for the temple and a lot of people worked transporting this material backed to Jerusalem. Remember that Jerusalem is up on a mountaintop. There were no big machines to carry this, so in effect these large stones had to be moved by hand from the quarries in Lebanon to Jerusalem. The building materials included cedar trees that would be used in the construction of temple as well as large stones that were used as the foundation of the temple.
 - e) The King James version uses a word that is not used here in the NIV translation. That text says these were "costly" stones. It is to convey the idea that the stones used to build the foundation of the temple were not small rocks that one can put in one's hands. They were in effect large pieces of cut stones. Think of the pyramids and one gets an idea. In Israel today, one can tour the foundation of the second temple which is the one built after the Babylonian captivity and expanded upon by King Herod of Gospel fame. My point is that these stones that no one can see unless one goes underground are special, because they were strong enough to and good ("costly") enough a foundation to support a great temple.
 - i) OK John, time for another so what. The point is others may not realize the work that we do for God. The foundation that we lay may be the foundation that others use to build upon. An old Christian expression is, "The blood of the martyrs are the foundation of the church". The point is as many Christians had to suffer much to start a great work for God, are usually then continued as others build upon the foundation of that work. Therefore, think of all of this text about building a good foundation as being how God wants us to work as a team to make a difference for Him so that others can build upon that foundation in order to continue to work to make a difference for Him. The key point here is about community effort to make a difference for God. With that said, I'm ready for Chapter 6.

10. Chapter 6: In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD.
 - a) If the focus of Chapter 5 is "off site", the focus of Chapter 6 is "on site". In other words, the last chapter focused on how the labor and materials was organized to work in Lebanon in order to prepare to build this temple. Chapter 6 now says in effect, "While all of that work is being done in Lebanon, to gather and build materials for that Jerusalem temple, here is how and where the actual construction was done on site in Jerusalem."
 - b) With that said, the text starts with a time marker. I should give the Israelites a little credit here. They knew to the year how long it has been since they left Egypt. That included the hundreds of years during the period of the judges where they collectively "did what they wanted" and ignored God. The text states the year and month of Solomon's reign when the actual construction started on the "Temple Mount" to build this temple.
 - i) Let me pause for a moment and describe why this particular spot was picked to build the temple. Think of it as a hilltop peak. From the backside of this location is a steep, straight drop down a hill. The city walls of Jerusalem below protect the other three sides of the mount. The point is everyone who lived there can look up and see this temple on the top of that hill. The Islamic mosque that was built there didn't come until about two millennia later. If you didn't know, Muhammad who is considered the great prophet of Islam, lived in the 7th Century AD.
 - ii) Speaking of marking time let me give you some rough dates of when all of this occurred. Solomon reigned from about 970 to 931 BC, so one can work 480 years back from there to calculate when they left Egypt. Those dates are debated and as I stated back in my first lesson on this book, one can spend a lot of time studying how dates worked back then and the controversies over those dates. Now that we have a rough idea when the 480 years started and ended, I'll move on from here.
 - c) What is important is that God told David that a son (or descendant, same Hebrew word) would be the Promised Messiah, so through Solomon, the idea is to get the "show on the road" and start with building this official temple. What is interesting coming up later in this chapter is that God speaks to Solomon and says in effect, "Thanks for the temple, but what I really want is a personal relationship with people. Therefore, if you Solomon do what I desire as in trust in Me and obey My commands, then I'll bless this temple".
 - i) In the meantime, it's time for more construction details.
11. Verse 2: The temple that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty wide and thirty high. ³ The portico at the front of the main hall of the temple extended the width of the temple, that is twenty cubits, and projected ten cubits from the front of the temple. ⁴ He made narrow clerestory windows in the temple. ⁵ Against the walls of the main hall and inner sanctuary he built a structure around the building, in which there were side rooms. ⁶ The lowest floor was five cubits wide, the middle floor six cubits and the third floor seven. He made offset ledges around the outside of the temple so that nothing would be inserted into the temple walls.
 - a) For those who don't know what a cubit is, it is a standard of measure that is roughly the length from one's elbow to one's figure tip. A good rule of thumb to translate from cubits to feet is to multiply by one and one half. Therefore, when you read sixty cubits, think 90 feet. This also reminds me of an old joke that goes, "If God wanted us to use the metric system instead of feet and inches, there would have been only 10 tribes of Israel and only 10 disciples of Jesus". With that joke out of my system, let's talk about this temple.
 - b) I was debating how to best describe this thing. I googled images of Solomon's temple. For those of you who need a visual picture, please do the same.
 - c) Whenever I am not sure where to go next in this study, I always come back to the "why" question: Why does God want us to know all of these construction details? Why does God want us to know how big was the "main hall" and the "sanctuary" for example?

- d) I think the first reason is to realize once again that Israel was at a power peak when they had no enemies around them. That is when they could build this special temple to God. Over the next 400 years the Israelites collectively turned from God so much that it got to a point where it was necessary for God to temporarily (70 years) destroy that nation. The point for us is to realize we can use our lives to make a difference for God or we can turn away from Him and over time pay the consequences of not doing His will for our lives.
- e) That's the big picture: What about all of these construction details? They are given first of all to show that this was a real temple and here are its dimensions. This temple wasn't big enough to house, say thousands of people. That's not the intent. The purpose of it was for the priests to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the Israelites. It is designed for people to realize that God exists, we have a sinful nature, and we have to trust Him in order to have forgiveness of sins as well as guide us in order to make that difference for Him. Therefore, the structure was not humongous, but just big enough for the priests to do their job there.
- f) With that said, let me describe the temple from a functional-use standpoint: The central room represents where God's presence is located. It was considered so holy, that only the top priest entered that room once per year. A larger main room is where the priests came in to worship God and offer prayers up to Him. Besides the two main rooms, there were also a lot of storage rooms around the building. The text said that there were three stories. Picture the two main rooms as being three stories in height. Around the two main rooms are three levels of storage rooms. OK, why all the storage? It was to keep the clothes that the priests wore, to do their jobs. Those rooms were also to keep the animal sacrifices and the equipment needed to make the sacrifices and for the priests to do their jobs.
 - i) The text also says the second floor was bigger than the first and the third floor was a little bigger than the second. There was also a large porch in front of this temple and walls around the entire compound.
- g) Now the important question: Why should we care about all of these construction details? Yes, the temple was designed for functional use for the priests, but more importantly, it is to teach us how we collectively are to worship God.
 - i) I already explained from the last chapter how Jewish and non-Jewish people did work together to build it. Think of that aspect as all believers in God working as a team in order to make a difference for Him.
 - ii) The text emphasizes the fact that all of the heavy construction work was done off site. The idea is that when we do come together to worship God, the focus should be on Him and not how the building itself was built.
 - iii) So why have the "main room" where only the high priest could go in once per year and the larger main room where the priests enter regularly? The point is to show that there was (key word "was") an unbreakable separate between God and man. Until God Himself could pay the price for our sins, that wall had to remain up.
 - iv) That is why it was so significant that after Jesus died, that separation wall was torn from top to bottom (See Matthew 27:51 or Mark 15:38). It symbolizes God-Himself removing the barrier between God and us.
 - v) So when we get to heaven, will God's throne room look like this temple room? I don't know and frankly, I don't care. The point for us is a structure was built that essentially contains God's presence, a larger location for people to worship Him. Then there were the "practical needs" rooms, which are the storage rooms located around the temple. I've always held the view that in heaven we exist in more than three dimensions so the question of how many people can get physically close to God has never been an issue for me. I also believe that heaven will not be boring and God gives us things to do there. That is why there are storage rooms that are associated with a temple for God. At the same time those rooms are outside of the main temple to show how us priests can draw close to Him as He desires of us.

- h) All of that imagery does lead me back to these verses. The text makes the point in Verse 6 to tell us that the three outside levels of storage are self-supporting, so that they are not dependant upon the walls of the temple itself for support. I suppose that is there to show that God's Holiness (the idea that He is perfect) is not dependant upon our work for Him.
 - i) In other words God is not perfect because we make Him perfect, but He is just perfect by definition. While we make the effort to worship Him, there still needs to be a realization that well, He is God and we are not. Yes, we can approach Him directly only because the blood of Christ has paid the price for us to approach Him even if we are not worthy to do so. At the same time this structure is designed to teach us we collectively are to seek Him not to be more saved, but because that is the best way to live out our lives.
 - i) Let me try this one more way, and then we'll get back to construction details. God wants us to confess our sins not to be more saved, but to remember that He desires us to live His way. It comes back to the idea that the best way to live out one's life is by doing what He desires of us and not trying to live to fulfill our own desires. In a sense we are always in the temple when we trust Him to guide our lives.
 - ii) At the same time, God wants us to make a difference for Him in the world, so that this temple represents a place for us to go to both physically and mentally if for no other reason than just to remember who is in charge of our lives.
 - j) Before I move on a few words on the windows in this temple. They were up on the top of third floor, so no one can look in on the work there. Remember that the original tabernacle had no outside light. I suppose Solomon designed it this way so the priests in the temple could look up and remind ourselves that God is still "up there" and we are "down here".
12. Verse 7: In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.
- a) Notice in this verse that hammers, chisels and iron tools existed at that time. With that said, why should we care that no construction tools were used here?
 - i) For starters, it again reminds us that when we come to God's presence, our focus should be on Him and not be distracted by the physical structure of our church.
 - ii) I believe it also shows that a lot of the work that we do for God is done "quietly". In other words, the differences we make for God are not reported in newspapers or for fanfare. We make a difference because that is what God wants us to do. If this temple represents our future worship of God in heaven, then one has to see it as a place where all of our efforts for Him are completed and we can just focus on Him and the great things He has done for us. (E.g., forgiveness, redemption, etc.).
 - iii) I read a commentary that fits well into the view that this temple describes a future day when we will collectively worship God together. It goes, "There, there is no preaching, exhortations, repentance, tears, cries, nor prayers; the stones must be all squared and fitted here for their place in their New Jerusalem." (Clarke)
13. Verse 8: The entrance to the lowest floor was on the south side of the temple; a stairway led up to the middle level and from there to the third. ⁹ So he built the temple and completed it, roofing it with beams and cedar planks. ¹⁰ And he built the side rooms all along the temple. The height of each was five cubits, and they were attached to the temple by beams of cedar.
- a) OK more construction details. Let me make this quick. The wood as described from the last chapter was used for stairs, beams and planks. The structure itself was stone based.
 - b) So this thing was built of stone and wood. Why should I care? Yes we get the idea that these were the best materials available and a lot of the work was done off site. What is the point of all of this? Consider the temple as a gathering of all believers coming together in order to worship God. Our work for Him is done off site (that is, in this lifetime) so that together in Him in the completed work we can have a close relationship with God. Just as the best materials were gathered to make this, think of us as being those materials that are shaped by God so that we can spend eternity with Him.

- c) OK, John, that is cute. What about the literal aspect of all of this? Yes I believe it was a literal temple that stood for centuries. I believe it was literally built as it is described here in this chapter. I believe it had the side rooms as described here for storage. Besides the fact it does represent our eternal relationship with Him, it also had a practical side and the temple was also built in a practical way so that the Jewish priests can do the jobs that they were called to do: Which is to offer sacrifices for sins and worship God as God on behalf of people who did trust in Him for their lives.
 - d) With that said, we get an interruption in construction details to get a message from God:
14. Verse 11: The word of the LORD came to Solomon: ¹² "As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. ¹³ And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel."
- a) If I had to pick the most important verses to learn in these two chapters, it is these two. To paraphrase God here, "This is a nice building, however what I really care about is My relationship with You and the Israelites. If you and all the Israelites for that matter live as I desire you to live and obey My commands, then I will bless your lives individually and collectively". God is reminding Solomon that He is the God of the Universe and can't fit in a building. Think of this statement by God as saying, "If you keep your end of the deal, I do promise to keep my end of the deal". Our end is to trust Him, be obedient to what He desires of us and live to make a difference for Him in this world. In exchange, His end is a promise of eternal salvation as well as a blessing on us collectively if we do trust in Him.
 - b) Ok, John, we are not the literal ancient nation of Israel. How does this work for us? Think of it this way: God will bless our church, our community or our nation if we collectively choose to follow Him, trust Him to guide our lives and do what He commands of us.
 - c) Does that mean bad things will never happen to us if we do this? Hardly. Most of us are well aware that God allows bad things to happen due to sin in this world. The good news is that for the Christians even the bad things ultimately happen for His glory. At the same time He does promise to guide us through whatever it is we have to face in life as long as we trust Him to guide our lives.
 - d) With that promise stated, it is time to get back to construction details.
15. Verse 14: So Solomon built the temple and completed it. ¹⁵ He lined its interior walls with cedar boards, paneling them from the floor of the temple to the ceiling, and covered the floor of the temple with planks of pine. ¹⁶ He partitioned off twenty cubits at the rear of the temple with cedar boards from floor to ceiling to form within the temple an inner sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. ¹⁷ The main hall in front of this room was forty cubits long. ¹⁸ The inside of the temple was cedar, carved with gourds and open flowers. Everything was cedar; no stone was to be seen.
- a) It would probably help to take a step back at this point and describe the whole thing in a few quick thoughts, and then focus on these verses. The main room was where the "ark of the covenant" (see Verse 19) would be located. This room would be associated with God's presence and remind us how the Jewish priests were to approach God. The other larger room was where the priests would be doing most of their work, offering up prayers and interceding for the Israelites. There was also the outside porch where animals were sacrificed. Besides that, there were the three stories of storage rooms attached to this main building. The entire thing was stone based construction. (I suppose you can all see the real estate appraiser coming out of me in these verses.)
 - b) With all that said, these verses focus on the interior of the building and the fact that the entire insider was covered in cedar wood. That includes the "holy of holy" room and the larger room where the priests made prayers on behalf of people. Carved in those cedar boards there were gourds and flowers. What's a gourd? It can be either a specific kind of fruit or vegetable, for example, melons, squash and cucumbers. That might be interesting if I was there, but again, why should we care? Glad you asked.

- c) To explain the significance, let us recall from Chapter 5 about all the trees that were cut down from the neighboring country of Lebanon. That is the cedar wood being described here that lined the entire inside of the temple. Remember that this type of wood was used not only because it smells nice, but also because it has a very bitter taste to insects so they don't eat it. The point is it lasts a long time. Again, so what? It is that the entire inside of this Jewish temple is made of Gentile (non-Jewish) materials. My point is the tabernacle structure is in effect a model of how we as both Jews and Gentiles together form the "body of Christ" to worship God forever.
 - i) Let me explain this concept another way: God worked through primarily through the Jewish nation in order to explain who He is and how He is to be worshipped. However, Jesus did not just pay the price just for the Jewish nation but for anyone of any background who accepts Jesus as both God and the one who died for our sins. Now here is this temple structure, based on a "Jewish design" and used by Jewish priests made up of materials that mostly came from non-Jewish sources. Think of the temple structure is a model of all people working together to serve and worship God as a united entity.
 - ii) When one thinks of one of these boards or one of these stones, think of it as your or my contribution to making a difference for God in our lives. The beauty of the temple is only seen from the inside as we all work together to make a difference for Him in our lives. That's the picture here.
 - iii) That leads me back to the "gourds and open flowers" that were decorated upon the wood boards. Gourds are types of ripen fruit. The point is both objects are carved in the wall "blooming". It is a picture of the both the finished work of us saints as well as the finished work of God blooming in our lives.
- d) Gee John, these are all nice word pictures. However, after I finish reading this, I have to go back to the reality of my world. How does any of this apply to my life? The answer has to do with how we use our time. Are we just using it to make a difference in our own lives or are we using our time to make a difference for God? In effect are we acting like a piece of cut stone or cut wood to bloom for God? Are we letting God shape and mold us to live our lives for Him? That is the real issue underlying these chapters. While we're thinking about that, Solomon still has to finish this thing, so back to the temple we go.

16. Verse 19: He prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the ark of the covenant of the LORD there. ²⁰ The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold, and he also overlaid the altar of cedar. ²¹ Solomon covered the inside of the temple with pure gold, and he extended gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, which was overlaid with gold. ²² So he overlaid the whole interior with gold. He also overlaid with gold the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary.

- a) You get the impression that Solomon had a lot of spare gold lying around the place. The reality is Solomon's father David conquered the nations surrounding Israel. He brought to Israel a lot of spoils of war, including gold. One has to grasp the idea that Solomon was one of the richest men that ever lived. He could afford to spare a lot of gold to cover all of the objects with that gold. That included the entire inside of the main room where God's presence was located. There was a thick curtain that separated this most important room from the main room and Solomon had a gold chain across the entrance. To put it simply, if something was seen in that top room, it was now gold covered.
- b) OK, it's time for another "so what"? Think of our work for God, no matter how significant or insignificant we may think it is, to be gold covered. When one reads through the bible one notices how the bible seems to go out of its way to point out those who are doing His will at any one moment in time. Think of the gold this way: The general public never got to see it. Only the High Priest when he enters that room once per year. It is only when we see the finished work of God is when we appreciate the beauty of His work.

17. Verse 23: In the inner sanctuary he made a pair of cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high.
²⁴ One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing five cubits--ten cubits from wing tip to wing tip. ²⁵ The second cherub also measured ten cubits, for the two cherubim were identical in size and shape. ²⁶ The height of each cherub was ten cubits. ²⁷ He placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the temple, with their wings spread out. The wing of one cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the other touched the other wall, and their wings touched each other in the middle of the room. ²⁸ He overlaid the cherubim with gold.
- a) To understand these verses, we should do a little comparison to the original tabernacle structure that the Israelites used for centuries. The main item in that tabernacle was the "ark of the covenant" that represented God's presence. On that ark were two statues of a type of angel called a "cherubim". How they knew what cherubim looked like is a whole separate discussion that I won't get into here. I don't know if the original statues that was made by Moses' direction was lost or worn out, but new ones were made here. One also gets the impression that the ones Solomon made were much bigger than the original ones that were part of the design of Moses' tabernacle. The original ones were only big enough to cover the ark. The one's Solomon ordered to be made filled up this room.
 - b) Here is where I find this stuff fascinating: The cherubim were not made of the same cedar wood that was used throughout the temple. It was made of olive wood (Verse 23). Why is that? Olive trees were common in Israel. That is a local grown product. It is just another reminder to us how the "God of the Jews" became the God of the whole world. The point is not everything in this room was a "Jewish based" product, as again, the stones and most of the wood came from Lebanon. The labor to build this thing was mostly non-Jewish but there were also Jewish people and priests involved in this process as well. Again, all of it is a model of Jewish and non-Jewish people working together to serve God.
 - c) So are you saying Jewish people are saved today if they don't believe in Jesus? Of course not. Until God Himself dying for our sins became common knowledge, God has to judge people individually and fairly based on what information one has about Him and what one did with that information. That is also how God judges us. The big question to me has always been, "If you believed Jesus died for your sins, what have you done about it?" That is how one is rewarded for eternity based on how one reacts to that knowledge.
 - i) Which leads me back to this temple. The point here is that the finished main room is based on Gentile building materials, focused on a Jewish building all covered in gold. It is a symbol of people from different places and backgrounds all working together to make a difference for God. That finished work is then covered in gold to show the beauty of that work that can only be appreciated from the inside.
 - ii) Like I said in my introduction to this lesson, one does not have to know the details about this temple to be a good Christian, but the details of it models how it is that God desires we work as a team in order to make a difference for Him.
 - iii) With that said, we're almost done with construction details, so let's get back to it.
18. Verse 29: On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers. ³⁰ He also covered the floors of both the inner and outer rooms of the temple with gold.
- a) The point here is that not only was the main room filled with decorative flowers that are blooming, but those objects were put in all the rooms of the temple. OK, John, we went from gourds in the main room to palm trees here. Why the difference? Remember that Israel is desert country. A palm tree blooms in a desert country. Flowers also can bloom there was some water. Again all of this is a picture of people making a difference for God and having them "bloom for God" in these dry locations.
 - b) Think of the decorations this way: We may think that whatever work we do for God isn't that significant. However, from God's perspective, we are blooming for Him in our world and symbolically speaking our works are covered in gold when we live as He desires.

19. Verse 31: For the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood with five-sided jambs.³² And on the two olive wood doors he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid the cherubim and palm trees with beaten gold.³³ In the same way he made four-sided jambs of olive wood for the entrance to the main hall.³⁴ He also made two pine doors, each having two leaves that turned in sockets.³⁵ He carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers on them and overlaid them with gold hammered evenly over the carvings.
- OK, Verse 31 says "five-sided jambs". What does that mean? It just means the door that leads to the main room folds and is one-fifth the size of the width of that room.
 - Also notice Verse 34 says pine doors. I don't like that translation. Other English versions say "cedar doors" and I think that is a better translation.
 - The bottom line here is again we have "Gentile" cedar wood and "Jewish" olive wood in the same location. We have carvings of a type of special guardian angel called cherubim that was over the presence of God. We have carvings everywhere of flowers and trees that symbolize the work one does for God. All of this is covered in gold that symbolizes His deity as to show that the work we do, we do for God is special.
 - OK, does this mean that God wants us to build our church with this exact design? No. I don't think any of us can get that amount of gold anyway. The key is what it represents and not the actual physical design. Remember that the "church" is the people who make up the church and not the physical building. To borrow a classic joke, "The people are not chewing gum in church, the church is chewing gum".
20. Verse 36: And he built the inner courtyard of three courses of dressed stone and one course of trimmed cedar beams.
- We're almost there. Down to "footnotes". Beside the temple itself, there was a courtyard or as we real estate appraisers say, "a big patio". The text is saying the floor of this area is dressed (think finely cut) stones and cedar wood beams.
 - OK, John, for us non-appraisers, tell us why we should care here? Consider my theme of how this was built by Jewish and non-Jewish labor with materials cut outside Israel. So what does the "patio" represent versus the temple? For starters, a place to approach God.
 - The animals were sacrificed outside the temple and the priests washed out here as well. Parts of the sacrifices were taken inside to be symbolically offered up to God to show the commitment of the Israelites to God. Since Jesus paid the complete we don't do that today, so what is the significance of all of this to us? I like to think of this outdoor area as the first step to approaching God. The priests who worked in this area believed in God, but they bathed and made sacrifices in effect to show the desire to be clean before Him. Just as we confess and turn from sin, so the priests made efforts to show their cleanness from sin when they approach God.
 - So if the temple represents an eternal relationship with God, why do we need to be clean up there if there is no more sin? What is interesting to consider near the end of the book of Ezekiel, animal sacrifices are being made in the millennium, which is a future event to us. The Christian view of those future sacrifices is to remember what Jesus already did as opposed to adding to his sacrifice. Therefore, think of the patio as making efforts to remember what He has already done for us as we prepare to approach Him eternally in the temple.
21. Verse 37: The foundation of the temple of the LORD was laid in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv.³⁸ In the eleventh year in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.
- The final two verses end where these two chapters started. They started by saying that the construction began 480 years after the Israelites left Egypt. These verses tell us that it took seven years to build it and it was built according to the plans. What plans are those? The ones made up under Solomon's leadership.
 - With that said, it's time it's time to lay down our building tools and close in prayer.

22. Let's pray: Father, help us to see all of these construction details not as ancient history, but as a model of how You desire a relationship with us. Help us as believing Christians to turn from sin, not to get us "more saved", but because that is how You desire we live. Help us as believers to work together to make a difference for You. Shape us to be finely cut "stones and boards" as a collective body of believers so that our lives may be pleasing to You and make a difference for You in this world. Help us to use our time to make a difference for Your eternal kingdom, as that is what really matters in this world. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.