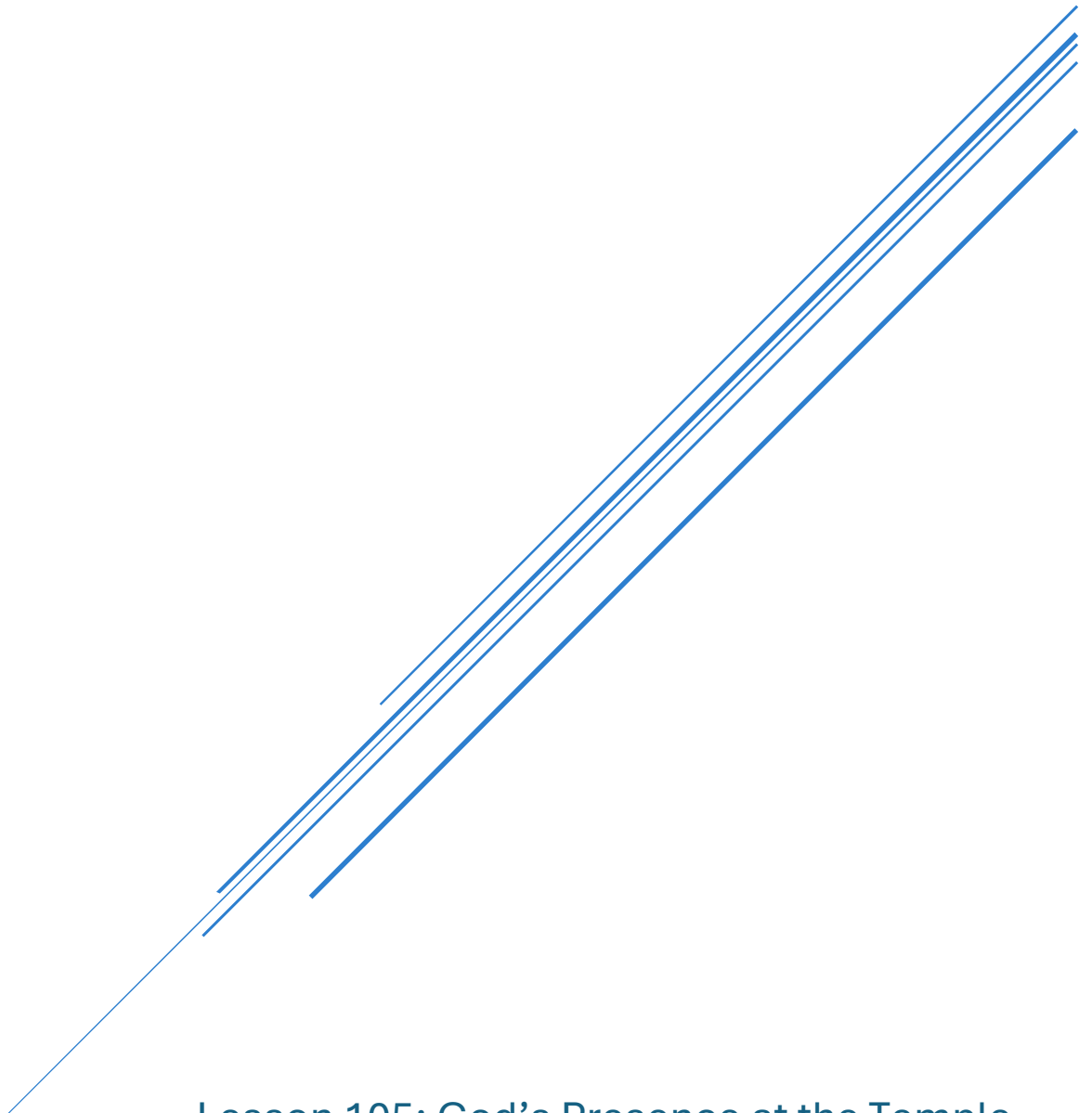


THE KINGDOM, THE BIBLE, & US

Understanding God's story, Jesus' importance, & our place in God's kingdom plan



Lesson 105: God's Presence at the Temple
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Finishing Touches & Furnishings of the Temple

1 Kings 7:13-51

Hiram's Projects

Solomon secures the help of a professional craftsman named Hiram. This is not king Hiram from Tyre who supplied the trees for the Temple. This Hiram is a half-Israelite. His mother is from Naphtali, but his father was from Tyre. He put the finishing touches on the Temple to ensure it was proper to David's plans.

He built and designed two large bronze pillars at the entrance of the Temple that were 18 cubits (~27ft.) tall and 12 cubits (~18ft.) in circumference. He also placed coverings (caps) over the pillars that were 5 cubits tall (~7ft). verses 13 through 22 explain his work of designing all the pillars for the Temple.

Hiram designed a large holding tank for water called "the Sea" (v.23). It was 10 cubits brim to brim, circular shape, 5 cubits high, and 30 cubits in circumference (15ft. diameter, 7.5ft. high). Scholars estimate it could hold 11,500-12,000 gallons of water. 2 Chronicles 4:6 says the priests used this water for their ceremonial cleansings as they performed their duties. The large tank was built on 12 oxen statues (3 facing N, S, E & W).

Next, Hiram designed and built ten movable stands to hold basins of water that could be moved and used in various temple rituals. The stands were made of bronze and were 4 cubits long, 4 cubits wide, and 3 cubits tall (6ft. x 6ft. x 4.5ft.) He put artistic designs on them of lions, oxen, and cherubim. Then he made 10 bronze basins for water that could each hold approx. 240 gallons of water.

Hiram's final project was to make smaller basins, shovels, and 'sprinkling' bowls. These were for ceremonies requiring less water. Verses 41-45 summarizes all of Hiram's work on the Temple.

Solomon's Personal Palace

1 Kings 7:1-12

The author sticks in a brief explanation that Solomon also built for himself a grand palace. His palace took 13 years to build (the Temple took 7.5). He also used timbers from Lebanon (Tyre). The dimensions were 100 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits tall (150ft. x 75ft. x 45ft.). Solomon's palace was also larger than the Temple, which suggests it would have been more expensive to build. This is proven by the fact

that we are told Solomon used valuable stones and cedars to craft beautiful artistic designs. He built a large courtyard all around as well.

Some argue that this shows evidence of Solomon's lusts for the things the world has to offer, even early on in his reign. The argument is that he chose on purpose to make his own home more grandiose than God's. Others argue in defense of Solomon saying he built it this large for practical reasons. The Palace will be used for not just Solomon's personal home, but his daily administration of the government. He needs room to house cabinet meetings, hold court, etc.

What is your opinion on Solomon's palace as compared to the Temple's size?

The Ark of the Covenant Moved

1 Kings 8:1-11

Solomon assembled the elders and leaders of Israel for the all-important task of transporting the Ark of the Covenant into the Temple. It was in Jerusalem, specifically in an area called Zion, the City of David. Verse 4 says they brought up the ark, the Tabernacle tent, and all the holy furniture and utensils. The priests and Levites properly transported them. Verse 5 says king Solomon and all Israel were going ahead of the Ark convey sacrificing sheep and oxen beyond what could be numbered.

The priests brought the Ark to the holy of holies inner most room of the Temple. They placed the cherubim over it and they made a type of covering for it with their wings. Verse 7 says the carrying poles were so long that the ends of them could be seen sticking out slightly from the holy place (the outer room).

Verse 9 tells us that the only artifact placed inside the Ark were the two tablets of stone that God gave to Moses, "where the Lord made a covenant with the sons of Israel..." Scholars point out that there is no longer any mention of Aaron's budding rod or the jar of mana. The speculation is that these artifacts may have been lost throughout time and various transportation. The only artifact God commanded to go into the Ark was the stone tablets anyways.

What is significant about the stone tablets being placed inside the Ark?

Why is it significant that they moved the Ark into the newly built Temple?

We see a fascinating scene in verses 10-11. As the priests came into the holy place, after placing the Ark, a cloud filled the Temple. The cloud was so thick the priests could not do their job in the Temple. “For the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.”

This scene is nearly identical to what happened after Moses and Israel finished building the Tabernacle and placed the furniture inside of it. Exodus 30:34, 35 records that the Lord’s glory came down in a thick cloud so much so that Moses could not enter the Tabernacle.

What do you think this cloud of God’s presence signifies at this point in the story?

After over 400 years, Israel had a permanent home. They were no longer nomads wandering about with no home. God had fulfilled His promises to bring them into a land of their own. The promises made to Abram all the way back in Genesis 12 had come true concerning he would have numerous descendants that form a nation and bring them into the Promised Land.

The Tabernacle was portable but the Temple was permanent. This is a major milestone event in the life of Israel in the Old Covenant era. God had settled them, given them a king (David, now Solomon), and shown that His glory resided over the mercy seat in the House of Worship (The Temple). This was a sign of God’s favor and blessing on His people. They were a proper nation, with leaders, a king, and now they once again have centralized worship where the priests can mediate between God and the people according to the Law.

Solomon’s Dedication Service

1 Kings 8:12-53

Solomon assembles Israel and gives a mini-speech reminding them how David had desired to build a house for God, but God said he would not do it. However, what David sought was a good thing. Solomon declares that he has finished the work and fulfilled his task.

Then, Solomon stands before the altar before the Temple and offers a prayer of dedication. Verses 22-30 are particularly significant. Solomon calls upon God to bless His people and to always listen when His people sin, but they call out for His forgiveness. Solomon acknowledges that God does not truly dwell on the earth because no house could ever contain God. But nonetheless, he prays that God would be blessed by the Temple as it represents God's seat on earth among His people.

1 Kings 8:54-61

Solomon offers another benediction after praying directly to God. He reminds the people that God is to be blessed since He has given rest to His people Israel, just as He promised (v. 56). Solomon reminds the people that they need God to guide their ways so that they follow the commands of God. He finally charges Israel to be entirely dedicated and devoted to the Lord by walking in His ways.

1 Kings 8:62-66

Solomon and Israel offered sacrifices in dedication to the Temple's completion. He offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep for peace offerings. Solomon offered so many burnt offerings the primary bronze altar could not contain them. So he dedicated another spot in the middle courtyard where they could offer the excess sacrifices.

Solomon also held the "feast" at this time it says in v. 65. Scholars point out this is the Feast of Booths (Tents/Tabernacles). This feast was to commemorate how Israel lived in tents (booths) as they journeyed in the wilderness post-Egypt. Some Bible commentators point out that the Feast of Booths celebrated the ending of the wilderness wanderings since God had brought His people into their own land. Solomon may have purposefully chose this timing to signify to the people that God had in an even greater sense brought stability to Israel's national homeland.

God Appears to Solomon, Again

1 Kings 9:1-9

After Solomon completed everything, the Lord appeared again to Solomon. God says to Solomon that He has heard Solomon's prayer. God agrees to consecration the Temple as His home on earth among His people. God's eyes, ears, and heart will be there forever. In verse 4 God charges Solomon to walk in obedience, as David did, with integrity and honesty of heart. If Solomon keeps the law of God, then "I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, 'You shall not be deprived of a man on the throne of Israel'" (v. 5).

But, in verse 6, God warns Solomon. If he or his sons turn away from following God, then “I will cut Israel off from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will expel from My sight (vv.6-7). God uses strong language in verses 8-9 saying that He will let the Temple become a heap of ruins if Israel abandons Him.

Conclusion

The Temple and Solomon’s palace are completed, after 20 years total time (7.5 for the Temple and 13 for Solomon’s house). This closes one major chapter in Israel’s story and begins a new chapter.

Solomon led Israel into an era of peace, expansion, prosperity, and building up of key infrastructure. He faithfully kept his vow and completed the Temple, which God consecrated as the sight of His special presence on earth.

Unfortunately, the rest of the story as we shall see is not positive. Solomon does not maintain his faithfulness and Israel enters a time of darkness. For our purpose in these lessons, we should take note that God always keeps His promises, despite our sin. Furthermore, God desires to dwell among His people in the Old Covenant, and He has faithfully done so. The Temple is the seat and hallmark of God’s presence among His people.

It is temporary though. The principle however is eternal. God desires to dwell among His kingdom people. In the New Covenant era, He does so through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. In the New Heaven and New Earth, we will be in the presence of God.