

1 Kings 7: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Date: 16 September 2020

Preacher: Alastair Roberts

[0 : 0 0] 1 Kings chapter 7 Solomon was building his own house 13 years, and he finished his entire house. He built the house of the forest of Lebanon. Its length was 100 cubits, and its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits.

And it was built on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars. And it was covered with cedar above the chambers that were on the 45 pillars, 15 in each row.

There were window frames in three rows, and window opposite window in three tiers. All the doorways and windows had square frames, and window was opposite window in three tiers.

And he made the hall of pillars. Its length was 50 cubits, and its breadth 30 cubits. There was a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy in front of them. And he made the hall of the throne where he was to pronounce judgment, even the hall of judgment.

It was finished with cedar from floor to rafters. His own house where he was to dwell, in the other court back of the hall, was of like workmanship. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken in marriage.

[1 : 0 6] All these were made of costly stones, cut according to measure, sawed with saws back and front, even from the foundation to the coping, and from the outside to the great court.

The foundation was of costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight and ten cubits. And above were costly stones, cut according to measurement and cedar. The great court had three courses of cut stone all around, and a course of cedar beams.

So had the inner court of the house of the lord, and the vestibule of the house. And King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali. And his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in bronze.

And he was full of wisdom, understanding, and skill for making any work in bronze. He came to King Solomon and did all his work. He cast two pillars of bronze. Eighteen cubits was the height of one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits measured its circumference.

It was hollow, and its thickness was four fingers. The second pillar was the same. He also made two capitals of cast bronze to set on the tops of the pillars. The height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits.

[2 : 1 6] There were lattices of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals on the tops of the pillars. A lattice for the one capital, and a lattice for the other capital. Likewise, he made pomegranates in two rows around the one lattice work to cover the capital that was on the top of the pillar.

And he did the same with the other capital. Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily work, four cubits. The capitals were on the two pillars, and also above the rounded projection that was beside the lattice work.

There were two hundred pomegranates in two rows all around, and so were the other capital. He set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple. He set up the pillar on the south and called its name Jachin, and he set up the pillar on the north and called its name Boaz.

And on the tops of the pillars was lily work. Thus the work of the pillars was finished. Then he made the sea of cast metal. It was round, ten cubits from brim to brim, and five cubits high, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference.

Under its brim were gourds, for ten cubits, compassing the sea all around. The gourds were in two rows, cast with it when it was cast. It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east.

[3 : 34] The sea was set on them, and all their rear parts were inward. Its thickness was a hand breadth, and its brim was made like the brim of a cup, like a flower of a lily. It held two thousand baths.

He also made the ten stands of bronze. Each stand was four cubits long, four cubits wide, and three cubits high. This was the construction of the stands. They had panels, and the panels were set in the frames.

And on the panels that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. On the frames, both above and below the lions and oxen, there were wreaths of beveled work.

Moreover, each stand had four bronze wheels, and axles of bronze. And at the four corners were supports for a basin. The supports were cast with wreaths at the side of each. Its opening was within a crown that projected upward one cubit.

Its opening was round, as a pedestal is made, a cubit and a half deep. At its opening there were carvings, and its panels were square, not round. And the four wheels were underneath the panels.

[4 : 34] The axles of the wheels were of one piece with the stands, and the height of a wheel was a cubit and a half. The wheels were made like a chariot wheel. Their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast.

There were four supports at the four corners of each stand. The supports were of one piece with the stands. And on the top of the stand there was a round band half a cubit high. And on the top of the stand its stays and its panels were of one piece with it.

And on the surfaces of its stays and on its panels he carved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, according to the space of each, with wreaths all around. After this manner he made the ten stands.

All of them were cast alike, of the same measure and the same form. And he made ten basins of bronze. Each basin held forty baths. Each basin measured four cubits. And there was a basin for each of the ten stands.

And he set the stands five on the south side of the house and five on the north side of the house. And he set the sea at the south-east corner of the house. Hiram also made the pots, the shovels, and the basins.

[5 : 38] So Hiram finished all the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of the Lord. The two pillars, the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars. And the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars.

And the four hundred pomegranates for the two latticeworks. Two rows of pomegranates for each latticework. To cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars. The ten stands and the ten basins on the stands.

And the one sea and the twelve oxen underneath the sea. Now the pots, the shovels, and the basins. All these vessels in the house of the Lord, which Hiram made for King Solomon, were of burnished bronze.

In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarithan. And Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because there were so many of them, the weight of the bronze was not ascertained.

So Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of the Lord, the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of the presence, the lampstands of pure gold, five on the south side and five on the north, before the inner sanctuary, the flowers, the lamps and the tongs of gold, the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense and firepans of pure gold, and the sockets of gold for the doors of the innermost part of the house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the nave of the temple.

[6 : 56] Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the Lord was finished, and Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, the silver, the gold and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of the Lord.

After the seven years of building the temple in chapter 6, Solomon gives thirteen years to building his house in chapter 7 of 1 Kings. We noted the proximity of the time of the building of the house of the Lord to a sort of jubilee year after the Exodus, 490 years after they were brought out of Egypt.

1 Kings chapter 6 verse 1 gives us this dating. In the 480th year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the Lord.

The temple was built in the first seven years. This takes us up to the 487th year after the Exodus, around the time of the 70 weeks of years after the Exodus.

Solomon's palace was then created after the Lord's temple was completed. In 1 Kings chapter 9 verse 10 we're told, at the end of twenty years in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord and the king's house.

[8 : 08] If we add the thirteen years of the construction of Solomon's own house to the seven years for the construction of the temple, we reach a total of five hundred years after the Exodus. The jubilee cycle is completed, and now a sort of an uber-Sabbath dawns.

What began with the firstfruits of the Exodus deliverance will now arrive at its full intended harvest of glory, as with peace on all sides, the Lord takes up residence in his house of rest, with his son the Davidic king reigning under him.

The building of Solomon's own palace is an essential part of the construction of the wider new complex of the temple. The point of Solomon's palace is not to compete with the house of the Lord, rather it is to express the grace of the Lord in establishing the Davidic king as his son, who rules over his people before him.

The king's palace and other associated royal buildings are temple-like, in no small measure, because they serve much the same purpose. The temple is the palace of the Lord, the true ruler of Israel.

The king's palace is the place from which the Davidic son of the Lord rules under him. It has similar characteristics to the temple, both in its construction and in its purpose. The hall of judgment, for instance, corresponds to the inner sanctuary, where the throne of the Lord is.

[9 : 25] Both the palace and the temple are lined by cedar, yet the palace of Solomon the son is less glorious than that of the Lord his father, as it is not overlain with gold. The construction of the tabernacle had enlisted the skills of Bezalel and Aholiab.

The building of the temple involves the skills of the Tyrian Hiram, who might make us think of the king of the same name, who is also assisting in the construction. The Lord had gifted this Gentile for the building of his house.

This is one of the many ways in which the Lord's house would be for all of the nations. Throughout scripture, we see that Gentiles are more advanced than the people of Israel in their mastery of many cultural skills and technologies.

Bringing these skills into the service of the Lord is both a glorious movement of God's grace out and a glorious movement of the riches of the Gentiles in. The temple is not just a replication of the tabernacle, but it is a dramatic variation upon the theme that brings the tabernacle's elements to a higher degree of glory and adds in various new components.

The temple, like the tabernacle, is a symbolic realm with a multitude of significant associations, not least those that exist with its predecessor. There are two pillars of bronze, Jachin and Boaz.

[10 : 40] They can represent different things and this is one of the things that we will discover about the temple. As in the tabernacle, there are all sorts of symbolic connotations and associations and connections.

It is a sort of architectural poetry where objects constructed according to a divinely stipulated design lead you into a whole network of symbolism. The pillars of bronze, for instance, correspond to the temple itself.

Moving up the pillars, you are moving up in holiness and glory. They correspond to the priest and the king. They stand as pillars and guardians of the Lord's house. They correspond to the cherubim guarding the entrance to Eden.

They also correspond to the two great cherubim guardians that are now added to the inner sanctuary, just as these pillars have been added to the outside. With their arboreal and botanic imagery, they correspond to trees and flowers.

Like other parts of the temple, they should remind us of Eden. They correspond to the body and the clothing of the priest, the movement up from the base to the head. They correspond to the legs of the body.

[11 : 45] The temple itself is the trunk and the head of the body, while the two great pillars are symbolically related to the legs, the two great pillars of the human body. All of this bronze work is associated with the outer court, whereas the gold work is associated with the interior of the house.

In the tabernacle, the bronze laver and the bronze altar were associated, one with the land and one with the sea. The instructions for their construction both related to the third day of creation in the sequence.

Now the small bronze laver becomes a great bronze sea, and this is borne aloft on the backs of twelve oxen. The oxen are ordered in a way that corresponds to the camp of Israel, as it is described at the beginning of the book of Numbers.

There are three facing in each direction of the compass. Out from the bronze sea come water chariots, as it were. The water chariots serve the practical purpose of giving water for washing the sacrifices.

However, they are also symbolically like waters coming down from God. Healing waters would one day descend from the Lord's temple and give life to the world. The lions and the oxen upon them are the kingly and priestly guardians of the people.

[12 : 53] The oxen relate to the priest. If you were to sacrifice for the high priest, you had to sacrifice a bull. The lion, on the other hand, might make us think of the lion of the tribe of Judah. The tribe that's associated with kingship is associated with the lion.

These chariots also represent a sort of ladder of water that someone would ascend to enter into God's presence. Like Jacob's ladder, where the angels were ascending and descending, the cherubim chariots of water are ascending and descending with the reign of God's blessing.

With the elevated bronze sea being like the waters above the firmament. We should also observe the way that this pattern is replicated inside the sanctuary, with a golden table and lampstand, but ten further tables and lampstands on each side.

All of this is a sort of ladder by which people can ascend to God's heavenly throne, ascending in glory at each stage. While Hiram makes the bronze items of the courtyard, the construction of the gold items inside the temple is related to Solomon himself.

The ceremonies of the temple then are carried out in this deeply symbolic realm that connects many different levels of reality. The temple is like a new Eden. The temple is like the heavens and the earth.

[14 : 06] The temple is also like the human body. Or we might also see the temple as corresponding in some ways to Israel. It is a sort of architectural symbol of the nation and the people themselves, a symbol in which God dwells in representation of his dwelling among his people more generally.

As people perform ceremonies within the temple, it was a symbolic manifestation of the broader realities that were implicated in their acts. In faithfully performing the symbols, Israel was to be directed to the realities, realities that we're engaged with, truly, within the context of these symbols.

For instance, we might observe the similarities with the body. The inner sanctuary is like the heart and the mind, where the Lord must be enthroned and his law treasured and hidden. The outer sanctuary has light and food, as the law of the Lord illumines our understanding and feeds us.

The five tables and lampstands on each side might recall the sides of the body and the five fingers on each hand. Perhaps they also represent the two tables of the law. The law that is a treasure hidden in the heart, the law that gives light, the law that gives food, and then the law that flows out like water into the world.

The pillars are like the legs of the body, and the bronze sea is like the organs of generation, from which life can flow out from the body. We can already see some of this flowing out in the way that the outer sanctuary now has one great table and ten smaller tables coming out from it, and one great lampstand and ten smaller ones.

[15 : 34] Outside, there is one great bronze sea that replaces the bronze laver, and now there are ten water chariots coming out from that. A question to consider.

Reading 2 Chronicles 3-4, what further details of the temple construction and furnishings stand out to you?