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1 Kings 7 - 8



1 Kings - Steve Gregg

In this section of "1 Kings 7-8," Steve Gregg details the building of Solomon's temple. The hall and court inside were made with beveled windows, and pillars shaped like lilies with no known functional purpose. The tabernacle laver is described as a large swimming pool, and ten carts were used to transport it. Solomon summoned the elders and leaders of Israel to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the Temple, which was filled with the glory of the Lord and consumed the offerings with fire.

Transcript

Well, in chapter 7 of 1 Kings, we have a continuation of the things that Solomon was building. The temple itself, its description is given in chapter 6. But then, of course, there's a lot of other things associated with it, including furniture and accompaniments to the functioning of the temple. And so, we're going to read about those in chapter 7. But Solomon took 13 years to build his own house, so he finished all his house.

For he also built the house of the forest of Lebanon. Its length was 100 cubits, its width 50 cubits, its height 30 cubits, with four rows of cedar pillars and cedar beams on the pillars. And it was paneled with cedar above the beams that were on the 45 pillars, 15 to a row.

There were windows with beveled frames in three rows, and window was opposite window in three tiers. And all the doorways and the doorposts had rectangular frames instead of rounded tops. And window was opposite window in the three tiers.

You know, I mentioned these tiered windows when we were talking about the temple. And I said I didn't know whether they were inclined inward or outward, but obviously they would be inclined outward. So the outer window would be larger than the inward window, because otherwise rain would run in.

And, you know, if the walls are thick and the windows are beveled in such a way that the bottom and the sides decline out into a larger window on the outside than the inside, then of course any rain that would get in on the edge would roll on the outside of the building. But if it was beveled the other direction, it would just welcome the rain, and the

rain would come pouring into the building. So I wasn't thinking very well when I mentioned I didn't know which way they were beveled.

I think that would be functional, to have them beveled outward. That is, the windows would look larger on the outside than on the inside. And it would also have that function of probably gathering light a little more so, maybe not so much, but it would certainly fail to gather rain into the building.

And there would be rain from time to time. They didn't have glass windows back then. Verse 6. Excuse me, to the great court.

Excuse me, to the great court. Now these other buildings, some of them their use is obvious. I mean, the Hall of Judgment where his throne was, that's where people would bring their cases to be heard and where he would actually rule from the throne there.

The House of the Forest of Lebanon was, I think, his own dwelling place. And the reason it would be called the House of the Forest of Lebanon is probably because it had so much wood imported from Lebanon that it was like a forest of Lebanon. Like a forest of trees, cedars from Lebanon.

And there were his wife's house, the daughter of Pharaoh. And so there were these different buildings. We're not told exactly what the use of all of them was.

But they were major building projects, some of them considerably larger, like his own home was a lot larger than the temple itself, of course. It housed a big family. Now, verse 13.

King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali. And his father was a man of Tyre.

This was not kinged Hiram. This man is also called Hiram. It's a variation on the same name.

But a different man. This man is not the king. He's brought in to work.

He's the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali and a father of a man of Tyre. So he's of mixed race. A bronze worker.

He was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill in working with all kinds of bronze work. So he came to King Solomon and did all his work. So he did a lot of the kind of work that Bezalel had done in making the furniture of the tabernacle.

And he cast two pillars of bronze, each one 18 cubits high. So that would be 27 feet high. Almost a three-story building in height.

And a line of 12 cubits measured the circumference of each. So they would be between

three and four feet in diameter, I suppose. And so they were very large bronze pillars.

Their use is not stated. Now normally pillars are used to uphold a roof or something like that. These apparently were freestanding pillars.

They were for decorative purposes, not for functional purposes. They weren't bearing weight, I don't believe. But in addition to their 27 feet of height, they had additional, a capital on top or a, what would we call it? We call it a capital, I guess, at the top of the pillar.

An ornate piece of work at the top. In King James it says a chapter. And none of us know what a chapter is, but New King James has modernized it to capitals.

And they were cast bronze, set on tops of the pillars. The height of one capital was five cubits. And the height of the other capital was five cubits.

Which means another seven and a half feet of height was given to them. So they're well above 30 feet high. He made a lattice network with wreaths of chain work for the capitals, which were on top of the pillars.

Seven chains for one capital and seven for the other capital. And he made the pillars and the two rows of pomegranates above the network all around to cover the capitals that were on the top. And thus he did for the other capital also.

And the capitals, which were on top of the pillars in the hall, were in shape of lilies. Four cubits. Apparently four cubits across.

The capitals on the two pillars also had pomegranates above by the convex surface, which was next to the network. And there were 200 such pomegranates in rows on each of the capitals all around. Then he set up the pillars by the vestibule of the temple.

He set up the pillar on the right and called its name Jachin. And he set up the pillar on the left and called its name Boaz. Now, Jachin means he shall establish.

And Boaz means in him is strength. Now, Boaz, of course, is the name of one of Solomon's ancestors. Boaz and Ruth were in David's ancestry and therefore in Solomon's ancestry.

And whether this was named in honor of Boaz or not, we don't know. We really don't know what these pillars were there for, except to apparently symbolize strength and establishment. He shall establish was the name of one of them, probably meaning God will establish.

And Boaz means in him is strength, probably means in God is strength. But these pillars stood there simply as, no doubt, images of strength. Pillars are by nature strong supports, and therefore they stood as a testimony to God's strength and him being the

one who establishes.

We must assume because we're not given any further explanation of them. The tops of the pillars were in the shape of lilies, so the work of the pillars was finished. Verse 23, then he made the sea of cast bronze.

Now, this was a laver or a wash basin that was huge of cast bronze. As everything in the temple was larger than its counterpart in the tabernacle, this one was much larger. We don't know how big the laver was in the tabernacle, but it was movable.

This would hardly be movable. This thing was huge and it was much larger than the laver of washing in the tabernacle. Now, Solomon multiplied some of the pieces of furniture.

For example, where the tabernacle had had a table of showbread, Solomon had ten. Where the tabernacle had had a lampstand, Solomon had ten. Where the tabernacle had had a laver of cleansing in the outer court, Solomon made this one very large laver and ten smaller ones that were on movable carts.

Now, the lavers were wash basins, and they were used for washing the priest's hands, washing the priest's feet before they'd go into the temple, and also probably for some of the washing of the animal parts and so forth that had to be done. So, there had to be water basins to wash in. Whereas the tabernacle had one basin called the laver of cleansing, Solomon really had 11.

One of them took the place of the original and was much larger. Then there were the ten auxiliary lesser basins that we will find too. But the large one he called the sea, and this is capitalized in our Bibles in order to set it apart from the ocean.

It's given as the proper name for this piece of furniture. And it is so called because it was like a swimming pool. It was huge.

It was a very large body of water right there out in the middle of the court of the temple. It says, he made the sea of cast bronze ten cubits from one brim to the other. So, it's 30 feet wide.

I'm sorry, 15 feet wide, excuse me. And it was completely round. Its height was five cubits and a line of 30 cubits measured its circumference.

Now, it was seven and a half feet tall, so they couldn't just walk up and wash on it without, they'd have stairs or a ramp or something to go up and access it. And 15 feet wide, which must be at least as wide as this room. I don't know how wide this room is, but this room must be approximately that, I think.

Something in that neighborhood. So, you can kind of picture this big round pool of water and seven feet tall at its brim. Now, it is said to be ten cubits wide, but its circumference

was 30 cubits.

It was exactly three times the length of its breadth around. Now, this is not exactly mathematically correct, generally speaking. There'd be a slight difference in the circumference of a completely round object.

This doesn't follow the formula of pi perfectly, but that is probably because it had a depth to it, a brim around the top that was about a man's hand width. And therefore, one would measure its breadth from the inner lip to the outer lip, or rather from the outer lip to the outer lip on either side, and the circumference may have been measured on the inside. And if that's what is being done, then you could account for the dimensions being what they are given.

Some people have tried to find some kind of fault with this mathematically, but since there was, it's possible to measure either the inner rim or the outer edge, and one measurement may be of the outer dimensions and one of the inner, that would really solve the problem immediately. Now, it said in verse 25, actually in 24, we're not finished with it. It says, the ornamental buds were cast in two rows when it was cast.

It stood on 12 oxen, three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east. The sea was set upon them, and all their back parts pointed inward. So, these oxen are standing facing all four directions, they're no doubt bronze.

It was a hand breadth thick, and its brim was shaped like the brim of a cup, like a lily blossom. It contained 2,000 baths. Baths is a quantity of water or liquid.

He also made 10 carts of bronze. Four cubits was the length of each cart, six feet long. Four cubits its width, and three cubits its height.

So, these were square carts, and they were made to hold the smaller basins. They were six by six feet, and four and a half feet tall. These were wheeled carts so that they can move these basins around.

They'd be quite heavy when they're full of water. And this was the design of the carts. They had panels, and the panels were between frames.

On the panels that were between frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. And on the frames was a pedestal on top. Below the lions and the oxen were wreaths of plated work.

Every cart had four bronze wheels and axles of bronze, and its four feet had supports. Under the laver were supports of cast bronze beside each wreath. Its opening inside the crown at the top was one cubit in diameter, and the opening was round, shaped like a pedestal, one and a half cubits in outside diameter.

And all on the opening were engravings, but the panels were square, not round. Under the panels were the four wheels, and the axles of the wheels were joined to the cart. The height of the wheel was one and a half cubits.

You know, I'm not sure if I'm seeing this correctly, but when it talks about the panels and the opening, the round opening in it, I'm assuming it's talking about the top surface of the cart. And it had a round hole cut in it so that a round bowl-shaped thing could rest upon it, and would partly be sunken below the level of the top of the cart so that it wouldn't slide around. I'm not sure that I'm seeing it as it's being described.

So, the workmanship of the wheels was like the workmanship of a chariot wheel. Their axle pins, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all of cast bronze. And there were four supports at the four corners of each cart, and its supports were part of the cart itself.

On the top of the cart, at the height of half a cubit, it was perfectly round. And on the top of the cart, its flanges and its panels were of the same casting. On the plates of its flanges and on its panels, he engraved cherubim, lions, and palm trees.

Wherever there was a clear space on each with wreaths all around. After this manner, he made the ten carts. All of them were of the same mold, one measure, and one shape.

I'll confess that I can't really describe these in detail to you, because, frankly, it's not easy to picture where all of these parts were positioned. We get the impression these carts were quite ornate, but unless you're better than I am at able to picture them, some of the details, it's hard to know where they fit into the construction. Then he made ten lavers of bronze.

Each laver contained 40 baths, and each laver was four cubits. On each of the ten carts was a laver. And he put five carts on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house.

He set the sea on the right side of the house toward the southeast. Hiram, or Hurram, made the lavers and the shovels and the bowls. Hiram, or Hurram, finished doing all the work that he was to do for the King Solomon on the House of the Lord.

The two pillars, the two bowl-shaped capitals that were on top of the two pillars, and the two networks covering the two bowl-shaped capitals which were on the top of the pillars. Four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, two rows of pomegranates for each network to cover the two bowl-shaped capitals that were on top of the pillars. The ten carts, the ten lavers on the carts, the sea, and the twelve oxen under the sea, the pots, the shovels, and the bowls.

All these articles which Hiram made for King Solomon for the House of the Lord were of burnished bronze. In the plain of Jordan, the king had them cast in clay molds between

Sukkoth and Zeritan. Apparently, this was a good location for getting clay out of the ground because they had to cast the bronze in clay molds.

And Solomon did not weigh all the articles because there were so many. The weight of the bronze was not determined. So, in a list that gives a lot of details about size and shape and so forth, they just admit quite openly, no, we're not sure how much all this weight is pretty heavy stuff.

We couldn't even weigh it all, so we're just going to leave that detail undetermined. Solomon had all the furnishings made for the House of the Lord. The altar of gold, the table of gold, which was the showbread, the lampstands of pure gold, five on the right side and five on the left in the front of the inner sanctuary, with the flowers and the lamps and the wick trimmers of gold, the basins, the trimmers, the bowls, the ladles, and the censers of pure gold, and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner room, the most holy place, and for the doors of the main hall of the temple.

Thus, all the work that King Solomon had done for the House of the Lord was finished, and Solomon brought in the things which his father David had dedicated, the silver and the gold and the furnishings, and he put them in the treasuries of the House of the Lord. Now, the things that David had collected, we read about in the end of 1 Chronicles, that David had taken up a collection of silver and gold and all such things that would be used for the temple. And this was because, although David wished to build the temple, and it was on his heart to do it, he was not allowed to do it, so he did what he could, and that was that he collected all the materials that would be really necessary.

On the other hand, it doesn't look like he used all of them, because Solomon was able to bring the stuff that David had dedicated into the temple and leave it in the treasury. It may be that there is just so much stuff donated that they could build this elaborate temple and still have a lot left over, or else that Solomon may have used his own resources to build the temple, and taken all that David had dedicated and just given that to be in the treasury of the temple to help with the ongoing expenses of maintenance and all that was necessary. But if you're interested, it is interesting to look at chapter 29 of 1 Chronicles, and we read of David taking the temple, the offering for the temple.

What's interesting about it is that the people gave so willingly that they actually had to tell the people to stop giving. It doesn't happen very often in churches that they have to tell people, please don't give anymore, we've got enough. But in 1 Chronicles 29, 1 says, Furthermore, King David said to all the congregation, My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, because the temple is not for man, but for Yahweh God.

Now, for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various

colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the Holy House, my own special treasure of gold and silver, three thousand talents of gold. Man, that's a lot of gold, that was his own private stash, and he gave that.

And it says, the gold of ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses. The gold for the things of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and all kinds of work to be done by the hands of craftsmen, who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord. And the elders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and hundreds, and officers over the king's work, offered willingly, they gave for the work of the house of God, five thousand talents, and ten thousand derrick's of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one thousand talents of iron.

And whoever had precious stones, gave them to the treasurer of the house of the Lord, to the hand of Jahiel, the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly, so to the Lord. And King David also rejoiced greatly.

And so there was this great willingness on the people to give, and they gave tons, really, tons of gold and silver. And it says here in 1 Kings, that after Solomon had finished building, and there was a lot of gold, and bronze, and so forth, used in the temple, it says he then took the things that his father David had dedicated, and he put them in the treasuries of the house of the Lord. So again, he either didn't use all of the materials, after he used what he needed, there was still a lot left over, or else he had actually ended up building the temple from his own expenses, and just gave everything that had been given to David to the temple.

So there was a lot of money. There was a lot of money in this building, and in this religious system at this particular time. Chapter 8 is a very long chapter, and because I believe we need to take it, I'm going to try to minimize my comments, just so we can get through it without going too long.

Now Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel, King Solomon, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from the city of David, which is Zion. And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the feast in the month of Ethanim, which is the seventh month. Now the temple was completed in the eighth month.

This must have been the next year. This must have been 11 months later that they had the dedication of the temple. And this ceremony of dedication involved bringing the Ark into the temple.

Now why they waited 11 months to bring the Ark to the finished temple, we aren't told, but it may well be that they waited until the Feast of Tabernacles. And the Feast of Tabernacles was in the seventh month, so they may have felt the Feast of Tabernacles would be the most apropos time, since people would be gathered in Jerusalem anyway, and it was a feast where they remembered the time they'd wandered in the wilderness and dwelt in tabernacles or tents or booths. And now there's a permanent dwelling for God, and they're going to move the Ark into its permanent place.

They may have just felt the symbolism of the event would be most suitable. Then all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the Ark. And they brought up the Ark of the Lord, the Tabernacle of Meeting, and all the holy furnishings that were in the Tabernacle, the priests and the Levites brought them up.

Now the Tabernacle was not going to be needed anymore, so they brought everything up. They dismantled it. Also King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled to him were with him before the Ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude.

Then the priests brought in the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to its place into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the most holy place under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread their two wings over the place of the Ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the Ark and its poles. And the poles extended so that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place in the front of the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen from outside.

So they are there to this day. Now the author apparently wrote this before the temple was destroyed, and yet the books of Kings include the destruction of the temple in the later chapters of 2 Kings. And all scholars tend to agree that one author wrote the whole book.

So it would appear that the author wrote part of the book when the temple was still standing, but completed the book later when it was burned down. So it must not have been very long after the temple was destroyed that this was written, because the author's lifetime, in fact his writing project, spanned the time between the destruction of the temple and after, because he knew about the destruction of the temple later. At this point he did not apparently.

It would take time to write history this much, and it doesn't take us as long to read it, but he apparently wrote this over a period of many years. And so we have at this early point in the book, the Ark was still there, it was still visible. Now to say its poles could be seen from the sanctuary, it's not clear what that means unless, of course, the doors between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place were pretty much left open.

And perhaps the veil that was there substituted for doors for the most part, and the

poles were positioned in such a way so they poke out and protrude to the point where you can see the protrusion on the veil. You can see the curtain being poked from the outside. You can tell that the poles are still there.

Since no one could really go in there except once a year, one might wonder, is it still there? Has anyone come and stolen it? We might never know until next Day of Atonement. But as they could see the poles were protruding and no doubt visible on the outside of the veil, then they would not have to wonder if the Ark was still there. But that would mean they'd have to leave the doors open, but the veil would be covering the opening.

There was nothing in the Ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put in their Horeb when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel and when they came out of the land of Egypt. Now this is different than what was earlier because the writer of Hebrews tells us that there had been in the Ark three things. The tablets of stone which we read are still there at this point.

Also there was Aaron's rod that had budded in the story of Korah's rebellion. And then there was the golden pot which was of manna. And it may well be that the Philistines had removed these things when they had the Ark.

We don't read what became of those other things. But by this late date, only the tablets of stone were still there. And it came to pass when the priests came out of the holy place that the cloud filled the house of the Lord.

So the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. Now this happened also in Exodus chapter 40 when the tabernacle was completed and dedicated. God filled the tabernacle and His presence was seen in the form of that cloud, that shekinah glory that they had seen every day and which had led them to the wilderness during the daytime and which had been a cloud of fire at night.

This was a visible manifestation of God's glory in the house showing that He really accepted it and He had moved in. That doesn't mean that there was always a cloud visible there. This was more or less the inauguration or the dedication of the temple.

And God makes His presence visible, apparently so heavily and thickly, that people couldn't stand to go in there. That would not be so the next day or the other days that they had to minister there. But at first, God gave His sign of approval and acceptance in this way.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 7, we're going to see that there's another supernatural manifestation. It doesn't come until the end of the chapter we're now dealing with, but Solomon is going to have a long prayer of dedication. And then in addition to the cloud

filling the temple, there's going to be fire come out from God to consume the offerings that they put on the altar there.

Because 2 Chronicles 7, 1 says, Now when Solomon had finished praying, that's a prayer we haven't read yet, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Now that's also what happened when the tabernacle was inaugurated. In Leviticus chapter 9, the fire from heaven came and lit the coals of the altar.

And those coals were then forever to be burning and they were the coals used to burn incense and to burn the sacrifices apparently too. So the dedication of the temple was accompanied with the same supernatural evidences of God's approval that had accompanied the opening of the tabernacle, the visible sign of the cloud, the glory of the Lord in that form, and also the consuming of the sacrificial meat by supernatural fire from heaven. Now back in 1 Kings 8, verse 12 says, Then Solomon spoke, The Lord said he would dwell in the dark cloud.

I have surely built you an exalted house and a place for you to dwell forever. And the king turned around and blessed the whole congregation of Israel while all the congregation of Israel was standing. Then he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who spoke with his mouth to my father David and with his hand has fulfilled it saying, Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there.

But I chose David to be over my people Israel. Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. But the Lord said to my father David, Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart.

Nevertheless, you shall not build the house, but your son who shall come from your loins, he shall build the house for my name. So the Lord has fulfilled his word which he spoke. And I have filled the position of my father David and sit on the throne of Israel as the Lord promised.

And I have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And there I have made a place for the ark in which is the covenant of the Lord, meaning the stone tablets, which he made with our fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. Now this is a blessing he pronounced on the people.

And then we're going to see that Solomon offers a very long prayer of dedication. It says Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. And he said, and then we have this lengthy prayer.

And I want to just point out that at the end of the prayer in verse 54, it says, Now when he started praying, we read that he was standing and when he finished praying, we read he was kneeling. Now, whether he fell to his knees in the midst of his prayer at some point that's not been recorded, whether he started praying with his, he was on his feet and ended on his knees as seems to be the case here, or whether he was simply on his feet at the time that he blessed the people and then fell to his knees to pray is not entirely clear. In Chronicles, excuse me, it seems to indicate that he fell to his knees when he prayed.

That is when he began to pray. So it's not entirely clear at what point he kneeled, but he was standing when he blessed the people and we don't read of him kneeling here until after the prayer, but he may have fallen to his knees in verse 22 unrecorded here or sometime in the midst of his praying. And he said, who walked before you with all their heart.

And now I pray, Oh God of Israel, let your word come true, which you have spoken to your servant, David, my father. But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain you. How much less this temple, which I have built.

Yet regard the prayer of your servant and his supplication, Oh Lord, my God, and listened to the cry and the prayer, which your servant is praying before you today, that your eyes may be open toward this temple, night and day, toward the place of which you said, my name shall be there. That you may hear the prayer, which your servant makes toward this place. And may you hear the supplication of your servant and of your people, Israel, when they pray toward this place, then here in heaven, your dwelling place.

And when you hear forgive. Now praying toward the temple would be simply like praying toward God because God's presence on earth was considered to be in the temple. God had given a token of that by his glory filling the temple.

But Solomon acknowledged that, of course, it's rather small minded to assume that the God who fills the heavens could be living in a house on earth. And that's something that Stephen points out in his sermon in Acts chapter seven. He says, God does not dwell in temples made with hands.

Solomon really knew that. He knew that God could not be contained in a temple, but he did recognize that God's name or God's reputation was going to be associated with this temple. And therefore it became the emblem of God's presence on earth.

Unfortunately, whenever you have a physical emblem representing God, it can become an idol, which is often the case. That's why God didn't want people making graven images. So also the building itself came to be idolized in many cases.

The Jews in Jeremiah's time thought that because the temple was in Jerusalem, they were invulnerable from any attack because the temple in Jerusalem was the same as having God in Jerusalem. Even though the prophet Jeremiah was saying that they had apostatized from God and God had left them. And God was turning them over to their enemies.

They just couldn't believe it because the temple was there. The temple is like God in itself. Likewise, Stephen was put to death because he was accused of blaspheming against the temple and against Moses.

As if the temple was God. And that's why Stephen's sermon was framed the way it was, to point out that God isn't confined to a temple made with hands. Now, of course, he is dwelling in a temple today too.

Although the Jewish temple no longer stands, he dwells in us, the church. The people of God collectively are the Father's house now, as the temple was God's house in the Old Testament time. And individually, we are also many rooms, many dwelling places in the house of God where he dwells in us individually as well.

So he does dwell in a house of sorts, but not houses made with hands. Look what God said in Isaiah 66, verse one and two. God says, Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool.

Where is the house that you will build for me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things my hand has made and all those things exist. That is, I already have a place to live. I made it myself.

It's called heaven and earth. So what house are you going to build for me? Can you build a better house for me than I built for myself? There's already an existing house, so to speak. And that is basically everything, everything that is created.

But he says then, in the middle of verse two, Isaiah 66, two, but on this man, on this one, will I look on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at my word. Now, essentially what God seems to be saying is that I won't dwell in a temple made with hands, but I will dwell with a man. I will dwell with somebody who is humble enough to qualify, who trembles at my word.

God says something kind of like that in Isaiah 57, verse 15 also. Isaiah 57, 15. He says, For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place with him who has a contrite and a humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble and revive the heart of the contrite ones.

He says, I dwell in the high and holy place, but I also dwell in the very low place in the heart of lowly people. God says, I dwell with people. I don't dwell in buildings made of hands.

I dwell in the universe and with people. And Solomon realized that at one level that was true. At another level it was the case that God had chosen to put his name and his presence, symbolically at least, at the temple.

And so Solomon, when he prays, says, When your people pray toward this temple, then hear. And this Daniel did when he was in Babylon as a captive. He prayed toward the temple.

He prayed every day toward the west, which was toward the temple, where the temple had been. And that is no doubt a practice that was informed by Solomon's prayer here. Because he says in verse 31, If anyone sins against his neighbor and is forced to take an oath and comes and takes an oath before your altar in this temple, then hear in heaven and act and judge your servants, condemning the wicked, bringing his way on his head and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.

And when your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and confess your name and pray and make supplication to you in this temple, then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land which you gave to their fathers. When the heavens are shut up and there's no rain because they have sinned against you, when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you afflict them, then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, that you may teach them the good way in which they should walk and give rain on your land which you have given to your people as an inheritance. Notice he keeps giving examples of when judgment comes on us because we sin.

He anticipates that the people of Israel are going to blow it and they're going to bring judgment on themselves. But he also says, but when they repent and pray toward this temple, notice he says, then hear from heaven. He doesn't say hear from this temple as if God really lives in the temple, but rather God lives in heaven.

And that being so, he hears from heaven, not from the temple. When there is famine in the land or pestilence, blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, when their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities, whatever plague or whatever sickness there is, whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone or by all your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart and spreads out his hands toward this temple, then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and give to everyone according to all his ways whose heart you know. For you, only you, know the hearts of all the sons of men, that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land which you gave to our fathers.

Moreover, concerning a foreigner who is not of your people Israel but has come from a far country for your name's sake, for they will hear of your great name and your strong hand and your outstretched arm, when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in

heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, that all peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by your name. When your people go out to battle against their enemy, wherever you send them, and when they pray to the Lord toward the city which you have chosen and toward the temple which I have built for your name, then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication and maintain their cause. When they sin against you, for there is no one who does not sin, and you become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy and they take them captive to the land of the enemy far or near, yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive and repent and make supplication to you in the land of those who took them captive, saying, we have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness, and when they return to you with all their heart, with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to you toward their land which you gave to their fathers, the city which you have chosen and the temple which I have built for your name, then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication and maintain their cause, and forgive your people who have sinned against you and all their transgression which they have transgressed against you, and grant them compassion before those who took them captive that they may have compassion on them.

For they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, that your eyes may be opened to the supplication of your servant and the supplication of your people Israel to listen to them whenever they call to you. For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your inheritance as you spoke by the hand of your servant Moses when you brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God. Now what's interesting about this is how much trouble Solomon anticipates Israel getting into because of their sins.

He talks about them being defeated by their enemies, being carried away to a far country. These things actually did happen, but the fact that he knew it in advance makes it almost like a spirit of prophecy must have come upon him so that he could anticipate these things because at that time there was no indicator that that would happen. The people were all on board with David and then with Solomon and things were looking good, but he could see that things might not always be so good and his most dire predictions, of course, did come true.

And so it was when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the Lord that he arose from before the altar of the Lord from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. Then he stood and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice saying, Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel according to all that he promised. There has not failed one word of all his good promise which he promised through his servant Moses.

May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us nor forsake us that he may incline our hearts to himself to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments which he commanded to our fathers. And may these words of mine with which I have made supplication before the Lord be near the Lord our God day and night that he may maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel as each day may require.

That all the peoples of the earth may know that Yahweh is God. There is no other. Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God to walk in his statutes and keep his commandments as at this day.

So at this dedication he starts out by blessing the people, praying a prayer of dedication and then charging the people to be obedient so that these things can come true that are promised to them. Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the Lord and Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings which he offered to the Lord. 22,000 bulls.

That's a lot of livestock and 120,000 sheep like a quarter of a million bulls. It's a big slaughter, big feast because they ate the food. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.

On the same day, the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the Lord for he there offered burnt offerings, grain offerings and the fat of peace offerings because the bronze altar that was before the Lord was too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat of the peace offerings. So they just offered much too many animals. I mean you had to be slaughtering 50 of them at a time or 100 of them at a time to get through a quarter of a million bulls.

I don't know how many, how long it took or how many Levites were working but imagine how long it would take to slaughter a quarter of a million bulls and an eighth of a million sheep. They couldn't do all that on one altar, too small. So they had to set up apparently a lot of ad hoc altars temporarily that would be able to accommodate the demands of this ceremony.

At that time Solomon held a feast and all Israel with him, a great congregation from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt before the Lord our God seven days and seven more days, 14 days. Probably it's over the period of that many days that they offered all these offerings rather than on one day. On the eighth day he sent the people away and they blessed the king and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for his servant David and for Israel his people.

So this is a very positive note to end on. It won't be very long that we see Solomon himself failing to keep his own exhortations and departing from the Lord. But at this point he's doing good and Israel's happy.

They have a big barbecue and a big worship ceremony at the dedication of the temple which of course defined their national life for the rest of their history.