

1 Kings 7

Introduction

1. Much like chapter 6, chapter 7 is mainly a list of details—LOTS OF DETAILS:
 - a. 7:1-12 provide details on Solomon's palace
 - b. 7:13-47 provide details on the objects outside the temple
 - c. 7:48-51 provide some additional details regarding the furnishings inside the temple (not provided in chapter 6)
2. As I mentioned with chapter 6, such details can be a bit overwhelming, and we might be tempted to skim or skip over them
3. But as we saw last week, God provided them for a purpose, and part of the purpose is that the design of the temple revealed the splendor and majesty of God
4. In the same way, we will see how the details in our passage today can teach us something

A. The design of Solomon's palace was not only a reflection of the wisdom God had given him but it served to reflect God's blessings on Israel (7:1-12)

1. In previous chapters, we've seen how Solomon's wisdom—the wisdom God gave to him—was revealed in not just the things that he knew but the things he did
2. The same is true with the construction of his palace (READ 7:1-12)
3. It's fairly common for commentators and pastors to claim that this passage reveals Solomon's mixed-up priorities and his love of opulence and worldly wealth
 - a. They base this on the fact that his palace took twice as long to build than the temple, that it was significantly larger than the temple, and that it was built with precious wood and stone
 - b. Scholar Paul House wrote one of the best respected commentaries on 1 Kings and he shares this opinion:

Inserted between the building and the furnishing of the temple, this palace construction story shows that Solomon's secular interests never cease and that these interests cost more than his religious one. The palace takes nearly twice as long to finish. Presumably it is also larger and more costly. Some of these differences are natural, given the constant use of the royal residence and Hall of justice. Still, the close proximity of [the two passages—building of the temple and the building of his palace] make the contrast quite obvious, even startling. The author again leaves doubt about the king in the reader's mind...Indeed, Solomon has built himself an impressive home. Is this project self-indulgence or another example of God's blessing? The author does not comment, though readers must wonder if this extravagance is in keeping with Moses's declaration that kings “must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold” (Deut 17:17). At least it is quite possible that DeVries is correct in writing ‘he [Solomon] did everything imaginable to show that, as Yahweh was a great god, he was a great king. What is displayed here is far more Solomon's riches and honor than his wisdom. His was undoubtedly the piety of worldly success.’ (p. 130-131)

4. Does this passage really reveal a dark side to Solomon or that his priorities were mixed-up, as one pastor put it? I don't believe that it does; in fact, it's actually another reflection of Solomon's wisdom:

- a. We learn in this passage that Solomon prioritized the building of the temple over his palace; he didn't start construction on his palace until the temple was finished (compare vs. 6:38 & 7:1 with 9:10)
 - b. We also learn that the palace was larger than the temple and took longer to build, but not because of Solomon's "mixed-up" priorities; this was because the palace included all the government buildings, not just Solomon's house:
 - 1) A large meeting hall called "the House of the Forest of Lebanon" (2-5)
 - 2) A building called "The hall of pillars" (6)
 - 3) A throne room used for judging (7)
 - 4) Living quarters for Solomon (8a)—notice that Solomon's living quarters get described in only HALF A VERSE! What does that say?
 - 5) Living quarters for his wife (8b)
 - 6) While not mentioned here, there were also living quarters for of his staff and large storehouses to hold not only the massive stockpiles of gold and silver, but all the tributes supplied by surrounding nations
 - c. We also learn in this passage that, as can be expected, the palace was very grand—it was built with expensive stone, cedar wood paneling, giant columns, ornate window frames, and coping at the ceilings:
 - 1) There is something noticeably absent, however
 - 2) Unlike the temple which was covered from floor to ceiling in gold, no gold or other precious metals are mentioned here
 - 3) We learn elsewhere that Solomon used gold in the throne room and for all the eating utensils, but there's no indication that his palace was nearly as splendid, extravagant, or costly as the temple as many commentators and pastors claim
 - d. Rather than see this passage in a negative sense, somehow as Solomon's love for opulence and worldly extravagance or his mixed-up priorities, I believe we should see Solomon's palace in the same light that Queen Sheba did (READ 1 Kings 10:1-10):
 - 1) After hearing Solomon speak and seeing his palace and all that it involved, v. 5 says "there was no more spirit (breadth) in her"—it literally took her breath away
 - 2) This led her to proclaim that what she had heard about Solomon's wisdom and prosperity was not only true, but didn't amount to half of what was true
 - 3) She then blesses the LORD and praises Him for his love for Israel
5. All of the aspects surrounding the construction of Solomon's palace indicates that it was another example of the wisdom God had given him, but it also served to reflect God's blessings on Israel—that is precisely why Queen Sheba blessed the LORD

B. Just as the interior of the temple reflected the splendor and majesty of God, the exterior did as well (7:13-47)

- 1. The author now turns his attention back to the temple, but focuses mainly on the outside:
 - a. He first describes the two large pillars Hiram made to flank the main entrance to the temple (READ 7:13-22):
 - 1) The Hiram mentioned here is not King Hiram, but another Hiram from Tyre, a man who specialized in working with bronze

- 2) Each pillar was made of molten bronze, approximately 27 feet high and 18 feet in circumference
 - 3) On top of the pillars were two 7.5 foot ornate bronze capitals, with two rows of pomegranates at the base of the capitals and a lily design on top
 - 4) The pillars were even given names, but unfortunately there's not a lot of agreement on what the names mean:
 - a) The right pillar was named Jachin which seems to mean "**He will establish**"
 - b) The left pillar was named Boaz which if you remember was David's great-grandfather who married Ruth, but it could also be translated as "**in strength**" (as it is in Psalm 21:1)
 - c) So, some scholars believe that these two pillars represent Israel's strength and stability in the LORD (e.g. "He will establish [them] in [His] strength") but it's uncertain
- b. Next the author describes a large water basin (READ 7:23-26):
- 1) It was also made of molten bronze, measured 15 feet across at the rim, 7.5 feet high, and 45 feet in circumference, and could hold nearly 12,000 gallons of water
 - 2) According to 2 Chronicles 4:6, it was used by the priests for ritual cleansing
 - 3) It was placed on the right side of the entrance and sat on 12 oxen, also made of bronze, with three facing in each direction, north, south, east and west
 - 4) There have been a handful of theories as to what the 12 oxen symbolized, but they likely represent the 12 tribes of Israel and may reflect the way the LORD commanded the Israelites to camp when in the wilderness; According to Numbers 2, three tribes faced each of the four directions, just like the oxen under the basin
- c. Hiram also made 10 wheeled carts (READ 7:27-39):
- 1) Each cart was identical and completely made of bronze, even the axels and wheels
 - 2) They were square, six feet by six feet, and 4.5 feet high
 - 3) On top of each cart sat a basin, also made of bronze, which could hold approximately 230 gallons of water
 - 4) Five of the carts sat on one side of the temple and five on the other side
 - 5) According to 2 Chronicles 4:6 these were also used for washing
- d. One item that's not included in this passage is the altar which sat outside in front of the temple:
- 1) We find that in 2 Chronicles 4:1
 - 2) It was a square, 30 feet on each side, and 15 feet high
 - 3) Like everything else Hiram made, it was made of pure bronze
 - 4) If it resembled the altar God commanded Israel to make while in the wilderness, it would have had a large fire pit in the center with a bronze grate over the top for burning the sacrifices (Exodus 27:1-8)
- e. Verses 40-47 serve as a summary of all the bronze items made by Hiram (READ 40-47)
2. Each of these items was designed to reflect aspects of God's character:
 - a. Did you notice the ornate details of each of these items?
 - 1) The pillars were decorated with giant lily like capitals, encircled by twisted threads of lattice work, and hundreds of pomegranates that circles the base of the capitals

- 2) The rim of the large water basin was flanged out like a lily, with two rows of gourds circling it
 - 3) The ten carts had bordered frames with lions, oxen and cherubim engraved on them, and the supports that connected the wheels looked like wreaths
 - 4) What's interesting about this, is that such intricate details have rarely been found on similar religious objects used by the pagan nations in the ANE
 - 5) These items were created not just for their functional use, but to display the beauty and majesty of the One they were used to serve
- b. Another way these items reflected aspects of God's character was in their function:
- 1) The description of the pillars suggest they were not used for support; rather, their function was to remind all who visited the temple that the LORD was their strength and stability
 - 2) The large water basin and the 10 smaller basins were used for cleansing which reflected God's holiness and one's need to be cleansed before stepping into His presence
 - 3) The altar was designed for sacrificial offerings which reminded the Israelites of their sin and how the LORD made provision for their sin

C. The last few verses of our passage close out the construction of the temple and reveal how even the temple furnishings reflected God's splendor and majesty (READ 7:48-51)

1. There was an altar of gold, table for the Showbread, and 10 golden lampstands, five on each side of the Holy place in front of the Holy of Holies
2. There were also flowers, lamps, snuffers, tongs, bowls, cups, spoons, and firepans all made of gold
3. And, we are reminded that even the hinges for the doors were made of gold
4. The last thing we see is that the temple also rooms had to store the nations treasures of gold and silver

D. Takeaways:

1. I think it might be hard for us to fully grasp the significance of the temple (and even Solomon's palace) and the role it played in Israel's history
2. Ever since the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we—the Church—serve as the temple of God; I believe it's one of the reasons why God allowed the temple to be destroyed in 70 A.D.
3. It is through us that He makes Himself known to the world, but for ancient Israel, God presence on earth was symbolized first by the tabernacle in the wilderness and then by the temple in Jerusalem
4. It was a fulfillment of His promise to choose a place for His name to dwell among His people
5. It makes sense, then, that God's temple would be the grandest and most magnificent of all temples, far more splendid and majestic than any other pagan god
6. After all, He is the One and only true God and the glory of the temple reflected that