

LESSON FIFTEEN 5-8

THE ARK AND THE TEMPLE. SOLOMON'S PRAYER OF DEDICATION. A GREAT FESTIVAL. SOLOMON AS KING.

3. BUILDING THE TEMPLE—Continued (3-5:1)

INTRODUCTION

The ark was set in the Holy of Holies. The Temple was finished. When the prayer was completed, the Temple was filled with the light of the glory of God. Solomon established himself as the king of Israel.

TEXT

(Scripture text in Lesson Fourteen)

PARAPHRASE

(Scripture text in Lesson Fourteen)

COMMENTARY

Solomon was faithful in all matters that pertained to the Temple. Those vessels that were specifically designed for the Temple services were completed according to their respective patterns. In addition to these there were many sacred vessels acquired in David's day and dedicated to Jehovah. These were placed in special rooms set apart for such treasures. The building of the Temple was complete in the eleventh year of Solomon's reign after seven years of diligent work on the magnificent structure (I Kings 6:38). Solomon called a great assembly of elders and princes to a meeting in Jerusalem for the purpose of bringing the ark of the covenant into the Temple. Although the Temple was not completed until the eighth month, this significant event of bringing in the ark took place in the seventh month. The seventh month, Tisri, was the first month of the civil year. The first day of this month was the Hebrew New Year. The tenth day was the Day of Atonement. The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated through eight days beginning on the fifteenth day of the month. Through several

years the ark had been kept in the tent David had set up for it in Jerusalem. On this important occasion the ark, the Tent, the furnishings and utensils of the old Tabernacle were carried into the Temple. Here is a beautiful picture of the progress of Jehovah's self-revelation. Having completed His purpose with regard to the old Tabernacle, He now causes it to be folded away and laid in storage rooms in the Temple. In its place a grand new institution was brought into being. The day would come when the Temple would have fulfilled its purpose. It too, would be removed, and in its place the grandest institution of all, the Church, would be brought on the scene. The assignment for moving the ark and the Tabernacle was given to the Levites. To underscore the consecration of the king and the people, great numbers of sacrifices were offered. We would assume that these offerings were presented on the altar of burnt offering in the court of priests at the Temple. Of all the parts of the Old Tabernacle, only the ark of the covenant would actually be used in the Temple. Once the ark had contained the tables of the Law, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod. The only treasure in the ark when it was brought into the Temple were the tables of the Law. The manna and Aaron's rod probably had been removed by the Philistines when they had the ark in Samuel's day. The ark was carried into the Oracle and placed beneath the extended wings of the large cherubim which were built for the Oracle. The curious note concerning the staves is not clear. The staves were to remain in the rings of the ark at all times so that it could readily be lifted to the shoulders of priests and moved at Jehovah's direction. The ark with its staves in place was in the Oracle at the time that the writer of II Chronicles completed his record. So the most sacred vessel out of the old Tabernacle was placed in the holiest part of the Temple.

4. DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE (5:2 - 7:22)

TEXT

Chapter 5:2. Thus all the work that Solomon wrought for the house of Jehovah was finished. And Solomon brought in the

things that David his father had dedicated, even the silver, and the gold, and all the vessels, and put them in the treasuries of the house of God.

2. Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the princes of the fathers' houses of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of the city of David, which is Zion. 3. And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king at the feast, which was in the seventh month. 4. And all the elders of Israel came: and the Levites took up the ark; 5. and they brought up the ark, and the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tent; these did the priests the Levites bring up. 6. And king Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, were before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be counted nor numbered for multitude. 7. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Jehovah unto its place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim. 8. For the cherubim spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 9. And the staves were so long that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without: and there it is unto this day.¹⁰ There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put there at Horeb, when Jehovah made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

11. And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place (for all the priests that were present had sanctified themselves, and did not keep their courses; 12. also the Levites who were the singers, all of them, even Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and their brethren, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them a hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets); 13. it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of

music, and praised Jehovah, saying, "For he is good; for his lovingkindness endureth for ever;" that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Jehovah, 14. so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah filled the house of God.

Chapter 6:1. Then spake Solomon, "Jehovah hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. 2. "But I have built thee a house of habitation, and a place for thee to dwell in for ever." 3. And the king turned his face, and blessed all the assembly of Israel: and all the assembly of Israel stood.

4. And he said, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, who spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hands fulfilled it, saying, 5. 'Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be prince over my people Israel: 6. but I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there, and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.' 7. "Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel. 8. "But Jehovah said unto David my father, 'Whereas it was in thy heart to build a house for my name, thou didst well that it was in thy heart: 9. 'nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name.' 10. "And Jehovah hath performed his word that he spake; for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as Jehovah promised, and have built the house for the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel. 11. "And have I set the ark, wherein is the covenant of Jehovah, which he made with the children of Israel."

12. And he stood before the altar of Jehovah in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands. 13. (for Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven); 14. and he said, "O

Jehovah, the God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven, or on earth; who keepest covenant and lovingkindness with thy servants, that walk before thee with all their heart; 15. who hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou didst promise him: yea, thou spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thy hand, as it is this day. 16. "Now therefore, O Jehovah, the God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him saying, 'There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel, if only thy children take heed to their way, to walk in my law as thou hast walked before me.' 17. "Now therefore, O Jehovah, the God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David.

18. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have builded! 19. "Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant; and to his supplication, O Jehovah my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee; 20. that thine eyes may be open toward this house day and night, even toward the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall pray toward this place. 21. "And hearken thou to the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: yea, hear thou from thy dwelling-place, even from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.

22. "If a man sin against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and he come and swear before thine altar in this house; 23. then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, requiting the wicked, to bring his way upon his own head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

24. "And if thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication before thee in this house; 25. then hear thou from heaven, and

forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers.

26. "When the heavens are shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them: 27. then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou teachest them the good way wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.

28. "If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting or mildew, locust or caterpillar; if their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities: whatsoever plague or whatsoever sickness there be; 29. what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, who shall know every man his own plague and his own sorrow, and shall spread forth his hands toward this house: 30. then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and render unto every man according to all his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of the children of men); 31. that they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways, so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

32. "Moreover concerning the foreigner, that is not of thy people Israel, when he shall come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thine outstretched arm; when they shall come and pray toward this house: 33. then hear thou from heaven, even from thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the foreigner calleth to thee for; that all the peoples of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name.

34. "If thy people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatsoever way thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; 35. then hear thou from heaven their prayer and their supplication and maintain their cause.

36. "If they sin against thee (for there is no man that sinneth not), and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive unto a land far off or near; 37. yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn again, and make supplication unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, we have done perversely, and have dealt wickedly;' 38. if they return unto thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captive, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: 39. then hear thou from heaven, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people who have sinned against thee.

40. "Now, O my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent, unto the prayer that is made in this place. 41. "Now therefore arise, O Jehovah God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Jehovah God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. 42. "O Jehovah God; turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember thy loving-kindnesses to David thy servant.

Chapter 7:1. Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah filled the house. 2. And the priests could not enter into the house of Jehovah, because the glory of Jehovah filled Jehovah's house. 3. And all the children of Israel looked on, when the fire came down, and the glory of Jehovah was upon the house; and they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and gave thanks unto Jehovah, saying, "For he is good; for his lovingkindness endureth for ever."

4. Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the Lord. 5. And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of

God. 6. And the priests stood, according to their offices; the Levites also with instruments of music of Jehovah, which David the king had made to give thanks unto Jehovah (for his lovingkindness endureth for ever), when David praised by their ministry: and the priests sounded trumpets before them; and all Israel stood. 7. Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of Jehovah; for there he offered the burnt-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings, because the brazen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt-offering, and the meal-offering, and the fat.

8. So Solomon held the feast at that time seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly, from the entrance of Hammath unto the brook of Egypt. 9. And on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and feast seven days. 10. And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away unto their tents, joyful and glad of heart for the goodness that Jehovah had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people.

11. Thus Solomon finished the house of Jehovah, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of Jehovah, and in his own house, he prosperously effected. 12. And Jehovah appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, 'I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. 13. "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 14. if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 15. "Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent, unto the prayer that is made in this place. 16. "For now have I chosen and hallowed this house, that my name may be there for ever; and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually. 17. "And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and mine

ordinances; 18. then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I covenanted with David thy father, saying, 'There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel.'

19. "But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; 20. then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 21. "And this house, which is so high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall say, 'Why hath Jehovah done thus unto this land, and to this house?' 22. "And they shall answer, Because they forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.' "

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 5:2. Solomon now summoned to Jerusalem all of the leaders of Israel—the heads of the tribes and clans—for the ceremony of transferring the Ark from the (Tabernacle in the) City of David, also known as Zion, (to its new home in the Temple). 3. This celebration took place in October at the annual Festival of Tabernacles.

4, 5. As the leaders of Israel watched, the Levites lifted the Ark and carried it out of the Tabernacle, along with all the other sacred vessels. 6. King Solomon and the others sacrificed sheep and oxen before the Ark in such numbers that no one tried to keep count! 7, 8. Then the priest carried the Ark into the inner room of the Temple—the Holy of Holies—and placed it beneath the angels' wings; their wings spread over the Ark and its carrying poles. 9. These carrying poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the outer room, but not from the outside doorway. The Ark is still there at the time of this writing. 10. Nothing was in the ark except the two stone tablets which Moses had put there at Mount Horeb, when the Lord

made a covenant with the people of Israel as they were leaving Egypt.

11, 12. When the priests had undergone the purification rites for themselves, they all took part in the ceremonies without regard to their normal duties. And how the Levites were praising the Lord as the priests came out of the Holy of Holies! The singers were Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and all their sons and brothers, dressed in finespun linen robes and standing at the east side of the altar. The choir was accompanied by 120 priests who were trumpeters, while others played the cymbals, lyres, and harps. 13, 14. The band and chorus united as one to praise and thank the Lord; their selections were interspersed with trumpet obligatos, the clashing of cymbals, and the loud playing of other musical instruments—all praising and thanking the Lord. Their theme was "He is so good! His lovingkindness lasts forever!" And at that moment the glory of the Lord, coming as a bright cloud, filled the Temple so that the priests could not continue their work.

Chapter 6:1. This the prayer prayed by Solomon on that occasion: "The Lord has said that he would live in the thick darkness, But I have made a Temple for you, O Lord, to live in forever!" 3. Then the king turned around to the people and they stood to receive his blessing:

4. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," he said to them, "—the God who talked personally to my father David and has now fulfilled the promise he made to him. For he told him, 5, 6. 'I have never before, since bringing my people from the land of Egypt, chosen a city anywhere in Israel as the location of my Temple where my name will be glorified; and never before have I chosen a king for my people Israel. But now I have chosen Jerusalem as that city, and David as that king.' 7. "My father David wanted to build this Temple, 8. but the Lord said not to. It was good to have the desire, the Lord told him, 9. but he was not the one to build it: his son was chosen for that task. 10. And now the Lord has done what he promised, for I have become king in my father's place, and I have built the Temple for the Name of the Lord God of Israel, 11. and placed the Ark

there. And in the Ark is the Covenant between the Lord and his people Israel.”

12, 13. As he spoke, Solomon was standing before the people on a platform in the center of the outer court, in front of the altar of the Lord. The platform was made of bronze, 7½ feet square and 4½ feet high. Now, as all the people watched, he knelt down, reached out his arms toward heaven, and prayed this prayer: 14. “O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven and earth. You are the God who keeps his kind promises to all those who obey you, and who are anxious to do your will. 15. And you have kept your promise to my father David, as is evident today. 16. And now, O God of Israel, carry out your further promise to him that ‘your descendants shall always reign over Israel if they will obey my laws as you have.’ 17. Yes, Lord God of Israel, please fulfill this promise too.

18. But will God really live upon the earth with men? Why, even the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain you—how much less this Temple which I have built! 19. “How I pray that you will heed my prayers, O Lord my God! Listen to my prayer that I am praying to you now! 20, 21. Look down with favor day and night upon this Temple—upon this place where you have said that you would put your name. May you always hear and answer the prayers I will pray to you as I face toward this place. Listen to my prayers and to those of your people Israel when they pray toward this Temple; yes, hear us from heaven, and when you hear, forgive.

22. “Whenever someone commits a crime, and is required to swear to his innocence before this altar, 23. then hear from heaven and punish him if he is lying, or else declare him innocent.

24. “If your people Israel are destroyed before their enemies because they have sinned against you, and if they turn to you and call themselves your people, and pray to you here in this Temple. 25. then listen to them from heaven and forgive their sins and give them back this land you gave to their fathers.

26. “When the skies are shut and there is no rain because of our sins, and then we pray toward this Temple and claim you as

our God and turn from our sins because you have punished us, 27. then listen from heaven and forgive the sins of your people, and teach them what is right; and send rain upon this land which you have given to your people as their own property.

28. "If there is a famine in the land, or plagues, or crop disease, or attacks of locusts or caterpillars, or if your people's enemies are in the land besieging our cities—whatever the trouble is—29. listen to every individual's prayer concerning his private sorrow, as well as all the public prayers. 30. Hear from heaven where you live, and forgive, and give each one whatever he deserves, for you know the hearts of all mankind. 31. Then they will reverence you forever, and will continually walk where you tell them to go.

32. "And when foreigners hear of your power, and come from distant lands to worship your great name, and to pray toward this Temple, 33. hear them from heaven where you live, and do what they request of you. Then all the people of the earth will hear of your fame and will reverence you, just as your people Israel do; and they too will know that this Temple I have built is truly yours.

34. "If your people go out at your command to fight their enemies, and they pray toward this city of Jerusalem which you have chosen, and this Temple which I have built for your name, 35. then hear their prayers from heaven and give them success.

36. "If they sin against you (and who has never sinned?) and you become angry with them, and you let their enemies defeat them and take them away as captives to some foreign nation near or far, 37, 38. and if in that land of exile they turn to you again, and face toward this land you gave their fathers, and this city and your Temple I have built, and plead with you with all their hearts to forgive them, 39. then hear from heaven where you live and help them and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

40. "Yes, O my God, be wide awake and attentive to all the prayers made to you in this place. 41. And now, O Lord God, arise and enter this resting place of yours where the Ark of your strength has been placed. Let your priests, O Lord God, be

clothed with salvation, and let your saints rejoice in your kind deeds. 42. O Lord God, do not ignore me—do not turn your face away from me, your anointed one. Oh, remember your love for David and your kindness to him.”

Chapter 7:1. As Solomon finished praying, fire flashed down from heaven and burned up the sacrifices! And the glory of the Lord filled the Temple, so that the priests couldn't enter! 3. All the people had been watching and now they fell flat on the pavement, and worshipped and thanked the Lord. “How good he is!” they exclaimed. “He is always so loving and kind.”

4, 5. Then the king and all the people dedicated the Temple by sacrificing burnt offerings to the Lord. King Solomon's contribution for this purpose was 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. 6. The priests were standing at their posts of duty, and the Levites were playing their thanksgiving song, “His Loving-kindness Is Forever,” using the musical instruments that King David himself had made and had used to praise the Lord. Then, when the priests blew the trumpets, all the people stood again. 7. Solomon consecrated the inner court of the Temple for use that day as a place of sacrifices for the bronze altar to accommodate.

8. For the next seven days, they celebrated the Tabernacle Festival, with large crowds coming in from all over Israel; they arrived from as far away as Hamath at one end of the country to the brook of Egypt at the other. 9. A final religious service was held on the eighth day. 10. Then, on October 7, he sent the people home, joyful and happy because the Lord had been so good to David and Solomon and to his people Israel.

11. So Solomon finished building the Temple as well as his own palace. He completed what he had planned to do. 12. One night the Lord appeared to Solomon and told him, “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this Temple as the place where I want you to sacrifice to me. 13. If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust swarms to eat up all of your crops, or if I send an epidemic among you, 14. then if my people will humble themselves and pray, and search for me, and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear

them from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land. 15. I will listen, wide awake, to every prayer made in this place. 16. For I have chosen this Temple and sanctified it to be my home forever; my eyes and my heart shall always be here. 17. "As for yourself, if you follow me as your father David did, 18. then I will see to it that you and your descendants will always be the kings of Israel;

19. but if you don't follow me, if you refuse the laws I have given you, and worship idols, 20. then I will destroy my people from this land of mine which I have given them, and this Temple shall be destroyed even though I have sanctified it for myself. Instead, I will make it a public horror and disgrace. 21. Instead of its being famous, all who pass by will be incredulous. " 'Why had the Lord done such a terrible thing to this land and to this Temple?' they will ask. 22. "And the answer will be, 'Because his people abandoned the Lord God of their fathers, the God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they worshipped other gods instead. That is why he has done all this to me.' "

COMMENTARY

This was one of those high moments in the history of God's people. Priests, Levites, musicians, singers all joined their voices in the praise of Jehovah. There were twenty-four courses of priests. All of these were represented on this occasion. All of the instrumentalists and the singers along with one hundred and twenty trumpeters shared in this glad service. They praised Jehovah for His goodness and lovingkindness (Psalm 136:1). He had done His religious duty toward Israel. The prospects for His continued blessings were wonderful. In some respects what happened here causes us to think about what was to take place in Jerusalem on another day when the people were all of one mind and the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 2). Jehovah came down to His people when the Temple was finished and He filled the House with His glory. It was a day to be long remembered in Israel's history.

Solomon was equal to the circumstances of this grand

occasion. In chapter 6:1-11 he spoke to the people. He made reference to the "thick darkness" because the cloud filled the Temple. No man could look on the full glory of Jehovah and live. The darkness itself added to the mystery of the one true God. The king knew that no man could build a house which would contain Jehovah, yet he and Israel had built a House for their God. The time had arrived when an official presentation of this Temple to Jehovah should be made. So he blessed Jehovah, "the God of Israel." He reviewed the fact that Jehovah had been content to have the Tabernacle represent His habitation among His people. In the later revelation of His will Jehovah chose David to be king and chose Jerusalem to be the capital city. Solomon reminded the people of David's desire to build the Temple and of Jehovah's restraint in this matter. As David's son, by divine appointment, Solomon had "built the house" and set the ark in its proper place.

Solomon had built a platform and a pulpit near the great altar of brass in the court of the priests. In his address to the people and in his prayer to Jehovah he was fully motivated. "He spread forth his hands" or "kneeled down upon his knees" as the mood dictated. His prayer of dedication is a model prayer. His attitude toward the people, his humility in Jehovah's presence, his seriousness as he considered the implications of these relationships all deserve careful study. Solomon's God was incomparable. He was the covenant God. Jehovah's promise to David (II Samuel 7) was often on Solomon's mind. One of David's line was always to be on the throne of Israel. Jehovah could not be contained in any house. The whole universe is His House. Nevertheless, Solomon and Israel had built a beautiful Temple for their God. In putting Jehovah's name in that place, Solomon considered the total character of God. The Temple would represent to the Hebrews all that Jehovah had ever revealed concerning Himself as far as this could be made known through a building. The Temple would be the only Holy Place in all the world for God's people. Wherever His people might be when they "prayed toward this place," when they considered the power and mercy of their God and called on Him for help,

they could expect Him to hear and answer.

Various circumstances out of which Jehovah's people might need to call upon Him are now previewed. A man might have some goods left with him by a neighbor. When the neighbor returned to claim it, his friend might tell him the goods had been stolen. The neighbor could demand that his friend take an oath in Jehovah's name swearing that he was truthful. Solomon's prayer was that the wicked would be condemned and the righteous justified. If Israel should sin and for this reason suffer at the hands of enemies, Solomon prayed that Jehovah would intervene if the Israelites in question would repent. There would be times when Jehovah might send drought and famine because of sin. Solomon's prayer was that if there was recognition of sin, genuine sorrow for sin, and "prayer toward the House," Jehovah would hear and forgive. He realized that Jehovah could send pestilence, blasting, mildew, locusts, many kinds of plagues. Solomon never asked Jehovah to cease being God. He only asked that in keeping with His mercy He would answer genuine repentance. One of the most remarkable aspects of Solomon's prayer has to do with the foreigners (verse 32). Solomon previewed the times when proselytes would join themselves to the Hebrew people. If the foreigner would be willing to come on Jehovah's terms, Solomon asks that Jehovah will receive him. This is the basic principle that provided the Apostle Paul his defense for his ministry. When Israel would go to war in Jehovah's name or when any Hebrew might be taken captive by an enemy because he had sinned, "if he prays toward this House," Solomon plead for God's help. So Solomon committed his trust and the confidence of his people to Jehovah, their God. The Temple, the ark, the king, the priests, the people all waited in Jehovah's presence.

Jehovah was ready with the answer to Solomon's prayer. While the king was praying, the sacrifices were burning on the altar. With regard to "fire coming down from heaven," we are reminded of the miraculous fire descending on the altar in the Tabernacle when the services were inaugurated (Leviticus

9:24).¹ We are also reminded of Jehovah's answer to Elijah's prayer on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18:38).² The glory (or brightness) of Jehovah filled the Temple to such an extent that the priests had to withdraw. The priests stood in awe of the whole experience much as Israel had done at Mount Sinai. It was a day of worship never to be forgotten by those who saw Jehovah's glory. What could the people say in such circumstances? "Jehovah is good; for His lovingkindness endureth forever."

The dedication of the Temple coincided with the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. Under ordinary conditions more offerings were presented at this time than at any other time during the year. Since this was such a special occasion, all of the facilities for worship were taxed to the limit. Offerings of dedication included twenty two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep. The sacrificing and feasting continued throughout the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles. Since all of the offerings could not be accommodated at the altar of burnt offering, a special dispensation permitted "the hallowing of the middle of the court" so that many offerings could be made at one time. The priest directed the worship. Some worked with the animal sacrifices, while others directed the music and singing. There had never been a day like this in Jerusalem. The total time involved in the celebration covered fourteen days. Seven days had been required for "the dedication of the altar" and seven days for the Feast of Tabernacles. The great assembly of Israelites had come to Jerusalem from the length and breadth of the land. Hammath was on the Orontes River about two hundred and fifty miles north of Jerusalem. The brook of Egypt flowed into the Mediterranean Sea about forty miles south of Gaza. On the day following the two weeks of celebration there was one final holy convocation from which the people were sent on their way rejoicing. The Temple was finished when it became a house of sacrifice. Solomon was able to do every good thing he desired for the Temple and for the kingdom.

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 83

²Schaff, Philip, *Lange's Commentary*, Chronicles, p. 178

The account of Jehovah's appearing to Solomon by night (verse 12) reminds us of His appearance to Solomon at Gibeon when the young king made his choice of wisdom. We are not told how long after the dedication of the Temple this appearance took place. Jehovah plainly declared that He was pleased with the Temple. The Temple was not a monument or a memorial. It was "a house of sacrifice" where Jehovah's people could give vital expression to their living faith in God. In direct answer to Solomon's prayer, Jehovah recognized that His people might sin and thus He would be forced to judge them by famine, locusts, or pestilence. Jehovah's character remained constant. Sin must be judged. However, He would temper judgment with mercy provided His people would confess their sin, repent, and commit themselves to do His will. The Temple was a house of prayer. The eyes of Jehovah would ever be upon the Temple and upon those who would "seek Jehovah's face" through worship at the Temple and the daily practice of the revealed religion. Jehovah renewed His promise to Solomon. If Solomon would be like David and if he obeyed Jehovah, his kingdom would be established and through him Jehovah would begin to keep His promise to David. However, if Solomon should forget God and turn to idols, both king and people would be "plucked up by the roots" (completely destroyed). Solomon was advised by direct revelation that the presence of the Temple in Jerusalem did not guarantee the safety of king and people. The Temple could be described as a "high house," but if Israel sinned, Jehovah would destroy Temple, city, king, and people. Instead of being a messenger of Jehovah to the nations, Israel would then become a by-word or a song of derision. The alternatives were laid very plainly before the king. If he should turn away from Jehovah, he had no excuse.

5. BUILDING, LABORERS AND SHIPS (8:1-18)

TEXT

Chapter 8:1. And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the house of Jehovah, and his

own house, 2. that the cities which Hiram had given to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there.

3. And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it. 4. And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store cities, which he built in Hamath. 5. Also he built Beth-horon the upper, and Beth-horon the nether, fortified cities, with walls, gates, and bars; 6. and Baalath, and all the store cities that Solomon had, and all the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build for his pleasure in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

7. As for all the people that were left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, that were not of Israel; 8. of their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, of them did Solomon raise a levy of bond-servants unto this day. 9. But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work; but they were men of war, and chief of his captains, and rulers of his chariots and of his horsemen. 10. And these were the chief officers of king Solomon, even two hundred and fifty, that bare rule over the people.

11. And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her; for he said, "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of Jehovah hath come."

12. Then Solomon offered burnt-offerings unto Jehovah on the altar of Jehovah, which he had built before the porch, 13. even as the duty of every day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the set feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.

14. And he appointed, according to the ordinance of David his father, the courses of the priest to their service, and the

Levites to their offices, to praise, and to minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required; the doorkeepers also by their courses at every gate: for so had David the man of God commanded. 15. And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures.

16. Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of Jehovah, and until it was finished. So the house of Jehovah was completed.

17. Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Eloth, on the seashore in the land of Edom. 18. And Hiram sent him by the hands of his servants ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they came with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and fetched from thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought them to king Solomon.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 8:1. It was now twenty years since Solomon had become king, and the great building projects of the Lord's Temple and his royal palace were completed. 2. He now turned his energies to rebuilding the cities which King Hiram of Tyre had given to him, and he relocated some of the people of Israel into them.

3. It was at this time, too, that Solomon fought against the city of Hamath-zobah and conquered it. 4. He built Tadmor in the desert, and built cities in Hamath as supply centers. 5. He fortified the cities of upper Beth-horon and lower Beth-horon, both being supply centers, building their walls and installing barred gates. 6. He also built Baalath and other supply centers at this time, and constructed cities where his chariots and horses were kept. He built to his heart's desire in Jerusalem and Lebanon and throughout the entire realm.

7, 8. He began the practice that still continues of conscripting as slave laborers the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites—the descendants of those nations which the Israelis had not completely wiped out. 9. However, he didn't make slaves of any of the Israeli citizens, but used them

as soldiers, officers, charioteers, and cavalry-men; 10. also, two hundred fifty of them were government officials who administered all public affairs.

11. Solomon now moved his wife (she was Pharaoh's daughter) from the City of David sector of Jerusalem to the new palace he had built for her. For he said, "She must not live in King David's palace, for the Ark of the Lord was there and it is holy ground."

12. Then Solomon sacrificed burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar he had built in front of the porch of the Temple. 13. The number of sacrifices differed from day to day in accordance with the instructions Moses had given; there were extra sacrifices on the Sabbaths, on new moon festivals and at the three annual festivals—the Passover celebration, the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Tabernacles.

14. In assigning the priests to their posts of duty he followed the organizational chart prepared by his father David; he also assigned the Levites to their work of praise and of helping the priests in each day's duties; and he assigned the gatekeepers to their gates. 15. Solomon did not deviate in any way from David's instructions concerning these matters and concerning the treasury personnel.

16. Thus Solomon successfully completed the construction of the Temple.

17, 18. Then he went to the seaport towns of Ezion-geber and Eloth, in Edom, to launch a fleet presented to him by King Hiram. These ships, with King Hiram's experienced crews working alongside Solomon's men, went to Ophir and brought back \$13,000,000 worth of gold to him!

COMMENTARY

Solomon had spent seven years building the Temple and thirteen years building his own palaces. These palaces included the House of the Forest of Lebanon, a Porch of Pillars, his personal quarters, a Judgment Hall, a House for Pharaoh's Daughter (I Kings 7:1-8). All of these buildings were wonderfully constructed, ornately furnished, and they were situated in

proper relationship to the Temple.¹ According to I Kings 9:11-13, Solomon had given Hiram (Hiram), king of Tyre, twenty cities in Galilee. These villages bordered the Phoenician country and were given to the Phoenicians as partial payment for their help in providing supplies for Solomon's building program. Hiram was not at all pleased with the transaction and showed his displeasure by calling these villages "Cabul," which means "good for nothing." Since the Phoenicians evidently did nothing with the villages, Solomon made some improvements which made the villages attractive to certain Israelites for settlement.

Hamath-zobah is the same city mentioned in 7:8. There may have been some uprising in this vicinity which Solomon was able to put down. He most likely established garrisons of soldiers in that district. Tadmor was west of Damascus about one hundred and forty miles about equi-distant from the Orontes and Euphrates rivers. The garrisons at Tadmor helped secure the northern borders of the kingdom. The villages of Beth-horon were in the territory of Ephraim, not far from Jerusalem in a north-westerly direction. Baalath was a village in the tribe of Dan. Solomon built whatever he pleased in any of these places either by way of military fortification or for his own personal satisfaction.

There were in Solomon's kingdom remnants of the native inhabitants of Palestine. Five of the seven native nations are named in verse 7. Girgashites and Canaanites are the others who are not named. All of these people were supposed to be utterly dispossessed in Joshua's day and the period of conflict that followed. The Hebrews failed in this matter. Instead of annihilating these people, they subjected them to taskwork. The free-born children of Israel were the chief military leaders. From among these Solomon selected two hundred and fifty men who were to have very responsible military positions.

In his complex of costly palaces Solomon built a house especially for the daughter of Pharaoh. Before his palaces were completed he had occupied the quarters of his father, David. At

¹Schultz, Samuel, J., *The Old Testament Speaks*, pp. 148, 149

this time he was able to move his queen into a palace more worthy of her dignity. In those months that followed the completion of the Temple Solomon was faithful in his service to Jehovah. He was careful to attend to the burnt offerings. By these he vowed his complete commitment to Jehovah. It is possible that he attended both morning and evening sacrifices at the altar. Special offerings were made on the sabbath day, to usher in a new month, and for the three great annual festivals. As long as the king was careful about these matters, he remained faithful to Jehovah. Solomon sought out carefully the appointments and schedule of service for the priests and Levites as these had been determined by David. He was faithful in administering this program. Once more, the chronicler emphasizes the fact that "the house of Jehovah was completed" when it functioned as a place of worship.

In Solomon's day Israel's wealth was greatly increased through the operation of two navies.¹ One of these, the Tarshish navy, was based at Tyre in Phoenicia. It was manned by Phoenician seamen and touched all of the main coastal cities on the whole perimeter of the Mediterranean as it went as far west as Spain (I Kings 10:22). The Ophir navy, also manned by Phoenicians, used Ezion-geber and Eloth at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba as home ports (I Kings 9:26-28). This navy moved through the entire length of the Red Sea touching the west coast of Arabia and the east coast of Africa. This navy visited ports in India and probably went as far east as China. Immense wealth was brought into Israel from these distant places. These navies also exported much merchandise from Israel. The four hundred and fifty talents of gold probably represents one deposit made upon the return of this Ophir navy. If the gold talent was worth thirty thousand dollars, this would amount to thirteen million five hundred thousand dollars.

¹Grosvenor, Melville, B., *Everyday Life in Bible Times*, pp. 246-248
Clarke, Adam, *A Commentary and Critical Notes*, Vol. II, p. 648

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON FIFTEEN 5-8

512. What were the dedicated things of 5:1?
513. When the Temple was finished what was the next important work to be done?
514. Locate the city of David as this is mentioned in 5:2.
515. When was the great feast held and why would it be appointed for this particular time?
516. Who actually moved the ark?
517. What was the "tent of meeting"?
518. As the ark was being moved, what was Solomon doing?
519. Exactly where was the ark finally placed?
520. What was in the ark at this time? What other materials had been in the ark previously?
521. Why were the priests not keeping their courses just at this time?
522. Identify Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun.
523. Where was the altar (5:12) located?
524. As the service of dedication proceeded why did the priests have to draw back from the Temple?
525. According to Solomon, for what purpose was the Temple built?
526. In Solomon's address to the people what did he say about Jerusalem and about David?
527. How did Solomon regard the ark?
528. How did Jehovah regard David's desire to build the Temple?
529. Describe the scaffold of 6:13.
530. What was Solomon's concept of Jehovah?
531. State the promise which Solomon calls upon Jehovah to fulfill.
532. Did Solomon believe that the Temple was worthy of God? Explain.

533. Explain the phrase, "to pray toward this place".
534. Was "oath taking" contrary to God's will? Explain.
535. What is the "turning again" of 6:24?
536. Why might terrible drought be experienced?
537. List the various problems which Solomon anticipates and indicate his plan for handling them.
538. What does Solomon say about the foreigners? Why is this so remarkable?
539. When Israel has sinned, what is the nature of her hope?
540. Describe the request the king made for the priests and the saints.
541. Who is the "anointed"?
542. By what means did Jehovah show His approval of Solomon's prayer?
543. What does "the glory of Jehovah" mean?
544. Describe Jehovah's lovingkindness.
545. How many oxen and sheep were sacrificed to Jehovah at the time of the dedication of the Temple?
546. How was the middle of the Temple court hallowed?
547. How long did the dedicatory service last?
548. Carefully locate "Hamath" and "the brook of Egypt".
549. In what attitude did the Israelites return to their homes?
550. When Jehovah appeared to Solomon at night summarize His word to Solomon.
551. Describe the wonderful promise in 7:14.
552. On what basis did Jehovah covenant to bless Solomon?
553. Under what circumstance might the Temple become a proverb?
554. How many years passed as Solomon built the Temple and his palaces?
555. Locate Tadmor.
556. Where was Beth-horon located?
557. What would be the kind of building which Solomon did in Lebanon?

558. How did Solomon handle the problems relating to the Amorites and Jebusites?
559. To what offices did Solomon appoint certain Israelites?
560. Identify the person who became Solomon's wife. What did he do for her?
561. Identify the great annual feasts of the Hebrews.
562. What did Solomon do with respect to the priests and Levites?
563. When would it be considered that the Temple was really finished?
564. Locate Ezion-geber.
565. Who manned Solomon's navy?
566. What valuable import did the navy bring back to Israel?