

# CHAPTER 5

The great work which Solomon was raised up to do was the building of the temple; his wealth and wisdom were given him to qualify him for that. In this, especially, he was to be a type of Christ, for “he shall build the temple of the Lord,” ~~<REF>~~ Zechariah 6:12. In this chapter we have an account of the preparations he made for that and his other buildings. Gold and silver his good father had prepared in abundance, but timber and stones he must get ready; and about these we have him treating with Hiram king of Tyre.

- I.** Hiram congratulated him on his accession to the throne (v. 1).
- II.** Solomon signified to him his design to build the temple and desired him to furnish him with workmen (v. 2-6).
- III.** Hiram agreed to do it (v. 7-9).
- IV.** Solomon's work was accordingly well done and Hiram's workmen were well paid (v. 10-18).

## ~~<REF>~~ 1 KINGS 5:1-9

### SOLOMON'S AGREEMENT WITH HIRAM

We have here an account of the amicable correspondence between Solomon and Hiram. Tyre was a famous trading city, that lay close upon the sea, in the border of Israel; its inhabitants (as should seem) were none of the devoted nations, nor ever at enmity with Israel, and therefore David never offered to destroy them, but lived in friendship with them. It is here said of Hiram their king that he was *ever a lover of David*; and we have reason to think he was a worshipper of the true God, and had himself renounced, though he could not reform, the idolatry of his city. David's character will win the affections even of those that are without. Here is,

- I.** Hiram's embassy of compliment to Solomon, v. 1. He sent, as is usual among princes, to condole with him on the death of David, and to renew his alliances with him upon his succession to the government. It is good

keeping up friendship and communion with the families in which religion is uppermost.

**II.** Solomon's embassy of business to Hiram, sent, it is likely, by messengers of his own. In wealth, honour, and power, Hiram was very much inferior to Solomon, yet Solomon had occasion to be beholden to him and begged his favour. Let us never look with disdain on those below us, because we know not how soon we may need them. Solomon, in his letter to Hiram, acquaints him,

**1.** With his design to build a temple to the honour of God. Some think that temples among the heathen took their first rise and copy from the tabernacle which Moses erected in the wilderness, and that there were none before that; however there were many houses built in honour of the false gods before this was built in honour of the God of Israel, so little is external splendour a mark of the true church. Solomon tells Hiram, who was himself no stranger to the affair,

**(1.)** That David's wars were an obstruction to him, that he could not build this temple, though he designed it, v. 3. They took up much of his time, and thoughts, and cares, were a constant expense to him and a constant employment of his subjects; so that he could not do it so well as it must be done, and therefore, it not being essential to religion, he must leave it to be done by his successor. See what need we have to pray that God will *give peace in our time*, because, in time or war, the building of the gospel temple commonly goes on slowly.

**(2.)** That peace gave him an opportunity to build it, and therefore he resolved to set about it immediately: *God has given me rest* both at home and abroad, and there is no adversary (v. 4), no *Satan* (so the word is), no instrument of Satan to oppose it, or to divert us from it. Satan does all he can to hinder temple work (~~1~~ 1 Thessalonians 2:18; ~~3~~ Zechariah 3:1), but when he is bound (~~2~~ Revelation 20:2) we should be busy. When there is *no evil occurrent*, then let us be vigorous and zealous in that which is good and get it forward. When the churches have rest let them be edified, ~~9~~ Acts 9:31. Days of peace and prosperity present us with a fair gale, which we must account for if we improve not. As God's providence excited Solomon to think of building the temple, by giving him wealth and leisure, so his promise encouraged him. God had told David that his *son should build him a house*, v. 5. He will take it as a pleasure to be thus employed,

and will not lose the honour designed him by that promise. It may stir us up much to good undertakings to be assured of good success in them. Let God's promise quicken our endeavours.

**2.** With his desire that Hiram would assist him herein. Lebanon was the place whence timber must be had, a noble forest in the north of Canaan, particularly expressed in the grant of that land to Israel — *all Lebanon*, <sup><6315></sup>Joshua 13:5. So that Solomon was proprietor of all its productions. The *cedars of Lebanon* are spoken of as, in a special manner, the *planting of the Lord* (<sup><6406></sup>Psalm 109:16), being designed for Israel's use and particularly for temple service. But Solomon owned that though the trees were his the Israelites had not *skill to hew timber* like the Sidonians, who were Hiram's subjects. Canaan was *a land of wheat and barley* (<sup><6388></sup>Deuteronomy 8:8), which employed Israel in the affairs of husbandry, so that they were not at all versed in manufactures: in them the Sidonians excelled. Israel, in the things of God, are a *wise and understanding people*; and yet, in curious arts, inferior to their neighbours. True piety is a much more valuable gift of heaven than the highest degree of ingenuity. Better be an Israelite skilful in the law than a Sidonian skilful to hew timber. But, the case being thus, Solomon courts Hiram to send him workmen, and promises (v. 6) both to *assist* them (*my servants shall be with thy servants*, to work under them), and to *pay* them (*unto thee will I give hire for thy servants*); for the labourer, even in church-work, though it be indeed its own wages, *is worthy of his hire*. The evangelical prophet, foretelling the glory of the church in the days of the Messiah, seems to allude to this story, Isaiah 60, where he prophesies,

**(1.)** That the *sons of strangers* (such were the Tyrians and Sidonians) shall *build up the wall* of the gospel temple, v. 10. Ministers were raised up among the Gentiles for the edifying of the body of Christ.

**(2.)** That *the glory of Lebanon* shall be brought to it to *beautify it*, v. 13. All external endowments and advantages shall be made serviceable to the interests of Christ's kingdom.

**3.** Hiram's reception of, and return to, this message.

**(1.)** He received it with great satisfaction to himself: He *rejoiced greatly* (v. 7) that Solomon trod in his father's steps, and carried on his designs, and was likely to be so great a blessing to his kingdom. In this Hiram's generous spirit rejoiced, and not merely in the prospect he had of making

an advantage to himself by Solomon's employing him. What he had the pleasure of he gave God the praise of: *Blessed be the Lord, who has given to David (who was himself a wise man) a wise son to rule over this great people.* See here,

[1.] With what pleasure Hiram speaks of Solomon's wisdom and the extent of his dominion. Let us learn not to envy others either those secular advantages or those endowments of the mind wherein they excel us. What a great comfort it is to those that wish well to the Israel of God to see religion and wisdom kept up in families from one generation to another, especially in great families and those that have great influence on others! where it is so, God must have the glory of it. If to godly parents be given a godly seed (<sup><3125></sup>Malachi 2:15), it is a token for good, and a happy indication that the entail of the blessing shall not be cut off.

(2.) He answered it with great satisfaction to Solomon, granting him what he desired, and showing himself very forward to assist him in this great and good work to which he was laying his hand. We have here his articles of agreement with Solomon concerning this affair, in which we may observe Hiram's prudence.

[1.] He deliberated upon the proposal, before he returned an answer (v. 8): *I have considered the things.* It is common for those that make bargains rashly afterwards to wish them unmade again. The virtuous woman *considers a field* and then *buys it*, <sup><3116></sup>Proverbs 31:16. Those do not lose time who take time to consider.

[2.] He descended to particulars in the articles, that there might be no misunderstanding afterwards, to occasion a quarrel. Solomon had spoken of hewing the trees (v. 6), and Hiram agrees to what he desired concerning that (v. 8); but nothing had been said concerning carriage, and this matter therefore must be settled. Land-carriage would be very troublesome and chargeable; he therefore undertakes to bring all the timber down from Lebanon by sea, a coasting voyage. Conveyance by water is a great convenience to trade, for which God is to have praise, who taught man that discretion. Observe what a definite bargain Hiram made. Solomon must appoint the place where the timber shall be delivered, and thither Hiram will undertake to bring it and be responsible for its safety. As the Sidonians excelled the Israelites in timber-work, so they did in sailing; for Tyre and Sidon were *situate at the entry of the sea* (<sup><3273></sup>Ezekiel 27:3): they therefore

were fittest to take care of the water-carriage. *Tractant fabrilia fabri* — *Every artist has his trade assigned.* And,

[3.] If Hiram undertake for the work, and *do all Solomon's desire concerning the timber* (v. 8), he justly expects that Solomon shall undertake for the wages: “*Thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household* (v. 9), not only for the workmen, but for my own family.” If Tyre supply Israel with craftsmen, Israel will supply Tyre with corn, <sup><2717></sup>Ezekiel 27:17. Thus, by the wise disposal of Providence, one country has need of another and is benefited by another, that there may be mutual correspondence and dependence, to the glory of God our common parent.

## <1650> 1 KINGS 5:10-18

### SOLOMON'S AGREEMENT WITH HIRAM

Here is,

**I.** The performance of the agreement between Solomon and Hiram. Each of the parties made good his engagement.

**1.** Hiram delivered Solomon the timber, according to his bargain, v. 10. The trees were Solomon's, but perhaps — *Materiam superabat opus* — *The workmanship was of more value than the article.* Hiram is therefore said to deliver the trees.

**2.** Solomon conveyed to Hiram the corn which he had promised him, v. 11. Thus let justice be followed (as the expression is, <sup><16131></sup>Deuteronomy 16:20), justice on both sides, in every bargain.

**II.** The confirmation of the friendship that was between them hereby. *God gave Solomon wisdom* (v. 12), which was more and better than any thing Hiram did or could give him; but this made Hiram love him, and enabled Solomon to improve his kindness, so that they were both willing to ripen their mutual love into a mutual league, that it might be lasting. It is wisdom to strengthen our friendship with those whom we find to be honest and fair, lest new friends prove not so firm and so kind as old ones.

**III.** The labourers whom Solomon employed in preparing materials for the temple.

**1.** Some were Israelites, who were employed in the more easy and honourable part of the work, felling trees and helping to square them, in conjunction with Hiram's servants; for this he appointed 30,000, but employed only 10,000 at a time, so that for one month's work they had two months' vacation, both for rest and for the despatch of their own affairs at home, v. 13, 14. It was temple service, yet Solomon takes care that they shall not be over-worked. Great men ought to consider that their servants must rest as well as they.

**2.** Others were captives of other nations, who were to bear burdens and to hew stone (v. 15), and we read not that these had their resting times as the other had, for they were doomed to servitude.

**3.** There were some employed as directors and overseers (v. 16), 3300 that ruled over the people, and they were as necessary and useful in their place as the labourers in theirs; here were many hands and many eyes employed, for preparation was now to be made, not only for the temple, but for all the rest of Solomon's buildings, at Jerusalem, and here in the forest of Lebanon, and in other places of his dominion, of which see <sup><1007></sup>1 Kings 9:17-19. He speaks of the vastness of his undertakings (<sup><2004></sup>Ecclesiastes 2:4, *I made me great works*), which required this vast number of workmen.

**IV.** The laying of the foundation of the temple; for that is the building his heart is chiefly upon, and therefore he begins with that, v. 17, 18. It should seem, Solomon was himself present, and president, at the founding of the temple, and that the first stone (as has been usual in famous buildings) was laid with some solemnity. *Solomon commanded and they brought costly stones* for the foundation; he would do every thing like himself, generously, and therefore would have some of the costliest stones laid, or buried rather, in the foundation, though, being out of sight, worse might have served. Christ, who is laid for a foundation, is an elect and precious stone (<sup><2386></sup>Isaiah 28:16), and the foundations of the church are said to be *laid with sapphires*, <sup><2541></sup>Isaiah 54:11, compare <sup><4019></sup>Revelation 21:19. That sincerity which is our gospel perfection obliges us to lay our foundation firm and to bestow most pains on that part of our religion which lies out of the sight of men.