

CHAPTER 2

Solomon's trading, which we read of in the close of the foregoing chapter, and the encouragement he gave both to merchandise and manufacturers, were very commendable. But building was the work he was designed for, and to that business he is here applying himself. Here is,

- I.** Solomon's determination to build the temple and a royal palace, and his appointing labourers to be employed herein (v. 1, 2, 17, 18).
- II.** His request to Hiram king of Tyre to furnish him both with artists and materials (v. 3-10).
- III.** Hiram's obliging answer to, and compliance with, his request (v. 11-16).

2 CHRONICLES 2:1-10

PREPARATIONS TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

Solomon's wisdom was given him, not merely for speculation, to entertain himself (though it is indeed a princely entertainment), nor merely for conversation, to entertain his friends, but for action; and therefore to action he immediately applies himself. Observe,

- I.** His resolution within himself concerning his business (v. 1): *He determined to build*, in the first place, a *house for the name of the Lord*. It is fit that he who is the first should be served — first a temple and then a palace, a house not so much for himself, or his own convenience and magnitude, as for the kingdom, for the honour of it among its neighbours and for the decent reception of the people whenever they had occasion to apply to their prince; so that in both he aimed at the public good. Those are the wisest men that lay out themselves most for the honour of the name of the Lord and the welfare of communities. We are not born for ourselves, but for God and our country.

II. His embassy to Hiram, king of Tyre, to engage his assistance in the prosecution of his designs. The purport of his errand to him is much the same here as we had it ^{<4167>}1 Kings 5:2, etc., only here it is more largely set forth.

1. The reasons why he makes this application to Hiram are here more fully represented, for information to Hiram as well as for inducement.

(1.) He pleads his father's interest in Hiram, and the kindness he had received from him (v. 3): *As thou didst deal with David, so deal with me.* As we must show kindness to, so we may expect kindness from, our fathers' friends, and with them should cultivate a correspondence.

(2.) He represents his design in building the temple: he intended it for a place of religious worship (v. 4), that all the offerings which God had appointed for the honour of his name might be offered up there. The house was built that it might be dedicated to God and used in his service. This we should aim at in all our business, that our havings and doings may be all to the glory of God. He mentions various particular services that were there to be performed, for the instruction of Hiram. The mysteries of the true religion, unlike those of the Gentile superstition, coveted not concealment.

(3.) He endeavors to inspire Hiram with very great and high thoughts of the God of Israel, by expressing the mighty veneration he had for his holy name: *Great is our God above all gods*, above all idols, above all princes. Idols are nothing, princes are little, and both under the control of the God of Israel; and therefore,

[1.] “The house must be great; not in proportion to the greatness of that God to whom it is to be dedicated (for between finite and infinite there can be no proportion), but in some proportion to the great value and esteem we have for this God.”

[2.] “Yet, be it ever so great, it cannot be a habitation for the great God. Let not Hiram think that the God of Israel, like the gods of the nations, *dwells in temples made with hands*, ^{<4172>}Acts 17:24. No, the *heaven of heavens cannot contain him*. It is intended only for the convenience of his priests and worshippers, that they may have a fit place wherein to burn sacrifice before him.”

[3.] He looked upon himself, though a mighty prince, as unworthy the honour of being employed in this great work: *Who am I that I should build*

him a house? It becomes us to go about every work for God with a due sense of our utter insufficiency for it and our incapacity to do any thing adequate to the divine perfections. It is part of the wisdom wherein we ought to walk towards those that are without carefully to guard against all misapprehension which any thing we say or do may occasion concerning God; so Solomon does here in his treaty with Hiram.

2. The requests he makes to him are more particularly set down here.

(1.) He desired Hiram would furnish him with a good hand to work (v. 7): *Send me a man.* He had *cunning men* with him in Jerusalem and Judah, whom David provided, ^{<13215>}1 Chronicles 22:15. Let them not think but that Jews had some among them that were artists. But “*send me a man* to direct them. There are ingenious men in Jerusalem, but not such engravers as are in Tyre; and therefore, since temple-work must be the best in its kind, let me have the best workmen that can be got.”

(2.) With good materials to work on (v. 8), cedar and other timber in abundance (v. 8, 9); for the house must be *wonderfully great*, that is, very stately and magnificent, no cost must be spared, nor any contrivance wanting in it.

3. Here is Solomon's engagement to maintain the workmen (v. 10), to give them so much wheat and barley, so much wine and oil. He did not feed his workmen with bread and water, but with plenty, and every thing of the best. Those that employ labourers ought to take care they be not only well paid, but well provided for with sufficient of that which is wholesome and fit for them. Let the rich masters do for their poor workmen as they would be done by if the tables were turned.

<4121> 2 CHRONICLES 2:11-18

SOLOMON'S TREATY WITH HIRAM

Here we have,

I. The return which Hiram made to Solomon's embassy, in which he shows a great respect for Solomon and a readiness to serve him. Meaner people may learn of these great ones to be neighbourly and complaisant.

- 1.** He congratulates Israel on having such a king as Solomon was (v. 11): *Because the Lord loved his people, he has made thee king.* Note, A wise and good government is a great blessing to a people, and may well be accounted a singular token of God's favour. He does not say, *Because he loved thee* (though that was true, ^{<1024>}2 Samuel 12:24) *he made thee king*, but because he *loved his people*. Princes must look upon themselves as preferred for the public good, not for their own personal satisfaction, and should rule so as to prove that they were given in love and not in anger.
- 2.** He blesses God for raising up such a successor to David, v. 12. It should seem that Hiram was not only very well affected to the Jewish nation, and well pleased with their prosperity, but that he was proselyted to the Jewish religion, and worshipped Jehovah, *the God of Israel* (who was now known by that name to the neighbouring nations), as *the God that made heaven and earth*, and as the fountain of power as well as being; for he sets up kings. Now that the people of Israel kept close to the law and worship of God, and so preserved their honour, the neighbouring nations were as willing to be instructed by them in the true religion as Israel had been, in the days of their apostasy, to be infected with the idolatries and superstitions of their neighbours. This made them high, that they lent to many nations and did not borrow, lent truth to them, and did not borrow error from them; as when they did the contrary it was their shame.
- 3.** He sent him a very ingenious curious workman, that would not fail to answer his expectations in every thing, one that had both Jewish and Gentile blood meeting in him; for his mother was an Israelite (Hiram though she was of the tribe of Dan, and therefore says so here, v. 14, but it seems she was of the tribe of Naphtali, ^{<1074>}1 Kings 7:14), but his father was a Tyrian — a good omen of uniting Jew and Gentile in the gospel temple, as it was afterwards when the building of the second temple was greatly furthered by Darius (Ezra 6), who is supposed to have been the son of Esther — an Israelite by the mother's side.
- 4.** He engaged for the timber, as much as he would have occasion for, and undertook to deliver it at Joppa, and withal signified his dependence upon Solomon for the maintenance of the workmen as he had promised, v. 15, 16. This agreement we had, ^{<1078>}1 Kings 5:8, 9.

II. The orders which Solomon gave about the workmen. He would not employ the free-born Israelites in the drudgery work of the temple itself,

not so much as to be overseers of it. In this he employed the strangers who were proselyted to the Jewish religion, who had not lands of inheritance in Canaan as the Israelites had, and therefore applied to trades, and got their living by their ingenuity and industry. There were, at this time, vast numbers of them in the land (v. 17), who, if they were of any of the devoted nations, perhaps fell within the case, and therefore fell under the law, of the Gibeonites, to be hewers of wood for the congregation: if not, yet being in many respects well provided for by the law of Moses, and put upon an equal footing with the native Israelites, they were bound in gratitude to do what they could for the service of the temple. Yet, no doubt, they were well paid in money or money's worth: the law was, *Thou shalt not oppress a stranger*. The distribution of them we have here (v. 2, and again v. 18), in all 150,000. Canaan was a fruitful land, that found meat for so many mouths more than the numerous natives; and the temple was a vast building, that found work for so many bands. Mr. Fuller suggests that the expedient peculiar to this structure, of framing all beforehand, must needs increase the work. I think it rather left so much the more room for this vast multitude of hands to be employed in it; for in the forest of Lebanon they might all be at work together, without crowding one another, which they could not have been upon Mount Sion. And, if there had not been such vast numbers employed, so large and curious a fabric, which was begun and ended in seven years, might, for aught I know, have been as long in building as St. Paul's.