

CHAPTER 6

Great and long preparation had been making for the building of the temple, and here, at length, comes an account of the building of it; a noble piece of work it was, one of the wonders of the world, and taking in its spiritual significancy, one of the glories of the church. Here is,

I. The time when it was built (v. 1), and how long it was in the building (v. 37, 38).

II. The silence with which it was build (v. 7).

III. The dimensions of it (v. 2, 3).

IV. The message God sent to Solomon, when it was in the building (v. 11-13).

V. The particulars: windows (v. 4), chambers (v. 5, 6, 8-10), the walls and flooring (v. 15-18), the oracle (v. 19-22), the cherubim (v. 23-30), the doors (v. 31-35), and the inner court (v. 36). Many learned men have well bestowed their pains in expounding the description here given of the temple according to the rules of architecture, and solving the difficulties which, upon search, they find in it; but in that matter, having nothing new to offer, we will not be particular or curious; it was then well understood, and every man's eyes that saw this glorious structure furnished him with the best critical exposition of this chapter.

<100>1 KINGS 6:1-10

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Here,

I. The temple is called *the house of the Lord* (v. 1), because it was,

1. Directed and modelled by him. Infinite Wisdom was the architect, and gave David the plan or pattern by the Spirit, not by word of mouth only, but, for the greater certainty and exactness, in writing (<1381>1 Chronicles

28:11, 12), as he had given to Moses in the mouth a draught of the tabernacle.

2. Dedicated and devoted to him and to his honour, to be employed in his service, so his as never any other house was, for he manifested his glory in it (so as never in any other) in a way agreeable to that dispensation; for, when there were carnal ordinances, there was a *worldly sanctuary*, ^{<300>}Hebrews 9:1, 10. This gave it its *beauty of holiness*, that it was *the house of the Lord*, which far transcended all its other beauties.

II. The time when it began to be built is exactly set down.

1. It was just 480 years after the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt. Allowing forty years to Moses, seventeen to Joshua, 299 to the Judges, forty to Eli, forty to Samuel and Saul, forty to David, and four to Solomon before he began the work, we have just the sum of 480. So long it was after that holy state was founded before that holy house was built, which, in less than 430 years, was burnt by Nebuchadnezzar. It was thus deferred because Israel had, by their sins, rendered themselves unworthy of this honour, and because God would show how little he values external pomp and splendour in his service: he was in no haste for a temple. David's tent, which was clean and convenient, though it was neither stately nor rich, nor, for aught that appears, ever consecrated, is called the *house of the Lord* (^{<1020>}2 Samuel 12:20), and served as well as Solomon's temple; yet, when God gave Solomon great wealth, he put it into his heart thus to employ it, and graciously accepted him, chiefly because it was to be a shadow of good things to come, ^{<300>}Hebrews 9:9.

2. It was in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, the first three years being taken up in settling the affairs of his kingdom, that he might not find any embarrassment from them in this work. It is not time lost which is spent in composing ourselves for the work of God, and disentangling ourselves from every thing which might distract or divert us. During this time he was adding to the preparations which his father had made (^{<3214>}1 Chronicles 22:14), hewing the stone, squaring the timber, and getting every thing ready, so that he is not to be blamed for slackness in deferring it so long. We are truly serving God when we are preparing for his service and furnishing ourselves for it.

III. The materials are brought in, ready for their place (v. 7), so ready that there was *neither hammer nor ax heard in the house while it was in*

building. In all building Solomon prescribes it as a rule of prudence to *prepare the work in the field, and afterwards build*, ^{<3127>}Proverbs 24:27. But here, it seems, the preparation was more than ordinarily full and exact, to such a degree that, when the several parts came to be put together, there was nothing defective to be added, nothing amiss to be amended. It was to be the temple of God of peace, and therefore no iron tool must be heard in it. Quietness and silence both become and befriend religious exercises: God's work should be done with as much care and as little noise as may be. The temple was thrown down with axes and hammers, and those that threw it down roared *in the midst of the congregation* (^{<3741>}Psalm 74:4, 6); but it was built up in silence. Clamour and violence often hinder the work of God, but never further it.

IV. The dimensions are laid down (v. 2, 3) according to the rules of proportion. Some observe that the length and breadth were just double to that of the tabernacle. Now that Israel had grown more numerous the place of their meeting needed to be enlarged (^{<2501>}Isaiah 54:1, 2), and now that they had grown richer they were the better able to enlarge it. Where God sows plentifully he expects to reap so.

V. An account of the windows (v. 4): They were *broad within, and narrow without*, *Marg.* Such should the eyes of our mind be, reflecting nearer on ourselves than on other people, looking much within, to judge ourselves, but little without, to censure our brethren. The narrowness of the lights intimated the darkness of that dispensation, in comparison with the gospel day.

VI. The chambers are described (v. 5, 6), which served as vestries, in which the utensils of the tabernacle were carefully laid up, and where the priests dressed and undressed themselves and left the clothes in which they ministered: probably in some of these chambers they feasted upon the holy things. Solomon was not so intent upon the magnificence of the house as to neglect the conveniences that were requisite for the offices thereof, that every thing might be done decently and in order. Care was taken that the beams should not be fastened in the walls to weaken them, v. 6. Let not the church's strength be impaired under pretence of adding to its beauty or convenience.

 1 KINGS 6:11-14

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Here is,

I. The word God sent to Solomon, when he was engaged in building the temple. God let him know that he took notice of what he was doing, *the house he was now building*, v. 12. None employ themselves for God without having his eye upon them. “*I know thy works, thy good works.*” He assured him that if he would proceed and persevere in obedience to the divine law, and keep in the way of duty and the true worship of God, the divine loving-kindness should be drawn out both to himself (*I will perform my word with thee*) and to his kingdom: “Israel shall be ever owned as my people; I will *dwell among them, and not forsake them.*” This word God sent him probably by a prophet,

1. That by the promise he might be encouraged and comforted in his work. Perhaps sometimes the great care, expense, and fatigue of it, made him ready to wish he had never begun it; but this would help him through the difficulties of it, that the promised establishment of his family and kingdom would abundantly recompense all his pains. An eye to the promise will carry us cheerfully through our work; and those who wish well to the public will think nothing too much that they can do to secure and perpetuate to it the tokens of God's presence.

2. That, by the condition annexed, he might be awakened to consider that though he built the temple ever so strong the glory of it would soon depart, unless he and his people continued *to walk in God's statutes*. God plainly let him know that all this charge which he and his people were at, in erecting this temple, would neither excuse them from obedience to the law of God nor shelter them from his judgments in case of disobedience. Keeping God's commandments is better, and more pleasing to him, than building churches.

II. The work Solomon did for God: *So he built the house* (v. 14), *so* animated by the message God had sent him, *so* admonished not to expect that God should own his building unless he were obedient to his laws: “Lord, I proceed upon these terms, being firmly resolved to walk in thy statutes.” The strictness of God's government will never drive a good man

from his service, but quicken him in it. Solomon built and finished, he went on with the work, and God went along with him till it was completed. It is spoken both to God's praise and his: he grew not weary of the work, met not with any obstructions (as ^{<1502>}Ezra 4:24), did not out-build his property, nor do it by halves, but, having begun to build, was both able and willing to finish; for he was a wise builder.

~~<1085>~~ 1 KINGS 6:15-38

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Here,

I. We have a particular account of the details of the building.

1. The wainscot of the temple. It was of cedar (v. 15), which was strong and durable, and of a very sweet smell. The wainscot was curiously carved with knops (like eggs or apples) and flowers, no doubt as the fashion then was, v. 18.

2. The gilding. It was not like ours, washed over, but *the whole house*, all the inside of the temple (v. 22), even the floor (v. 30), he *overlaid with gold*, and the most holy place with *pure gold*, v. 21. Solomon would spare no expense necessary to make it every way sumptuous. Gold was under foot there, as it should be in all the living temples: the abundance of it lessened its worth.

3. The oracle, or *speaking-place* (for so the word signifies), *the holy of holies*, so called because thence God spoke to Moses, and perhaps to the high priest, when he consulted with the breast-plate of judgment. In this place *the ark of the covenant was to be set*, v. 19. Solomon made every thing new, and more magnificent than it had been, except the ark, which was still the same that Moses made, with its mercy-seat and cherubim; that was the token of God's presence, which is always the same with his people whether they meet in tent or temple, and changes not with their condition.

4. The cherubim. Besides those at the ends of the mercy-seat, which covered the ark,

(1.) Solomon set up two more, very large ones, images of young men (as some think), with wings made of olive-wood, and all overlaid with gold, v. 23, etc. This most holy place was much larger than that in the tabernacle, and therefore the ark would have seemed lost in it, and the dead wall would have been unsightly, if it had not been thus adorned.

(2.) He carved cherubim upon all the walls of the house, v. 29. The heathen set up images of their gods and worshipped them; but these were designed to represent the servants and attendants of the God of Israel, the holy angels, not to be themselves worshipped (*see thou do it not*), but to show how great he is whom we are to worship.

5. The doors. The folding doors that led into the oracle were but a fifth part of the wall (v. 31), those into the temple were a fourth part (v. 33); but both were beautified with cherubim engraven on them, v. 32, 35.

6. The inner court, in which the brazen altar was at which the priests ministered. This was separated from the court where the people were by a low wall, three rows of hewn stone tipped with a cornice of cedar (v. 36), that over it the people might see what was done and hear what the priests said to them; for, even under that dispensation, they were not kept wholly either in the dark or at a distance.

7. The time spent in this building. It was but seven years and a half from the founding to the finishing of it, v. 38. Considering the vastness and elegance of the building, and the many appurtenances to it which were necessary to fit it for use, it was soon done. Solomon was in earnest in it, had money enough, had nothing to divert him from it, and many hands made quick work. He finished it (as the margin reads it) with all the appurtenances thereof, and with all the ordinances thereof, not only built the place, but set forward the work for which it was built.

II. Let us now see what was typified by this temple.

1. Christ is the true temple; he himself spoke of the temple of his body, ~~<412>~~John 2:21. God himself prepared him his body, ~~<810>~~Hebrews 10:5. *In him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead*, as the *Shechinah* in the temple. In him meet all God's spiritual Israel. Through him we have access with confidence to God. All the angels of God, those blessed cherubim, have a charge to worship him.

2. Every believer is a living temple, in whom the Spirit of God dwells, ^{<416>}1 Corinthians 3:16. Even the body is such by virtue of its union with the soul, ^{<416>}1 Corinthians 6:19. We are not only wonderfully made by the divine providence, but more wonderfully made anew by the divine grace. This living temple is built upon Christ as its foundation and will be perfected in due time.

3. The gospel church is the mystical temple; it grows to a *holy temple in the Lord* (^{<417>}Ephesians 2:21), enriched and beautified with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, as Solomon's temple with gold and precious stones. Only Jews built the tabernacle, but Gentiles joined with them in building the temple. Even strangers and foreigners are built up *a habitation of God*, ^{<419>}Ephesians 2:19, 22. The temple was divided into the holy place and the most holy, the courts of it into the outer and inner; so there are the visible and the invisible church. The door into the temple was wider than that into the oracle. Many enter into profession that come short of salvation. This temple is built firm, upon a rock, not to be taken down as the tabernacle of the Old Testament was. The temple was long in preparing, but was built at last. The top-stone of the gospel church will, at length, be brought forth with shoutings, and it is a pity that there should be the clashing of axes and hammers in the building of it. Angels are ministering spirits, attending the church on all sides and all the members of it.

4. Heaven is the everlasting temple. There the church will be fixed, and no longer movable. The streets of the new Jerusalem, in allusion to the flooring of the temple, are said to be *of pure gold*, ^{<621>}Revelation 21:21. The cherubim there always attend the throne of glory. The temple was uniform, and in heaven there is the perfection of beauty and harmony. In Solomon's temple there was no noise of axes and hammers. Every thing is quiet and serene in heaven; all that shall be stones in that building must in the present state of probation and preparation be fitted and made ready for it, must be hewn and squared by divine grace, and so made meet for a place there.