

Sermon 8: The King Provides for Worship, 1 Kings 7

Proposition: The true king establishes true worship

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- II. Hiram the Craftsman (vv. 13-14)
- III. The Bronze Pillars (vv. 15-22)
- IV. The Sea (vv. 23-26)
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- I. The King's Dwelling (vv. 1-12)
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Intro: Fathers, what will make you a success as fathers? Is success when all your children are married and have good jobs? Is it when they can all recite the Shorter Catechism? Is it when their rooms are always clean and their chores are always done? What is the most important task of a father, or of any leader, in the kingdom of God? Well, this week, in the forest of architectural details, we need to see that the true king establishes true worship. We've heard about Solomon's administrators, about his tax base and his government spending policies. We've seen these aspects of the kingdom of God--the administrative part of the kingdom, if you will-- recognized and praised. But those descriptions were nothing like this. We come now to one of the most important things a true king can do--that is, to establish the worship of God. If you're a father, the same is true of you. Yes, it's important that you put food on the table and make sure your kids pick up their rooms. But far more important is that you provide for and train them to worship God. And ultimately, of course, what I want you to take away this evening is this: Christ establishes the true worship of God. He provides us with everything we need for that worship. Just as Solomon took his role seriously and gave good worship to Israel, so Christ provides for us. He gives a book. He gives preachers. He gives people with musical talent to write hymns and sing them. He gives us time every week, a whole day off, on which we can worship. He provides for our physical needs so that we can worship Him acceptably. So let's look at this chapter and see how the true king establishes true worship.

I. The King's Dwelling (vv. 1-12)

There are two contrasts in these first 12 verses that I want you to pick up on. The first is the contrast the narrative as a whole is making. How much time have we spent on the temple? Well, most of Chapter 5 was about the temple. Chapter 6 was exclusively about the temple. Chapters 7 and 8 are pretty much all about the temple. But here, for twelve little verses, the narrator leaves the temple and tells us about Solomon's palace complex. In other words, relatively speaking, Solomon's house is nowhere near as important to the narrator as the temple is. The emphasis should jump out at you. Solomon's house is cool, but it's not the main theme.

Second, notice the relative time Solomon spends on his own house. Thirteen years, as opposed to the seven the temple took. Now, what are we to make of this? A couple of things are relevant. First, Solomon's house was much larger than the temple. Second, David hadn't been making preparations for decades for Solomon's house. Third, Solomon's house probably was more complicated than the temple. Any of the builders in the room will tell us that a big, open building is the simplest, easiest kind of structure to build. Well, how many rooms did the temple have? One. That's correct. If you said two, you're sort of right--the hanging of the curtain divided it into two rooms. But as far as simply building the thing was concerned, it was one big open room. Fewer corners, fewer angles, fewer cuts, etc. Solomon's palace doubtless had kitchens, reception rooms, bedrooms (lots and lots and lots of bedrooms!), and so on. I told you a few weeks ago that Jerusalem in 966 B.C. was reckoned to have fewer than 18,000 inhabitants. Actually, archaeologists estimate that only 5,000 people lived in Jerusalem at this time. Can you imagine living in a town where 1 out of 5 people was a royal wife? It's a celebrity-spotter's paradise. In any case, Solomon has some excuse for spending longer on his house. However, no matter what considerations you bring forward, the fact is still a bit troubling: he spent nearly twice as long glorifying himself as he did glorifying God? That seems wrong. The narrative doesn't tell us what to think; the Bible is not a moralizing book (though it is of course a moral book). But the way the construction time is presented should raise your eyebrows.

Regardless, notice how beautiful and amazing Solomon's house is. This is not wasteful extravagance. We have no right to say, "Oh, all this nice wood should have been sold, and the money given to the poor." No, that's not the point. The point is that as king of the earthly manifestation of God's own kingdom, Solomon had a responsibility to look good. His house had to be beautiful, because like the temple, it ultimately was saying something about the character of God. God is a God of order, of beauty, of symmetry. Look at verse 5--everything was regular in this place, everything was set up to amazing, from the giant stones--stones the size of UPS trucks--to the huge cedar pillars. This was a reception hall fit for a king; as we said about architecture last week, this place demonstrates the grandeur and glory fitting for God's kingdom.

II. The King's Craftsman (vv. 13-14)

The second thing we see is this half-Israelite, half-Gentile craftsman contributing to the beauty of the house of God. In fact, he seems to have been the chief architect and designer; "he

came to king Solomon and did *all* his work.” What is this, again, but foreigners coming in to worship the true God? Ultimately, the temple is not just for Israel; the temple is for the world. The first temple was built by a Gentile. The second temple actually had a space set aside, the Court of the Gentiles, in which Gentiles could come and worship God. The significance of Hiram is that the blessing of worshipping God is not just for Israel; it is for everyone. See Isaiah 66:18, 20-21. And so, in establishing true worship, the true king is not afraid to call on half-breeds and foreigners. Christianity is not a religion of exclusivity: “I don’t think we can trust him; he’s not like us.” Oh no. We welcome all God-fearing people in this church, whether you’re black, white, yellow, tattooed, whatever. The test of fellowship is not what you look like, not your physical ancestry but your spiritual pedigree. God is bringing Gentiles into His kingdom and making them true worshippers. I trust that he did that with Hiram; I know He’s done it with many of you.

III. The King’s Testimony (vv. 15-22)

Now, the first of Hiram’s works to receive major attention is the narrative is these bronze pillars, Boaz and Jachin. They stood one on either side of the temple door, as you walked in--massive pillars almost six feet thick and 35 feet tall. He gave these pillars names--not names like “Hank” and “Al,” but symbolic names, meaningful names that said something about what this temple was all about.

A. Jachin: “He Establishes”

Now why would Solomon emphasize to his people that God establishes? Well, we should be familiar with this word. Back in chapter 2, it says four times that Solomon’s kingdom was “established.” God established Solomon’s kingdom; you may remember that that was the title of my sermon on that chapter. Well, Solomon was not going to forget that as a true king, he had been established by God. Ultimately, true worship is the true king’s responsibility because Jesus Christ is the true king. He is the one who sets up the ordinances of divine worship. Solomon was referring the credit for the temple to God. “Don’t look at me; I didn’t establish this place. *God establishes! Praise Him!*” Doesn’t this highlight God’s promise? “He said He would establish a kingdom, *and He has!* He said He would establish true worship and fellowship, *and He has!*” Surely that is a source of ultimate joy and trust. And surely we can say that about our church. God has established us, Harvest Church, and let’s not forget it. He promises to continue to establish all those who trust in Him.

B. Boaz: “In Him is Strength”

This pillar highlights the *power* of God. He is strong, He is mighty, He does His will. Where is your trust? In your own artistic skills? In your wealth? In your political savvy and ability to fast-talk people into anything? In your good habits? Solomon goes on the record as saying, “My trust is in the God of Israel. He is strong.”

And these two things must be our affirmations when coming to worship. Do you trust that God has the character to keep His promises, and the power to make them happen? Specifically, you trust that He will answer the prayers we make in worship? That He will bless our Bible

reading to greater fellowship with Himself? That He will make the sacraments effective means of grace? In our worship, we see God establishing His kingdom. Even if it just looks like me or some other preacher up here, droning on about something, the power of God to establish His kingdom is present among us. It's no longer shown by two big pillars; it is proclaimed verbally.

So in establishing true worship, the true king relies on the promise of God and the strength of God to carry out that promise.

IV. The King's Provision for Worship (vv. 23-51)

Finally, as we have seen every week, good theology is highly practical. The true king provides for His people to worship him.

A. A Water Supply (vv. 23-39)

This sea could hold somewhere around 11,500 gallons of water. The ten mobile lavers could each hold about 43 gallons. Now, as you know from home preparation of roast meat, animal sacrifices must have been a pretty bloody business. But God provided water for the work of the priests. The material side of worship was provided by the king's generosity. Further, the outward-facing oxen probably symbolize something about the spreading of worship to the whole earth, while the sea contributes to the imagery of the natural world and also indicates that large bodies of water are no threat to Yahweh. Though the false gods of the ANE fought with chaotic seas and chaos monsters, Yahweh is absolutely secure. He stills the sea; He triumphs over it, and subdues it entirely to His worship.

B. Tools for Sacrifice (v. 45a)

Again, shovels, pans--all the things necessary for the bloody worship, for the fires of the Old Covenant, are here. The true king overlooks nothing. And again, today He has given us everything we need to worship Him. You need a book, and you need to be able to discuss the book and sing the words of the book. Pretty much anyone can do that, to some degree. How generous is our God!

C. Interior Furnishings (vv. 45b-50)

God's fingerprints are all over this house. He delights in detail. If you purchased a brand-new house, you might gush for a while about the beautiful brushed nickel doornobs. Well, obviously the author of Kings was enthralled with the interior of the temple. Do you realize that this may be the most detailed description of an interior, except for possibly the tabernacle, anywhere in the Bible? Surely this author delighted in the details of worship. Do you? Do you love hearing God's word and singing His praise? Do you see us as a church as one of those ten lampstands, the perfect number shining light out into the world?

D. An Endowment (v. 51)

Finally, the last verse highlights again how thoroughly Solomon provided for the worship of God. He even endowed the temple with all kinds of treasure, so that it would always have money to keep itself running when tithes and offerings ran low.

Is worship this kind of priority to you? Do you seek Christ's provision for time to worship Him? Do you get up early to read the Bible and pray before you start your day? Do you

invest time and money in worshipping God adequately? Do you prepare your heart the night before by reading spiritual books and discoursing of the things of God? Above all, are you lifting your heart right now to praise and honor Jesus Christ, the true king who makes the worship of God possible? The text emphasizes that Solomon gets all the credit. Hiram and his laborers may have done the actual work, but it was Solomon's baby, Solomon's project, and no one in Israel could forget that. It's called "Solomon's Temple" for a reason. Now that you are privileged to be part of Christ's temple, do you use that privilege? Do you neglect worship? Oh, "blessed are they that dwell in God's house. They will always be praising Him!" May that be a description of us all, for the rest of our lives. Christ has provided us everything we need for life and godliness--including true worship! Amen.