

# Solomon Builds the Temple

**THEOLOGICAL THEME:** Because of the Holy Spirit's presence, God's people are the temple of God today, the people who bear His name and join His mission.

Burj Khalifa, located in Dubai, is the tallest building in the world. The building's website states: "More than just the world's tallest building, Burj Khalifa is an unprecedented example of international cooperation, symbolic beacon of progress, and an emblem of the new, dynamic and prosperous Middle East. It is also tangible proof of Dubai's growing role in a changing world. In fewer than 30 years, this city has transformed itself from a regional centre to a global one. This success was not based on oil reserves, but on reserves of human talent, ingenuity and initiative. Burj Khalifa embodies that vision."<sup>1</sup>

As you can tell from this summary, the Burj Khalifa is not just a building; it's a message. Its significance extends beyond its towering summit. It is intended to communicate something to the rest of the world.



List some of the great structures and buildings of history. What comes to mind when you think of them?



What do these buildings communicate?

In this session, we will learn about Solomon building a temple for the Lord. We'll see the reasons he wanted to build the temple and how the temple bore God's name, manifested God's presence, and represented God's glory to the world. As Christians, we belong to the church, described by the apostles as "the temple of God." In the Old Testament, the temple referred to a place. In the New Testament, the temple refers to a people. We are being built together as God's residence—a beacon of light and hope to the world.

## Voices from the Church

"The church is the temple of the living God...built on the foundations of the prophets and apostles, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone."<sup>2</sup>

—Michael Bird

## 1. The temple bears God's name (1 Kings 5:1-5).

Names are powerful. Mention Adolf Hitler, Steve Jobs, Justin Bieber, Barack Obama, Tiger Woods, or Warren Buffet and you're likely to start an interesting conversation in the break room of your office. King Solomon knew the power of names too. He knew the esteem and honor that certain names deserve. This was one of the main reasons he wanted to build a house for the Lord.

*<sup>1</sup> Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram always loved David. <sup>2</sup> And Solomon sent word to Hiram, <sup>3</sup> "You know that David my father could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. <sup>4</sup> But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune. <sup>5</sup> And so I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD said to David my father, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.'*

There are two things we should note in Solomon's message to Hiram about why he was building the temple.

### God's Sovereign Work

First, God gave Solomon rest on every side. God did this, not Solomon. God worked and moved to expand the kingdom of Solomon. At this point, unlike in David's time, there was rest and peace all around. God had subdued the enemies of Israel and established them on every side.

The temple was a tangible reminder of what the Lord had done for the nation He loved. He was the One who brought Israel from Egypt. He was the One who gave them His law. He was the One who brought them through the wilderness into a land flowing with milk and honey. He was the sovereign God who saved and established His people. Solomon responded to this sovereign work by erecting a building worthy of the God of heaven.



What ideas and beliefs do you think were communicated to the Israelites when they visited the temple?

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What ideas and beliefs do you think were communicated to people outside Israel when they saw the temple?

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### **God's Gracious Promise**

The second reason we see that Solomon built the temple was because God promised King David that he would (v. 5). God comes through on His promises. Before Solomon was ever born, God declared to David that He would put his son on the throne and establish his kingdom. This promise was now coming to fruition in Solomon's day. The temple was not only evidence of God's work; it was evidence of God's keeping His word. We serve a God who keeps His promises.

All that God intended to show with the temple, He would show even more so with His own Son, who claimed that He was the true temple (John 2:12-25). For this reason, the name of God is no longer localized to a place—it is found in a Person! We go to Jesus and see the work and promises of God on full display.



What purposes of the temple are fulfilled by Jesus?

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## 2. The temple hosts God's presence (1 Kings 8:10-14).

After Solomon completed the temple, he gathered all Israel, along with the priests, Levites, and leaders, to bring the ark of the covenant to the Lord's house (1 Kings 8:1-9). On that day, God displayed His glory among His people. Just imagine standing among the assembly witnessing this spectacular display of God's glory!

*<sup>10</sup> And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, <sup>11</sup> so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.*

*<sup>12</sup> Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. <sup>13</sup> I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever." <sup>14</sup> Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood.*



This event validated many things for Solomon and for Israel. It further confirmed and established Solomon's kingdom and reign, and it showed yet again God's love and commitment to His people, Israel. Normally, God dwelled in thick darkness (v. 12), in a place where no one could see Him. But now, God had come down to be with His people in the place built for His name and presence. God was so near and real that day that even the priests had to stop what they were doing!

On that day, Israel received the blessing of God Himself. This is the greatest blessing that God can give to His people—Himself. In fact, we see all throughout the Bible that God's intention has always been to dwell among His people. We see this theme from the beginning to the end of Scripture.

The great hope of the Christian life is not getting things from God; it is getting God. This is a God who wants to be known and who wants us to sense His presence.



When have you sensed the reality of God's presence? What was it about that time that convinced you it was the Spirit working?

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The New Testament teaches that Jesus is the true temple of God and that as His followers, we also are the temple of God. God dwells in His people through His Holy Spirit. Consider what Peter said about this: "As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:4-5).

According to Peter, we are now priests who offer sacrifices to God. God's people no longer have to stand outside a temple. God now meets with us as we gather in His name. The presence of God is manifested where His people are since the Spirit resides in our hearts.

Unfortunately, many Christians attend worship gatherings every Sunday and fail to encounter the presence and majesty of God through singing, prayer, giving, and listening to the Word of God preached. Our hearts are filled with distractions, other duties to get to, and anxiety about the week ahead. But if what Peter said is true—and it is!—then when we gather with God's people, we are engaging in the most climactic event of our week.



### Voices from Church History

"The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God."<sup>3</sup>

—C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)



Talk honestly about your attitude toward gathering for worship on Sundays. What are some things you can do to prepare for worship to make it more meaningful and edifying?

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### 3. The temple is for God's mission (1 Kings 8:54-61).

<sup>54</sup> Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven. <sup>55</sup> And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying, <sup>56</sup> “Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. <sup>57</sup> The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, <sup>58</sup> that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. <sup>59</sup> Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, <sup>60</sup> that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. <sup>61</sup> Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.”

We don't generally associate the nation of Israel with the term *mission*, especially when it comes to the temple. But a phrase that we tend to gloss over in this passage is perhaps the most important thing Solomon prayed here. He blessed the people and offered a prayer for the nation that “all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God” (v. 60).

This was one reason God chose the nation of Israel. He did not choose them for their own sake. He chose them for the sake of the nations. He is a global God who desires all the nations to be glad in Him (see Ps. 67). They were to be a particular people with a universal purpose—to extend the name and glory of God to the ends of the earth (Ex. 19:5-6).

The temple in Israel represented what God wanted to do in the whole earth. He wanted to spread His name and fame, not only to Israel but among all the nations so that Habakkuk's words might be fulfilled: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).



If we are the temple of God today, then we are to represent God to the world. What should our identity as God's temple communicate to the nations today?

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The urgency to live on mission is even greater for us as Christians. We are now the temple of God on the earth. God indwells us and fills us as His missional people (see Eph. 2:18-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5). God called us and chose us for the purpose of representing Him on the earth and spreading His fame to the nations.

As we think of this great task before us, we must understand that it starts with ordinary Christians having ordinary conversations with ordinary people. It starts with you walking across the street and befriending your neighbor. It starts by giving up time, money, and comfort for the sake of non-Christians. It starts by taking a risk to ask your coworker what she thinks about Christianity. It starts with you choosing each day to live your life on mission and being available for whatever God wants to do through you. It is virtually impossible to talk about following Jesus without also talking about how to help others follow Him. Following Jesus by necessity means helping others follow Him and obey Him.

As Christians, we are a *saved* people. But we are also a *sent* people. We are sent into the world to bear God's name and make Him known to all people. And one day we will gather around the throne of Jesus Christ and sing, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

## 99 Essential Christian Doctrines

### 80. *Temple of the Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit indwells the church, both individually and corporately (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 12:13). As the temple of the Holy Spirit, we live our lives differently than before, bearing the virtuous fruit that comes only by the indwelling work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This indwelling work of the Spirit also equips individual members of the church with gifts for the work of the ministry (1 Cor. 12:11).



What is your greatest fear when it comes to living on mission for the gospel?

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How does God's heart for the world help you overcome these fears?

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## Conclusion

In this session, we essentially learned two great truths: that God wants to dwell among His people and that God wants to make His name known to the nations. As we moved from Solomon's day further into redemptive history, these truths became more and more vivid. God no longer dwells in particular geographical locations (John 4:21-24). He now dwells among those who are in Christ. Not only that, He intends to use His people to spread His name and fame to the nations. We are to make disciples of all the nations with the confidence that our God is always with us (Matt. 28:19-20). This is what we are called to—His name, His presence, and His mission. May we be found faithful!



### Voices from the Church

"The mark of the true church is an expanding witness to the presence of God: first to our families, then to others in the church, then to our neighborhood, then to our city, then the country, and ultimately the whole earth. May God give us grace to go out into the world as his extending temple and spread God's presence by reflecting it until it finally fills the entire earth."<sup>4</sup>

—G. K. Beale

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** The temple was to be a place where the name of God would be upheld and the presence of God would be experienced so that the nations would know that the Lord is God. Jesus spoke of Himself as God's temple, and in His life, death, and resurrection, He upheld God's name, embodied God's presence, and extended God's mission.



# HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

**MISSIONAL APPLICATION:** God calls us to be devoted to Him in obedience so that the original purpose of the temple can be fulfilled—the people of the earth will know our God is King.

1. As the temple of God in Christ, what are some ways our group/church can bear the name of Christ well as we live on mission to share the gospel?

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2. How should recognizing God's presence with us always through His Holy Spirit impact our daily living? How can we help one another grow in this knowledge?

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3. The people of God are the temple of God in Christ, not our church buildings. How should this reorient our hearts regarding our missionary call?

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**Eric Geiger**

Vice President, LifeWay Resources

**Ed Stetzer**

General Editor

**Trevin Wax**

Managing Editor

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Content and Production Editor

**Ken Braddy**

Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

**Michael Kelley**

Director, Groups Ministry

**Send questions/comments to:**

Managing Editor,  
*The Gospel Project: Adult Personal Study Guide*,  
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0102;  
or make comments on the Web at  
[www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com).

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## About the Writers

### Unit 1:

**J. D. Greear** is the lead pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. He's the author of *Gospel*, *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart*, and *Jesus, Continued...: Why the Spirit Inside You Is Better Than Jesus Beside You*. J. D. holds a PhD from Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife, Veronica, have four children.



**Spence Shelton** lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his wife, Courtney, and their four children. Spence and his family were sent by The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham to plant Mercy Church in the fall of 2015. He holds a BSBA from UNC-Chapel Hill and an MDiv from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.



### Unit 2:

**Greg Breazeale** (sessions 7-12) resides with his wife, Heather, and three sons in Austin, Texas, where he is the North Campus pastor at The Austin Stone Community Church. He holds an MDiv from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is currently pursuing a DMin in Expository Preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.



**Keith and Kristyn Getty** (session 13) are writers of modern hymns that teach Christian doctrine sung in globally-accessible melodies. Some of their best known hymns include "In Christ Alone," "Speak, O Lord," and "The Power of the Cross," all three co-written by Keith with Stuart Townend. Their hymns are sung in churches around the world, in fine concert halls of Europe and North America, and on US network and public television and the UK's BBC. Keith and Kristyn live between Northern Ireland and Nashville with their three young daughters.



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