

Solomon: King of Peace (Part 2)

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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The Bible teaches us through prophecies, parables, psalms and stories. Last week we looked at the story of King Solomon and noted how it reflected certain aspects of our dear Savior, Jesus Christ, in five ways: his name, where he reigned, and his title as King; and his remarkable wealth and wisdom. The name "Solomon" comes from the Hebrew *shalom*, meaning that Solomon was "King of Peace." Because his capitol was Jerusalem, meaning "foundation of peace," Solomon was "king of peace" on two levels. He was a monarch, a king. In all of these things he exemplified the Lord Jesus, Who is our peace, our "King Shalom." He rules the vast empire of the universe, and wants to rule in our hearts also if we will grant Him permission. We also looked at Solomon's wealth and wisdom as foreshadowing Jesus, Who is rich in mercy, and wise to save us from this troubled world. Today we're going to look at King Solomon's accomplishments and see what we can learn about Jesus through them.

One of the major projects tackled by Solomon was the construction of the temple, reputed to have been the world's most beautiful building. For more than four centuries, worship rituals had been conducted as a part of the portable sanctuary, constructed by Moses in the wilderness. After the children of Israel entered Canaan, that structure was still the centerpiece of worship, pitched in different places. Finally, as King David conquered the fortress held by the Jebusites which was Jerusalem, and having constructed a palace for himself as king, he aspired to build a permanent home for the ark of the covenant, a temple in which to worship the Lord.

In this enterprise he was encouraged by the prophet Nathan, at first. But then the Lord instructed Nathan to tell David that he was not to build the temple. Being a man of war, his hands had too much blood on them. He would be allowed to gather materials for its building, but it would be his son under whose reign the temple would be built. To his credit, David did not pout nor pine at this disappointing news, but set his face to assemble wealth and material for the future house of the Lord. He explained later, "My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of the LORD my God; but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight.' indeed I have taken much trouble to prepare for the house of the LORD one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver." I Chronicles 22:7, 8, 14. The value of just the gold in today's dollars would be 100,000 (talents) X 75 (pounds per talent) X 14.58 (ounces troy per pound) X \$1661.70 or about \$181,706,897,000. There are two lessons we're going to focus on in our study of the building of the house of God by Solomon: the stone that was rejected and the amazing off-site quarry work.

Stones of monumental size were required for the foundation of the temple. The name "Jerusalem" itself means literally "*foundation of peace*." It's possible that, although this *temple* was later destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B. C., the *foundation stones* might have been the same and later employed by those who rebuilt the temple under the guidance of Ezra and Zerubbabel. If so, we have a description of those stones given by the eyewitness Josephus, a historian who viewed the temple, recently remodeled by Herod, before it was destroyed by Titus the Roman in A. D. 70. Josephus records that some of these foundation stones were 45 by 5 by 6 cubits, or about 66 by 7 by 9 feet! (See Josephus, *Wars*, v. 5. 6.) Those were large stones! Jesus said that these very stones would not be left one upon another in Jerusalem's destruction. This was literally fulfilled when the soldiers of Titus dislodged them as they recovered the molten gold that flowed from the burning temple.

These stones were quarried off-site and then transported to the building location. Some believe that quarry work was done just to the north of Jerusalem leaving a rocky face which resembled a skull and so was named "Golgotha" in Hebrew and "Calvary" in Latin. If so, what a spiritual lesson! The very place where the Messiah died to pay for our sins is where the stones came from that went into His temple.

Solomon's workmen, under the tutelage of skilled masons from Tyre, cut all the stones according to precise specifications. When they were brought to the site, there seemed to have been one of unusual size that didn't fit anywhere, and was therefore set aside for the time being. As they neared completion of the foundation, they realized that this stone, of great size and strength, was actually the cornerstone! This was a well-known story in Israel's heritage. "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." Psalm 118:22.

What was the purpose of the cornerstone? The cornerstone was important because in the structural design of the building this stone would have to be especially strong. It would be asked to accept the burden of a great deal of weight and be able to withstand tremendous stresses placed upon it. Builders today know that when you're pouring a slab, there will be exterior footings of larger and deeper proportions because of weight bearing considerations. If you look at a construction project just before the concrete trucks roll in (if it's a "slab on grade" style of construction which is typical where I live), you will likely see trenches defining the perimeter of the building, as well as some interior footings. Periodically there might be larger and deeper rectangles pocketed out. In these places you may be assured that more concrete is required because greater strength is needed to support heavier loads. So whatever rock was chosen to be the cornerstone was selected because of its ability to carry weight.

Secondly, when constructing a building, there needs to be a *reference point* from which all measuring is done. When building a house, for example, after the slab is poured a corner is chosen and used as the starting point from which all measurements are taken. Typically a 90-degree corner is established, using the well-known Pythagorean formula "the sum of the squares of the sides of a right triangle equals the square of the hypotenuse." Three feet, four feet (for the

two legs of the right triangle) and five feet form the basis of such a calculation (that is, the square of 3 which is 9, added to the square of 4 which is 16, equals 25, which is also the square of 5).

Actually, in practicality, you use the largest multiple of those numbers as can be achieved. So you and your buddy measure from one corner point to a point 15' (using 3' for the shorter leg times 5) and make a mark along the end of the slab. Then, starting from the same corner point you measure along the other leg of the right triangle to a point 20' (using 4' times your multiplier of 5) and make a mark along that edge of the slab. Now you measure across from one mark to the other, the hypotenuse, and if you're fortunate enough to have described a perfect 90-degree corner, that measurement will be exactly 25' (5' times the multiplier of 5).

Often there's some adjusting until the precise proportions are realized. This then is your corner reference point. Lines are now chalked along those marks to indicate the legs of that triangle, and all measurements thereafter are taken from those two lines. (Actually this process is done first when you dig for your footings and then build the forms for the concrete, and later refined after the slab is poured.) Whatever time is expended in this effort is well worth it, because if you're sloppy and begin with your building being out of square, it will haunt you during every phase of construction, from floor tile to roof tile and everything in between (I speak from experience! I could tell you about a project on which every piece of roof sheeting had to be trimmed because the rafters were slightly out of square).

Here's the point: Jesus is the Cornerstone. Peter, speaking of Jesus quoted from Isaiah and said, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." I Peter 2:6. Shame is the result Adam and Eve felt when the Lord came to the Garden after they had sinned. Shame is what will drive sinners to hide in the rocks when Jesus comes back again. If we want to meet Him in peace and in confidence, He must be the Cornerstone of our lives. Jesus is the One upon whom the weight of the building rests. He it is Who makes the building sure. Whoever builds on this Rock will not be moved by the tides of destruction and discouragement. I just watched a video filmed by a Japanese deliveryman Yu Muroga, who had a camera mounted on his dashboard of his vehicle on the fateful day of March 11, 2011, the day of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami. He escaped just before the car was slammed into other vehicles and sunk, but experts later were able to retrieve the camera and save the video. Satan is devising earthquakes of trial and tsunamis of affliction to sweep humanity away in annihilation. Only those who are built on the Rock, the Chief Cornerstone Jesus Christ will survive.

It is Christ Who sets the standard against which all are measured and all dimensions drawn. It's human nature to compare ourselves with others and smugly say, "I'm not as bad as that person." This is very dangerous! We can't afford to compare ourselves with others, for their lives will not be the standard in the final judgment. The life of Christ, declared by the perfect law of Christ will be the standard against which we will be measured. "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, *measuring themselves by themselves*, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." II Corinthians 10:12. It is when we

measure ourselves against Him that we see our true condition and are driven to repentance and receive forgiveness.

Beginning in the 40th chapter of Ezekiel the prophet is taken in vision and shown an exquisite temple. His angel companion walks him through the building with a measuring rod in his hand, stopping frequently to measure the dimensions of the building and its furniture. At one juncture the angel stops and says "Son of man (a title frequently given to Ezekiel), describe the temple to house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern." Ezekiel 43:10. To "describe" in this sense means to delineate all the measurements he had been shown. What's the point of all these measurements that are taken in Ezekiel's vision? It's to emphasize our need to study the life and character of Christ through His Word. It's to "measure" Him in a spiritual sense. This "measuring" process increases our appreciation for His infinite sacrifice, His unfathomable love and His untainted character.

If someone hands you a blueprint and says, "Build this," you are going to have to spend a great deal of time in familiarizing yourself with the details of that structure in order to translate it into reality. You and that blueprint are going to become best friends. You will have to "build it in your head" before you build it on the ground. Every aspect of how it goes together will have to be digested before you undertake its actual construction. If you merely give it a casual glance and then launch out to start the construction, disaster lurks!

In the same way the blueprint of life, the Bible and the Christ, of Whom the Bible testifies, need to be "measured." This implies a significant amount of time, just as a blueprint is frequently consulted during building. Sometimes by the time the job is done the blueprint might have frayed edges. Maybe the staples have torn lose in a place or two. But if it has served its purpose and the building has been successfully erected, then its purpose has been accomplished. Isn't this true?

If we follow that principle, conveyed in the imagery of "measuring the temple," something is going to happen. We're going to see things in a different way. What looked fine before in our lives is not going to look good anymore. That's because when we "measure" the Bible (translation: "study carefully as if you're going to build from it") we are confronted with its truths and human pride is laid in the dust. It's when we "measure" the "Pattern." Who is Jesus that we see ourselves in desperate need of a Savior. We become ashamed of our failures that used to look so good when we measured ourselves by human standards, we fall on our knees and ask forgiveness for our sins. When we approach God with humility and true contrition, our loving God accepts and restores us through His grace!

The cornerstone carried the bulk of the weight and was the reference for measuring. If we put the weight of our trust in others we will be misled and disappointed. If we measure ourselves by any other standard than by Jesus we will be deceived. He is the One Who can carry the weight of our need. He is the One Who provides a true picture of righteousness. He is the Cornerstone. How do you *build* on this Cornerstone? It is by each day learning from His Word, yielding your will to His wisdom and allowing His Spirit to guide you in all your daily activities. If you do this, you will never be shaken by the poor examples of others who claim to be Christians.

Jesus was the Stone refused. As in the construction of Solomon's temple, He was set aside and rejected. From His sermon in Nazareth, early in His ministry, to the climactic climb to Calvary His message of love found little place in the hearts of men and women. The people were too absorbed in their daily living, too steeped in their own ideas of what life was about to listen to the humble Carpenter Who came to share a new picture of God's love. Their minds were crowded with the cares of this life and had little time to consider the lofty themes He proposed. They had "no room" for Him, from His infancy in Bethlehem to the end.

How much our world is like that! People go from day to day, completely immersed in the pursuit of the pleasures and profits of this life, with little concern for the future immortal life promised by God! People sink their roots deeply into the soil of this planet, as if the things of this life were to last! People have no time for serious Bible study, no time for serious prayer or meditation. A flippant repetitious grace at a meal or a casual "Now I lay me down to sleep" is considered pious worship. God forgive us for our laxity! Where is there true soul-searching? Where is there serious seeking for truth? Where is there deep repentance and desire for reformation? Where is there earnest pleading for character change and victory over sin? He is indeed the Stone rejected today every bit as much as when the Jews crucified Him.

The great and glorious purpose of life is to restore in mankind the likeness of His Maker. Make that the "mission statement" of your life. Everything we do should revolve around that grand pivot point. The purpose of our lives is not to stockpile wealth; you'll never get "enough," and as far as I've seen, there are no luggage racks on hearses! The purpose of life is not to bury ourselves in an endless round of pleasures; there's a huge difference between mere recreation and re-creation.

I wonder if you were to ask 100 people on the street "What is the purpose of life?" how many would give an answer remotely resembling what God has in mind for us. First, if you were actually courageous enough to ask someone that question, he or she will likely look at you as if you're crazy. They'd look at you like you're from some far-off distant planet, out of touch with reality. Most would deflect your question by some humorous reply, as if you were making a joke.

If you were successful in obtaining a serious answer from anyone, I wonder how long you would have to wait until someone said "The purpose of my life is for God to re-create me in His image." I would guess that if you were to position yourself outside your local Walmart and ask people that question, and if you were to maintain your post until someone gave you any kind of an answer like that, you might have to pack several lunches and maybe a pillow! And yet that's what Jesus wants most to do in our lives today! He's the Stone rejected today just as He was back then. "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." Psalm 118:22, 23.

Another fascinating feature of the building of Solomon's temple is that all the shaping of the stones was done off-site. "And the temple, when it was being built, was built with *stone finished at the quarry*, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built." I Kings 6:7. What a sermon there is in that text! Do you see how the spiritual application of that passage echoes the "purpose of our lives" we just noted? The great and

glorious purpose of our lives is for God to re-make us in His likeness. Listen to the chisels in Solomon's quarry as they preach that Gospel!

Some teach that our Christian lives go something like this. We sin; God forgives, but there's never any real change in us. We plod along in perpetual defeat, the devil having the upper hand constantly. The change is only in the heavenly record books, as God takes His divine eraser and removes our sins from the chalkboards up there, but He's powerless to make any real change in our characters down here. There's no point in asking for Him to overcome sin in our lives, because it can't be done anyway. There's no point in wrestling with temptation because it can't be conquered anyway. So you might as well relax and trust His grace and make no earnest efforts to pray and believe His promise, because it does no good anyway. Then when we go to heaven, somewhere between the Moon and Mars He'll give us new minds so we won't sin anymore and heaven will be perfect. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

Our Creator God claims the ability to make us new and make us "more than conquerors" through Christ. Any person who lays hold on His promise and believes, will experience the "power of His resurrection." Let no one say "I have an excuse to continue to sin." The unlimited power of the Almighty stands ready to rescue and restore any fallen sinner who accepts God's promise to bring life today.

His chisel will begin to work. He will reshape and reform our minds and lives into His likeness. We'll find, if we cooperate with His intentions, that we won't have an appetite for the "former things." We'll discover that those things that used to consume us are no longer interesting. Our language will change. What we watch and listen to will change. Associates from the past won't understand or comprehend this. "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you." I Peter 4:1-4. The amazing thing is that this won't be something we have to "struggle at" as if we're doing it. We simply won't be attracted to the things we used to enjoy. The "work" is to believe His promise and to dedicate ourselves to spending time with Him; to "measure the Pattern."

We'll find that our attitudes and philosophy will change. Gone will be the all-absorbing interest to "get rich." Can you imagine this scene? The ark has been built, the animals have boarded, but what's this you hear? It's the chug of Noah's forklift as he treads the gangplank with another pallet of gold ingots. He's going to be the richest man in the "new earth." Why is that a preposterous picture? Well, first of all, the only thing gold would do would be to weigh his ship down. It might even cause it to sink. Secondly, for all practical purposes his gold would be worthless on the "other side" anyway. There really was no point in loading the ark down with tons of gold. The Lord can likewise give us a perspective on wealth like that. He can give us an appreciation for the temporary nature of this world's goods. It all has to do with the way we think.

The life quest for earthly things will actually take on the appearance of silliness and futility. The self-centered "it's all about me" mentality cherished by the world and exuded by the media will appear disgusting and revolting.

All this the chisel of God will accomplish, if we don't resist. He, as the divine Michelangelo is extracting "David" from the limestone. He, as Creator God, proposes to make us "living stones" fit for His temple. It is His purpose that our characters will be refined and reshaped so that introduction into the heavenly society will be a smooth and natural thing. Do you really anticipate living among holy angels? Will the language you use and the interests you pursue fit in with what life up there will be like? Now is when God wants to do His work in us to "prepare" us for that happy existence above. *This is the quarry. He is the Sculptor. Now is the time.* Those who think that they can continue in a life of sin and presume upon God's forgiveness are making a "grave" mistake. Whatever work on our characters will be done is to be done here and now. This life is the "vineyard" where the pruning takes place. John 15:2.

There is a small vineyard down the street for me, and I enjoy the annual procession of growth there paraded. It interests me that early in the season, the leaves burst forth in their pretentious verdure, and cover everything so that you couldn't see the fruit except by careful examination, and even then the fruit would appear small and unimpressive. But as time goes on, things change. By the time late summer comes the fruit has grown, large and plentiful (I can't remember how many tons of grapes the owner told me he harvested, but it was prestigious), but the leaves have faded and gone brittle. Now it's easy to spot the fruit; you don't see the leaves as much. So it is for the learner in the school of Christ. Early on, as it was in the life of the Apostle Paul, fruitless leaves occupy the spotlight, self is prominent and the fruits of the Spirit are yet immature. But as growth takes place, through the process of time, the leaves of self die off and become less visible, leaving way for the glorious beauty of Heaven's influence in our lives.

"And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone *finished at the quarry*, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built." There will be no chisel work in heaven. Let us pray as never before to allow His Spirit full access to our lives and make us ready.

One more important thought we'll consider. Solomon's reign typifies the kingship of Jesus in heaven and the earth made new. The plenitude of gold during Solomon's rule points us forward to the golden city of God. The peace of Solomon's tenure symbolizes the peace in that eternal abode. Remember also that part of Solomon's heritage was his ability to answer hard question. The queen of Sheba visited the monarch, and pressed him with difficult problems and inquiries of all types. Solomon answered them all to her complete satisfaction. "*So Solomon answered all her questions*; there was nothing so difficult for Solomon that he could not explain it to her." II Chronicles 9:2.

In this life we walk by faith and not by sight. We see through a glass darkly, indistinctly. God has graciously provided us with enough information to get us safely to the other shore, but some questions will remain. It will be when we at last sit at His feet, the true King Shalom, that the dark

things shall be plain, and He will answer all life's mysteries and perplexities. Often in the Bible a woman is used to symbolize the Church. The Queen of Sheba asking Solomon hard questions typifies God's people in the Kingdom being able to have all their inquiries answered by the King of Peace. Solomon's kingdom turned out to be more than she imagined. "Then she said to the king: 'It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe their words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half of the greatness of your wisdom was not told me You exceed the fame of which I heart.'" II Chronicles 9:5, 6. So it will be in the kingdom. Her confession is the "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" of the Old Testament.

Solomon, the King of Peace, exemplifies Jesus, Who is our Peace. In Solomon's life we see wealth and wisdom, we see a temple built with stones surfaced off-site. We see a Cornerstone able to bear the weight and the Standard of excellence. We see a kingdom of peace pointing us forward to the day of Christ's eternal kingdom. You want to be there, don't you!