

1 KINGS 7:1-12

A. Introduction

1. In our elders' meetings, we're tracing the story of King Solomon, from his coronation to his burial, as recorded in 1 Kings 1-11.

As well as seeing how he points us to the 'one greater than Solomon', we're going to focus in on what we can learn as elders from his life and particularly his downfall, as we seek to lead those whom God has made us overseers over.

2. Beginning in 1 Kings 6, the focus for the next three chapters of 1 Kings turns to how Solomon used his wisdom to build the temple.

1 Kings 6 presented Solomon as a builder who built the temple.

"So Solomon built the temple and completed it." (1 Kings 6:14)

The temple communicated both the glory and the holiness of the God who would live in it.

The temple also pointed to the glory and holiness of the temple Jesus, the 'one greater than Solomon' is building, the church, and like the temple Solomon built, one day the building of this temple will be completed.

3. The temple however wasn't the only thing that Solomon built.

Sandwiched between the description of how Solomon built the temple and how Solomon furnished the temple, is a description of another building project Solomon embarked on.

In 1 Kings 7:1-12 we are told that Solomon as well as building a temple or house for the LORD, built a palace or house for himself.

"It took Solomon thirteen years, however, to complete the construction of his palace." (1 Kings 7:1)

4. There much that was good and right about Solomon building a house for himself.

Solomon needed a place to call home and since he was the king, it was right for him to live in a beautiful palace.

Solomon's palace was modelled on the temple with the same architectural features and same materials, and by building his palace next to the temple, he showed his intention to be a greater Adam, David's Son, who takes his throne alongside God the Father to rule with him. Although he would fail ultimately to do so, the desire to rule with God is there in the building of his palace.

Yet in this building project we see that Solomon succumbed to two temptations, which are dangers we face as elders.

B. The Danger of Distraction

1. The amount of time it took for Solomon to build his palace was almost double what it took him to build the temple.

"The temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it. It took Solomon thirteen years, however, to complete the construction of his palace." (1 Kings 6:38-7:1)

The reason it took so much longer was because his house was so much bigger.

There were five main buildings in the palace complex.

The House of the Forest of Lebanon:

"He built the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon a hundred cubits long, fifty wide and thirty high, with four rows of cedar columns supporting trimmed cedar beams. It was roofed with cedar above the beams that rested on the columns – forty-five beams, fifteen to a row. Its windows were placed high in sets of three, facing each other. All the doorways had rectangular frames; they were in the front part in sets of three, facing each other." (1 Kings 7:2-5)

The Hall of Pillars:

"He made a colonnade fifty cubits long and thirty wide. In front of it was a portico, and in front of that were pillars and an overhanging roof." (1 Kings 7:6)

The Hall of Judgment:

"He built the throne hall, the Hall of Justice, where he was to judge, and he covered it with cedar from floor to ceiling." (1 Kings 7:7)

Solomon's Palace:

"And the palace in which he was to live, set farther back, was similar in design." (1 Kings 7:8)

Pharaoh's daughter's Palace:

"Solomon also made a palace like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had married." (1 Kings 7:8)

2. Whilst it was right and good for Solomon to build a palace, in verse 1, there is a hint that his priorities were not as they should have been.

"However" (1 Kings 7:1)

The fact that the writer of 1 Kings devoted 12 verses to its construction, compared to the number of verses either side on the construction of the temple, says to us, that "this doesn't matter too much."

But clearly it mattered a lot to Solomon given the time he spent on it.

He was distracted by the construction of his own house.

C. The Danger of Extravagance

1. The palace that Solomon built for himself was very impressive.

"All these structures, from the outside to the great courtyard and from foundation to eaves, were made of blocks of high-grade stone cut to size and trimmed with a saw on their inner and outer faces. The foundations were laid with large stones of good quality, some measuring ten cubits and some eight. Above were high-grade stones, cut to size, and cedar beams. The great courtyard was surrounded by a wall of three courses of dressed stone and one course of trimmed cedar beams, as was the inner courtyard of the temple of the LORD with its portico." (1 Kings 7:9-12)

2. One commentator writes that the whole project "smacks of affluence and indulgence."

All the cedar was imported from Tyre at great expense.

All the stone must have cost a fortune as it is described as being "high-grade" i.e. costly.

And with 5 building in the royal complex too, Solomon's house seems to be far more extravagant than God's house.

It seems again that Solomon priorities were not quite right.

D. Application

1. As elders, distraction is a danger we face.

Our priorities as elders is to devote ourselves to shepherding the flock by prayer and the ministry of the word, and to lead the church towards making disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Yet there are many things that can distract us from this task – meeting practical needs, business matters which are right and good things. We must be on guard that these things don't take our time away from what matters the most.

2. As elders, extravagance is also a danger we face.

There is a pressure, for example, to have a church building that is impressive, a worship service that is buzzing, a youth ministry that is bulging, amongst other things.

Yet we must seek with God's help to get the balance right with wanting to honour the Lord by doing things well and wanting to look good in the eyes of the world.

2. As elders, focus and simplicity are what we are called to, because that is how Christ did ministry.

There was a real focus (without being unconcerned) to Jesus' ministry.

"Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come." (Mark 1:38)

"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." (Luke 9:51)

There was a real simplicity (without being shoddy) to Jesus' ministry.

Let us follow His example.