

2 Chronicles 2; 3:1-2; 5; 6:40-42; 7

Aim of Lesson

To show Solomon's dedication to the Lord in the building of the temple.

Background study

1 Kings chapters 5-8. Remaining verses from 2 Chronicles chapters 2-7. Seek information and diagrams regarding the temple plan and materials used.

Suggested outline of lesson

Ask the children if they remember how pleased God was with Solomon's choice of wisdom, and what it was that God promised to give him in addition to wisdom. Endeavour to convey the vast amount of wealth that was at Solomon's disposal. Conjure up a picture of treasure, e.g. gold, silver, fabrics, perfumes, precious stones, and explain that the supply of these was almost limitless. What was Solomon to do with all this? His mind was clear. He would use it all to build the magnificent temple to glorify God. He remembered how his father had hoped to accomplish this great work, but that God had directed David to prepare Solomon for the task. Solomon had received the detailed plans and instructions that God had given to David. Now he was eager to follow his father's zealous and generous example, and give all to his God. He felt deeply, as had David, that he owed everything to God, and was now greatly honoured and excited at the prospect of the work before him.

In addition to the materials that David and Solomon had amassed, and those willingly donated by the people, timber was also needed which was not available in Israel. Describe the trading agreement between Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre, who had been David's ally. The Israelites had no experience in constructing a building of this magnitude, but Solomon was determined to acquire skilled craftsmen - carpenters, wood-carvers, engravers, stonemasons, embroiderers, etc. - and these, too, came from Tyre. Solomon himself undertook the negotiations with Hiram, and also organized the work force.

Impress upon the children the vast numbers employed. It is also important to point out that in those days there was no mass-production, nor could items be purchased ready-made. Everything was made by hand with great skill, care and attention to detail. Solomon inspired all who contributed to the work to give of their best. The children will understand the pleasure and satisfaction experienced by each workman as he completed his work, knowing that it was a job well done.

The blocks of stone were cut in the quarries and made ready before being brought to the temple site, so that no sound of metal tools on stone could be heard during the construction. Nor would there be the noise of machinery, for they had no power-driven equipment such as drills, earth-movers, concrete-mixers or cranes.

It will be necessary to read and re-read the two accounts (Chronicles and Kings) in order to gain an overall picture which can then be described in your own words. Also draw a simple diagram in front of the children (this could be prepared lightly in pencil beforehand and gone over with a felt pen in class) showing the ground plan, or, better still, produce a model upon which to focus their attention. Describe the magnificence and outstanding beauty of the interior, with its lining of gold and intricate detail. Describe how the light from the ten lampstands would make the precious stones and burnished gold gleam and sparkle.

After seven-and-a-half years the temple was finished, and Solomon proclaimed a general holiday (holy day). Many people gathered at Jerusalem to witness the dedication of this majestic building to the glory of God. Outside, the whole congregation watched as the ark was carried into the temple. The people's work was finished; now it was time for the priests' work to begin, for henceforth only the priests would be privileged to enter the beautiful holy place which had been so lovingly prepared. As the priests emerged, a great fanfare of trumpets, accompanied by other musical instruments and the sound of many voices, rang out through Jerusalem - "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever". This sudden burst of music and praise uplifted the congregation. As the notes died away, Solomon stood before the altar, on which a great sacrifice had been prepared. As he was about to dedicate the temple to God, he was aware, none the less, that God was far too great to be contained in any house.

At this point it is important to build the story towards a climax. Solomon was ecstatic and spread his arms wide to heaven. At the same time he felt deep humility, as he knelt before God and the assembled people and expressed the overwhelming feelings of them all in a prayer of praise and dedication. At the culmination of this heart-felt prayer, God demonstrated his acceptance, and manifested his presence amongst them in a visually spectacular way. Their hearts were so full of devotion to God that they drew close to him and felt his power and glory with them that day. Now they humbled themselves and gave voice to their praise. The solemn dedication of the temple was the focal point of prolonged devotions and a feast that lasted fourteen days (8th to 22nd of the 7th month, which included the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles).

Relevance to the children's lives

Solomon built a beautiful temple, the place where God should be worshipped, and God was pleased with it. But Solomon knew that God was everywhere. We worship God in our Sunday School. Can we worship God anywhere else? Where do we find it easiest to talk to God?

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we worship you. All that we have has come from you. Help us to use the gifts you have given us, in order to do things which will please you. Amen.

Memory verse

“They ... gave thanks to the Lord, saying, ‘For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever’” (2 Chronicles 7:3).