

Foretaste of a New Creation

1 Kings 5-7

Last Sunday, Lee proclaimed to us from the story of Jesus' healing of the deaf and mute man that Jesus came to make all things new. It occurred to me this week, as I watched the slow motion trainwreck of Cracker Barrel's rebranding, that making things new, in and of itself, is not necessarily a good thing. If you're not familiar, Cracker Barrel decided to update its logo by eliminating Uncle Herschel and the image of the actual cracker barrel. They also decided to remodel their stores, removing much of their antique southern charm and replacing it with a generic modern dreariness. Basically, everything customers love about the look and feel of Cracker Barrel they decided had to go, but then they backtracked after the public outcry. More often than not, I am not a fan of making things new. I host a podcast called "The *Old Roads* Podcast" (you can subscribe on Spotify or your favorite podcast app) because I love the old more than the new. The older I get, the more I can see myself becoming one of those old men who begins a lot of sentences with, "Well, back in my day..." Who knows? Maybe I'll even start yelling, "Get off my lawn!" for good measure.

Jesus came to make all things new, but in a good way, not in a Cracker Barrel rebrand way. And the story of Mark 7:31-37 that Lee preached last week illustrates that point perfectly. How did Jesus "make new" the deaf and mute man in the story? He restored his hearing and enabled his tongue to speak. He took what had been broken by the fallen state of this world and restored it to what it was originally designed to do. Jesus made his ears and tongue new by enabling them to fulfill their created purposes. And therein lies a profound theological insight about the redeeming work of our Savior: he brings to fulfillment what God had always designed for us from the beginning. God made us with certain ends in view for us. Those ends were frustrated by sin and the curse, and by removing sin and the curse, Christ restores us to the fullness of our humanity.

I see a foretaste of that redeeming, fulfilling work of Christ here in 1 Kings 5-7. We have seen to this point in 1 Kings that Solomon's reign represents the high point of the kingdom of Israel. Under Solomon, Israel experienced peace, security, prosperity, and dominion over a small empire of neighboring nations. Now we come to King Solomon's crowning achievement: the building of the temple of Jerusalem. In the work of building this temple, King Solomon builds a mini-version of a new creation, filled with symbols that represent the cosmic rule of the God of Israel. By contemplating the design of the temple, we gain insight into the meaning of our existence and of creation itself. We hear whispers of a coming day when all things will be made new, and I mean "new" in a good way.

First I want to show you some of the major themes in these chapters as we look at various aspects of Solomon's construction project. Then we will pull back and reflect on what this passage means for our faith. We will see in these three chapters that Solomon secured supplies for the temple, formed and filled the temple, and also built his own royal palace. Let's look at each of those in turn before we draw some theological conclusions. Chapter 5, our first chapter, is about

1. Supplying the temple (5:1-18)

What did King Solomon need to build a temple in Jerusalem? He needed opportunity, materials, and labor. Chapter 5 shows us how he secured all three. With regard to opportunity, let's read

5:1-5: “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. And Solomon sent word to Hiram, ‘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. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune. 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.”’” David made preparations for the temple, but he could never build it himself because it had to wait until the Lord had given Israel rest from her enemies.

Throughout Scripture there is a pattern of work followed by rest. God created the world in six days, then rested on the seventh. It seems that Adam was created to imitate that pattern, filling the earth and subduing it (Gen. 1:28), and then entering into the enjoyment of rest with God. Israel has now followed the same pattern: they have entered the land of Canaan and have subdued their enemies within and all around. Now that they have rest, the Lord’s dwelling place among them should no longer be a portable tent, but a permanent structure. Verse 1 of chapter 6 tells us that Solomon began to build the temple in the 480th year after Israel came out of Egypt. That time reference signals to us that a new era in Israel’s history has begun. Exodus 12:40-41 tells us that Israel spent 430 years in Egypt, and then they were set free. Now we see that 480 years later, the time of their wandering has come to end, and the time of rest has begun. David never had this opportunity to build a temple before, but in fulfillment of God’s promise to David, Solomon now builds a house for the name of the Lord.

In addition to the opportunity, Solomon also secured the materials and labor for the project. He asked King Hiram, a Phoenician of the city-state Tyre and an ally of the late King David, for timber from the forest of Lebanon and that good old Phoenician expertise to help him build a house for the Lord. Hiram agreed, and they made a treaty. I find it interesting that there are three major holy places built in the Old Testament, and all three of them were built with materials from nations outside of Israel. The tabernacle first constructed at Mount Sinai was fashioned with materials Israel plundered from the Egyptians. Here Solomon’s temple is built with Phoenician timber and skill, and over 400 years after this, the second temple, built under Zerubbabel, will be funded from the royal treasury of the Persian Empire. Even in the details of the construction of his holy places, the God of Israel shows his rule over all nations.

With regard to labor, verses 13-17 tell us that Solomon used forced labor from Israel. There is some debate about whether he only conscripted non-Israelites who were living in Israel, or (as I think more likely), he included Israelites but did not treat them as slaves. Verse 14 is clear that they labored one month at a time and then had two months off, which is not exactly what you would call “enslavement.” This was Solomon’s method for mobilizing a labor force large enough to get the job done, but without returning the people of Israel to full-blown slavery, which would have undone the exodus and defeated the whole purpose.

All that was needed, God supplied, from opportunity to materials to available labor. One final note from chapter 5 comes from verse 18: “So Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders and the men of Gebal [another Phoenician city-state] did the cutting and prepared the timber and the

stone to build the house.” The united effort of Israelites and Phoenicians in building a house for the Lord foreshadows the uniting of Jew and Gentile as one new man in Christ (Eph. 2:15). God writes the beautiful picture of his worldwide family in Christ into the details of the building of his temple.

With temple supplies secured, we can now reflect on the meaning of the temple’s design. Chapters 6-7 divide into three sections, and the first and last one pertain to

2. Forming and filling the temple (6:1-38; 7:13-51)

In the original creation account, we are told in Genesis 1:2 that the earth was “formless and void,” and the creation week proceeds with God’s acts of forming the earth on days 1-3, creating day and night and the realms of the earth, sky, and sea. Then, on days 4-6, God filled these realms with heavenly bodies, birds, fish, land animals, and ultimately man. Solomon, who is a son of God (2 Sam. 7:14), imitates the creative work of God by forming the temple and then filling it with the holy articles that go into it. Solomon engages in the work of new creation.

Chapter 6 relates the forming of the temple’s exterior and interior design. According to verses 1-10, it was about 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high (with measurements given in cubits; a cubit is about 18 inches). Different sections of the temple that are mentioned in these verses include the vestibule, which was a porch at the main entrance on the east end; the nave, which was the main hall inside the temple (also called “the holy place”); and the inner sanctuary, also called the “most holy place” or “holy of holies.” Solomon also had rooms built into the two sides of the temple structure for priestly use, and they were constructed on three levels.

When it comes to the interior design of the temple, I want to draw your attention to a number of elements that I will call “new creation imagery.” The temple was designed to echo the Garden of Eden and point forward to a renewed creation. Verses 14-15 mention construction of cedar and cypress wood, and verses 31-32 mention doors made of olivewood. As one of our pastoral apprentices pointed out in our meeting this week, these trees are all evergreen trees, and I think that could symbolize not only God’s unfailing faithfulness, but also the unending life of the new creation. And patterns drawn from creation are carved all over the interior of the temple. Verse 18 says, “The cedar within the house was carved in the form of gourds and open flowers. All was cedar; no stone was seen.” Solomon designed it to have the look and feel of a beautiful, fruitful garden. Palm trees are also mentioned as carved into the design of the walls in verse 29. But in addition to these garden elements, take note of what is described in verses 20-22: “The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid an altar of cedar. And Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, and he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.” Inside the nave and the inner sanctuary, there is gold everywhere. This massive amount of gold, a shiny precious metal, symbolizes the radiant glory of God that will one day fill the new creation. In addition to that, we also have images of heavenly, angelic beings called “cherubim.” Verses 23-28 describe two carved cherubim who stood in the holy place, both 15 feet tall and 15 feet from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. And the two cherubim’s wings touched each other in the middle of the room so that together their wingspans crossed the entire inner sanctuary. And they were overlaid with gold. We first see cherubim in Scripture in Genesis 3:24, when God placed

cherubim as guardians of the holy place, the Garden of Eden, after he had driven Adam and Eve out. And then chapter 6 ends with one last allusion to the theme of new creation. Read with me verses 37-38: “In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv. And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications. He was seven years in building it.” Solomon’s seven years of work on this mini-new creation correspond to God’s seven days of creating the world.

Notice that it’s not just earthly imagery, such as gourds, open flowers, and palm trees that decorate this temple. It is also heavenly imagery, such as cherubim, guardians of the heavenly throne, and gold, representing the manifest glory of God. This temple is meant to harken back to Eden and forward to a new creation, for both represent a union of heaven and earth. God created two distinct realms in the beginning: the heavenly, where his glory is fully manifest, and the earthly, where it was not yet fully manifest but destined for that same glory as man expanded the borders of the garden to the ends of the earth, at which time these two realms, heaven and earth, would become one. Eden was the first intersection of heaven and earth in creation, and now Solomon’s represents that same intersection of the two realms.

But not only did Solomon form the temple structure, he also filled it with holy articles that are described in 7:13-51. The first category of these holy articles is those that are made of bronze, fashioned by a man from Tyre named Hiram. But this is not King Hiram of chapter 5. It is a different Hiram from Tyre, a man of great skill in metalworking. He crafted two beautiful pillars with capitals on their tops to stand at the entrance of the temple. And they had pomegranates fashioned into their design, which seems to reflect the look of fruitful trees like those in the Garden of Eden. These pillars even had names: Jachin, meaning “he establishes,” and “Boaz,” meaning “in him is strength.” Together, they point to the promises and power of God to uphold the kingdom of the house of David. Hiram also made a bronze sea, which means he crafted a giant basin that could hold around 12,000 gallons of water. This basin was set on the backs of twelve bronze oxen, each group of three looking in a different direction on the compass, but all of them with their hind parts facing inward. The number twelve suggests a symbol of the people of Israel, of which there were twelve tribes. The use of oxen to symbolize Israel is fitting, since an ox is a clean animal. And the fact that they are facing toward all directions of the compass indicates that the Lord’s rule over all creation is mediated through his people Israel. This bronze sea was set outside the entrance to the temple near the altar for burnt offerings. And then Hiram also made ten bronze stands, elaborately described, with more creation imagery, that were created to hold ten more bronze basins (much smaller than the bronze sea). These were also for holding water that was used for washing and ritual purification.

Solomon not only filled the temple complex with bronze items, but inside the temple itself he placed items made of gold: the golden altar of incense before the inner sanctuary, symbolizing the prayers of Israel rising up to God; the golden table for the bread of the presence, symbolizing the fellowship God has with his people; and ten golden lampstands (menorahs), five on the south side and five on the north, symbolizing the visible heavens in which we behold the light of the sun, moon, and stars. After mentioning these articles of bronze and then of gold, the author concludes in verse 51, “Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the LORD was finished.” And it sounds a lot like Genesis 2:1: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished,

and all the host of them.” With the combined wealth of Israel and other nations, King Solomon has built a mini-new creation that communicates something about what God originally designed creation itself to be.

But before we explore that idea further, let’s look at one last section of this text that we previously skipped over:

3. Building the royal palace (7:1-12)

Tucked in between two sections about the temple project are these twelve verses about Solomon’s royal palace complex. Like the temple, it seems to have three main sections for state business: the Hall of the Forest of Lebanon, apparently a great hall to host gatherings for state functions; the Hall of Pillars, an ornate entryway similar to the temple’s vestibule; and the Hall of the Throne, corresponding to the temple’s inner sanctuary. This was where Solomon held court and rendered legal judgments. Also mentioned are personal residences for Solomon and for the queen, the daughter of Pharaoh.

Verses 9-10 tell us that this structure was made of beautiful, costly stones. Some have argued that Solomon’s act of building an ornate structure reveals a heart that is full of pride and more attentive to his own comfort and honor than he is to the Lord. Two arguments to support this claim are that Solomon took 13 years to build the palace, but only 7 to build the temple. So it may look like he gave more attention to one than the other. Another argument is that Solomon’s palace is bigger than the temple. The House of the Forest of Lebanon alone is larger than the main temple structure. Are these arguments persuasive?

I don’t think they are. Regarding the time difference, it makes sense that Solomon could build the temple faster than his own house. His father David had already done a lot of the preparatory work for him. In addition to that, Solomon’s finishing the temple in a shorter amount of time could just as easily indicate that he prioritized getting it done first because he valued it more than his own palace. And then, regarding the size, it makes sense that a royal palace where large gatherings for state functions will occur, needs to have more space than a temple where very few people (the priests) are ever going to enter. As a counterargument, I also want to point out that, while the royal palace is made of costly stones, there is no mention over overlaying anything in it with gold. It seems that the amount of gold Solomon put into the temple vs. his own house shows where his priorities truly are.

But the royal palace is a magnificent, ornate, costly structure, and that is fitting for the king of Israel. Why? Because the temple represents the cosmic rule of Israel’s God, and the son of David is God’s own son. God’s rule is mediated through the house of David, and so for the son of David to have his own house from which to exercise his rule is entirely fitting.

Now that we have had a chance to take in the big picture of this passage, let’s reflect on where it fits in the larger story of the Bible. Let me begin by stating a theological conclusion to all that we have seen in 1 Kings 5-7: **Jesus Christ is building a worldwide temple of his people, culminating in a new creation.**

Solomon, a son of God, builds a house for the Lord’s name. It is a house that draws from the wealth of other nations, and it represents the merger of heaven and earth. In this work, Solomon

is clearly a type of Christ. In John 2, Jesus said of the temple in Jerusalem, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John tells us that he was speaking of the temple of his body. The true temple, the true dwelling place of God with man, is Christ. But the New Testament also speaks of the church as God’s temple, with Christ as the cornerstone. Ephesians 2:19-22 says, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” Solomon constructed a temple made of wood and stone from the nations. Jesus Christ is building a worldwide temple made of his people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Every believer is another stone added to the house for the Lord’s name.

And it will all culminate in a new creation. When God first created the world, he created a place and then a people to inhabit it. In the work of new creation, he reverses the order: first he creates a people, and then he will create a place for them to inhabit. That’s why we have no sacred spaces in this world today. We cannot consecrate any particular location on earth as a holy site and invoke the glory-presence of God to be manifest there. God’s dwelling place is not in a building, or in any particular nation. It is among his people, wherever they gather. The Holy Spirit indwells us. We are God’s temple. But one day, when we are raised from the dead, the earth itself that now groans in pain because it was never designed to be a graveyard, will give birth to the risen, glorified bodies of the children of God. Then, and only then, creation will be cleared of all remnants of death, and it will be fit to become God’s holy dwelling place, a new creation.

Jesus Christ is going to call us out of our graves and make all things new. And when that day comes, Revelation 21:22 tells us there will be no temple in the New Jerusalem. Why not? A few verses earlier (vv. 15-16), we read, “And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.” The New Jerusalem itself, the whole city, is shaped like a massive cube. Why? Look again at 1 Kings 6:20: “The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold.” The Holy of Holies, God’s own space, was a perfect cube in Solomon’s temple. But it was relatively small, only about 30 feet by 30 feet by 30 feet. And it was off limits to all humanity, guarded by the massive golden cherubim who signaled to all who would dare enter, “Don’t come near!”. There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem because the whole city itself will be a massive Holy of Holies. God will make his dwelling place with us forever, because of the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

And that is what we were created for from the beginning. When God created Adam, he made him a priest-king in the very first temple, the Garden of Eden. God designed humanity to dwell with him and to behold his face forever. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” There is no higher aim, no greater joy, than to see God. And I want to submit to you that no matter what it is you may go through in this world, that transcendent hope of seeing God never changes. Maybe the dreams you had for your life, your personal achievements, or your family have been shattered. Maybe your body is falling apart. Maybe a lot of the promises the things of this world held out to you have not been delivered as

you once thought they would. Let me ask you this: have you been resting your hope for fulfillment on those things? Do you find your faith broken because life hasn't worked out the way you planned? If so, then thank God for breaking that kind of faith. It was never faith in his promises to begin with. It was a hope in this world that needs to give way to something far, far better, a hope that sees beyond this world to the hope of life in God's presence.

In his song "All Things New," Andrew Peterson begins,

"Come broken and weary. Come battered and bruised.
My Jesus makes all things new, All things new.

Come lost and abandoned. Come blown by the wind.
He'll bring you back home again, Home again."

Do you hear the paradox in that? Jesus makes all things new, and he brings you back home again. The new that Jesus brings is the old for which we were created from the beginning. In this present age, nothing you put your hope in will last. The fulfillment for which you long can be found only in Jesus Christ, the Son of David and last Adam who makes all things new by making them what they were always designed to be. As it turns out, God's holy temple was not designed to exclude us. Sin made that necessary. But when Jesus breathed his last on the hill of Golgotha, the veil that separated God's dwelling place from man, the veil that hid the inner sanctuary of the temple, was torn in two from top to bottom. And in that act, God said to us, "Welcome home." Amen.