

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST KINGS 5

This chapter relates Solomon's preparation for building the temple: on Hiram, king of Tyre, sending a congratulatory letter to him, he returned another to him, signifying his intention to build an house for God, and requesting him to supply him with timber, and men to work it, (~~1KIN~~1 Kings 5:1-6); to which Hiram readily agreed, and sent him cedar and fir, and Solomon in return sent him food for his household; and things went on very amicably between them, (~~1KIN~~1 Kings 5:7-12); the chapter concludes with an account of Solomon's workmen, where, how, and in what they were employed, (~~1KIN~~1 Kings 5:13-18).

Ver. 1. *And Hiram king of Tyre sent servants unto Solomon*, etc.] His ambassadors, to condole him on the death of his father, and congratulate him on his accession to the throne; this king is called by the Phoenician historians ^{f69} Hirom, and by Eupolemus ^{f70} Suron, as he is Hiram in (~~4CH~~2 Chronicles 2:3); and by Theophilus of Antioch ^{f71} Hierom the son of Abelmalus, in the twelfth year of whose reign the temple was built:

for he had heard that they had anointed him, king in the room of his father; that the Israelites had anointed him king:

for Hiram was ever a lover of David; a friend and ally of his; and we never read of the Tyrians being at war with him, or assisting any of his enemies.

Ver. 2. *And Solomon sent to Hiram*, etc.] A letter, either by the hand of his ambassadors when they returned, as Kimchi thinks, or by ambassadors Solomon sent on purpose. Josephus ^{f72} appeals to the Tyrian archives for the genuineness of these letters that passed between Hiram and Solomon; and Eupolemus, an Heathen writer ^{f73} has both this which Solomon sent to Hiram, and that which Hiram sent in answer to it, which agree with those in the sacred records:

saying: as follows.

Ver. 3. *Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the Lord his God,* etc.] As he designed, and was desirous of; and which Hiram might know not only by common fame, but from David himself, between whom there was an intercourse, and that in relation to cedars for building, which David had of Hiram, (^{<448B>}2 Chronicles 2:3);

for the wars which were about him on every side; or warriors, as the Targum, the Philistines, Moabites, Edomites, and Syrians:

until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet; made them subject and tributary to him, as he did at length, (see ^{<407E>}2 Samuel 7:1 8:1), etc. so the “Cetib”, or textual reading, is; but the “Keri”, or marginal reading, is, “under the soles of my feet”; that is, Solomon’s, which agrees with what follows; it was true of both.

Ver. 4. *But now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side,* etc.] From foreign enemies; for Solomon had no wars with any:

[so that there is] neither adversary; or Satan, no internal enemy in his kingdom, as well as no external ones, Adonijah, Joab, and other ill-designing persons, being cut off:

nor evil occurrent; nothing that rose up, and met him, to discourage or hinder the prosecution of the good work he had in view.

Ver. 5. *And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God,* etc.] For his worship, and for his honour and glory:

as the Lord spake unto David my father; by the prophet Nathan, (^{<407D>}2 Samuel 7:12,13);

saying, thy son whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name; which was no small encouragement to Solomon to go about this work; in which he was a type of Christ, the builder of his temple, the church, (see ^{<386Z>}Zechariah 6:12,13).

Ver. 6. *Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedars out of Lebanon,* etc.] That is, order his servants to cut them down there for him. Some think that Lebanon belonged to the land of Israel, and therefore Solomon did not ask for the cedars upon it, but for his servants to hew them for him; but as it lay upon the borders of Israel, part of it might belong to them, and another part to Hiram, and on which the best cedars

might grow, and so he furnished Solomon both with trees, and men to cut them, as it seems from (^{<1K50>}1 Kings 5:10); see also (^{<1CH2>}2 Chronicles 2:3,8);

and my servants shall be with thy servants: to assist them, and to carry the timber from place to place, and to learn how to hew timber:

and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants, according to all that thou shalt appoint; pay them for their work and service, as Hiram himself should judge fit and reasonable for them; no mention being made of paying for the timber, seems to countenance the notion that the trees were Solomon's; but when the quantity of provisions sent yearly to Hiram for his household, besides what the servants had, is observed, it seems to have been sent as an equivalent to the timber received by Solomon, (see ^{<1K50>}1 Kings 5:10,11);

for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians; it is not said Tyrians, the Sidonians, perhaps, being more skilful in this than they were; and the Sidonians are said by Homer^{f74} to be *πολυδαίδαλοι*, very ingenious: and they were both under the jurisdiction and at the command of Hiram; so Eupolemus^{f75} makes the inscription of Solomon's letter to him to run thus, to Suron (that is, Hiram) king of Tyre, Sidon, and Phoenicia. The Jews being chiefly employed in husbandry, and in feeding cattle, were very unskilful in mechanic arts, and in this of cutting down trees, and hewing timber; for there is skill to be exercised therein; the proper time of cutting down trees should be observed, the part in which they are to be cut, and the position in which they are to be put when cut down, as Vitruvius^{f76} directs, with other things, and Pliny^{f77} observes the same.

Ver. 7. *And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon,* etc.] The letter read he sent him:

that he rejoiced greatly; that the friendship which had subsisted between him and David was like to be continued between him and his successor, but chiefly for what follows:

saying, blessed [be] the Lord this day; or Jehovah, by which he seems to have some knowledge of the true God, the God of Israel, and might worship him, though along with him other deities, as some Heathen princes did:

which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people; which he perceived by the letter he sent him, and by his solicitous concern to build an house for the worship and honour of God, and by various other things which his ambassadors reported to him they had seen and heard in Solomon's court.

Ver. 8. *And Hiram sent to Solomon*, etc.] A letter to him, to the following purpose:

saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for; whether he could, and whether it was fitting he should grant his request; which was acting like a wise and prudent prince:

[and] I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir; or of cypress, as in Josephus's copy of this letter, and which grew on Lebanon^{f78}; these were odorous, sound, and durable timber, especially the cedar, and therefore chosen by Solomon for building.

Ver. 9. *My servants shall bring [them] down from Lebanon unto the sea*, etc.] The Mediterranean sea, on which Tyre stood:

and I will convey them by sea in floats; which were either a sort of carriage for the timber the Tyrians and Sidonians had, being furnished with various navigable vessels; or these were the timber itself, and the planks of it, which being fastened together, were set afloat under the direction of some boats with oars, of which they had plenty:

unto the place that thou shalt appoint me; which was Joppa, as appears from (<4126>2 Chronicles 2:16); belonging to the land of Israel, in the same sea:

and will cause them to be discharged there; either to be unloaded from the vessels, or to be unloosed and taken up separately:

and thou shalt receive [them]; by his servants appointed there to bring them to Jerusalem, which was forty miles from Joppa:

and thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household; signifying, that all that he desired in return was, that he would supply him with corn or wheat, which he stood in need of, and his letter in Josephus^{f79} expresses; and we find in later times this place was supplied with bread corn from Judea, (see <1580>Ezra 3:7 <3271>Ezekiel 27:17) (<4121>Acts 12:20).

Ver. 10. *So Hiram, gave Solomon cedar trees, and fir trees,* etc.] Ordered his servants to cut them down from Lebanon, and sent them to him in floats, which he received:

[according to] all his desire; he had as many as he requested, and what he wanted.

Ver. 11. *And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat [for] food to his household,* etc.] This measure was the Hebrew measure “cor”, or “corus”, and, according to Bishop Cumberland^{f80}, its contents were 17,477 solid inches; it was equal to ten ephahs, each of which held two gallons and an half, and the cor held seventy five wine gallons five pints, and somewhat more; according to some^{f81}, what it held was equal to six hundred forty eight Roman pounds; so that twenty thousand of them contained 12,960,000 pounds of wheat:

and twenty measures of pure oil; squeezed out of the olives without breaking them; the same kind of measure is here expressed as before, and the quantity answered to 12,960 Roman pounds; another writer^{f82} reckons a cor to contain 1080 Roman pounds; so that Hiram had every year 21,600 pounds of oil. In (³⁴²⁰2 Chronicles 2:10), it is twenty thousand baths of oil now not to take notice that the measures are different, a bath was but the tenth part of a cor, reference is had to different things; here the writer relates what was given to Hiram for his own family, there what was given to the workmen, where several other things are mentioned besides these:

thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year: so long as the building lasted, and the workmen were employed; but Abarbinel thinks that he gave it to him as long as he lived, out of his great munificence and liberality.

Ver. 12. *And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him,* etc.] Which, among other things, appeared in his preparations for building the temple, and in his agreements with Hiram for timber and workmen for that purpose and by continuing and confirming friendship between himself and Hiram, who was so serviceable to him:

and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and they two made a league together; in order to continue and establish peace and friendship between them, which Solomon might lawfully do, the Tyrians being no part of the seven nations with whom alliances were forbidden.

Ver. 13. *And King Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel*, etc.] Not of money, but of men, as follows:

and the levy was thirty thousand men; for what purpose, and how they were employed, (^{<1154>}1 Kings 5:14) shows.

Ver. 14. *And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses*, etc.] In their turns; these are the servants of his he proposed to be with Hiram's servants, assisting in cutting down the trees, and squaring the timber in Lebanon, (^{<1106>}1 Kings 5:6);

a month they were in Lebanon, [and] two months at home; that they might not be overworked; for they wrought but four months in the year in the hard service in Lebanon, the rest of their time was spent in managing their domestic affairs; these were Israelites:

and Adoniram [was] over the levy: the same that was over the tribute or the collectors of the tax, (^{<1106>}1 Kings 4:6); and, according to the Targum, these were such persons.

Ver. 15. *And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens*, etc.] Seventy thousand to carry the stones from the mountains out of which they were dug, and which were near Jerusalem, to the city; these were strangers in Israel, as were those that follow:

and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains: eighty thousand that dug the stones out of the quarries, and squared them; these, with the others, made 150,000, (see ^{<1407>}2 Chronicles 2:17); according to Jacob Leon ^{f83}, the number of workmen at the temple for seven years was 163,600, and some make them more.

Ver. 16. *Besides the chief of Solomon's officers which [were] over the work*, etc.] Over the whole work, preparatory for the building of the temple; though it seems chiefly to have respect to that of hewing the stones, and bringing them to the city:

three thousand and three hundred which ruled over the people that wrought in the work; to keep them to their work, and to see that they performed it well: in (^{<1428>}2 Chronicles 2:18); they are said to be 3600, which is three hundred more than here; those three hundred are the chief officers mentioned in the former part of this verse, which were over the whole work, and even over the 3600 overseers, and with them made up the

sum of 3600; so Jacob Leon ^{f84} observes there were 3300 master workmen, and three hundred commanders over them all.

Ver. 17. *And the king commanded, and they brought great stones,* etc.] Not in quality, but in quantity, large stones, fit to lay in the foundation; strong, and durable against all the injuries of time, as Josephus says ^{f85}:

costly stones; not what are commonly called precious stones, as gems, pearls, etc. but stones of value, as marble, porphyry, etc.

[*and*] *hewed stones*; not rough as they were taken out of the quarry, but hewed, and made smooth:

to lay the foundation of the house; which, though out of sight, was to be laid with goodly stones for the magnificence of the building; so the church of Christ, its foundation is said to be laid even with sapphires and other precious stones, (see ^{<2541>}Isaiah 54:11 ^{<6219>}Revelation 21:19).

Ver. 18. *And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew [them],* etc.] The stones; for it seems Solomon had not only hewers of wood, but of stone, from Hiram:

and the stonesquarers; or rather the Giblites, the men of Gebal, which were under the jurisdiction of Tyre, and were skilful in this sort of work, as some of them were in others, (see ^{<3270>}Ezekiel 27:9);

so they prepared timber and stones to build the house; both Solomon's and Hiram's builders, and the large number of workmen, both Israelites and strangers; which latter were an emblem of the Gentiles concerned in the building of the spiritual temple, the church of Christ, (^{<3065>}Zechariah 6:15); and whereas the number of strangers that wrought for the building was far greater than that of the Israelites, it may denote the greater number of Gentiles in the Gospel church state mentioned besides these: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year: so long as the building lasted, and the workmen were employed; but Abarbinel thinks that he gave it to him as long as he lived, out of his great munificence and liberality.