

Bible Workshop


Developing Bible study skills

5. David's input into Solomon's temple

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THIS STUDY is designed to highlight a number of different aspects of Bible study, as follows:

- that Bible study is not difficult or the preserve of the intellectual
- the need to give careful attention to the text
- the value of comparing Scripture with Scripture
- the value of building up a picture from various scriptures
- the value of recording and preserving information found.

 You will need:
Bible with marginal references
Concordance or computerised Bible

David told Solomon, "I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD" (1 Chron. 28:2), but he had been told by the Lord, "thou shalt not build an house unto My name" (22:8). This study will examine the degree to which David was involved in planning and preparing for the temple that Solomon built.

We will:

- look for indications as to when David first thought about the need for a permanent resting place for the ark
- see how David had these things on his mind even when he was fleeing from Saul
- establish that, though he was forbidden to build the temple, he devoted much effort in preparing for the temple and its worship
- see how the things that David prepared formed the basis of temple worship throughout the days of the kings of Judah.

When did David first think about building the temple?

David was on the throne in Hebron for seven-and-a-half years before he reigned in Jerusalem

(2 Sam. 2:11). He was reigning in Jerusalem when he said to Nathan, "See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains" (7:2), which indicates that David had a desire to build a temple in Jerusalem. Was this the first time that David thought about building a house for God?

Although there is no Scripture which says something like, "I decided to build a temple in Jerusalem", there are indications in Scripture which help to show to what extent building a temple was on David's mind. This study will show the benefit of using circumstantial evidence.


The opening of Psalm 132, "LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions", should alert us to the possibility that this psalm might provide an insight into David's thoughts. Maybe it will tell us something about David's attitude to the building of a temple. Now is a good time to read the psalm carefully. While you are reading it, think about God's desire to have a place for worship, and about David's life.

 Read Psalm 132

The following questions come to mind:

- What is David thinking about when he says, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes . . . until I find out a place for the LORD" (vv. 4,5)?
- Why does David say, "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah" (v. 6)?

In answer to the first question, in Deuteronomy 12 God repeatedly tells Israel, through Moses, that it is His intention to "choose" a place where He will put His Name (vv. 5,11,14,18,21,26). Psalm 132 informs us, "the LORD hath *chosen* Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation" (v. 13). So maybe the psalmist is telling us that David knew about God's plan to choose Zion.

 Look up references to 'Ephratah' in a concordance or computerised Bible

Regarding the second question, a concordance search for 'Ephratah' reveals that the word occurs

only five times in Scripture, three of which speak of a place, one identifying it as the town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).

As Bethlehem was David's home town (1 Sam. 16:4-13), it seems that David "heard" about the ark while he was at home, before he became Saul's armour-bearer, which happened when he was but a youth (17:33). So we have an indication that David thought about the ark and God's choice of a "place" even before he killed Goliath.

David's preparation for the temple

From our general reading of Scripture we might have noticed that David is mentioned from time to time with respect to the temple service, even after the days of Solomon. We might not have thought about the significance of these references to David, or we might not even have noticed them.

We will highlight some of these references, found by simply looking up 'David' in a concordance and working through all the occurrences that relate to events after the death of Solomon. As we look at each occurrence we should think whether the passage furthers our understanding of David and the temple at Jerusalem.

🔍 Look up 'David' in a concordance or computerised Bible and examine occurrences of the name in texts relating to the time after the death of Solomon, noting any that seem to relate to the temple in Jerusalem

An example of a passage that throws light upon David's involvement in preparation for the temple is, "All these . . . porters in the gates . . . whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain" (1 Chron. 9:22). We ask, When could David and Samuel have talked about this issue, since Samuel died during the reign of Saul at the time when David was fleeing from Saul (1 Sam. 25:1), before David came to the throne? Can we find any occasion when David and Samuel spent time together?

🔍 Use a computerised Bible to search for passages that contain the names of both David and Samuel

A computerised Bible enables us to find two passages where the record places Samuel and David together. The first is when he was anointed. The second was when he was fleeing from Saul (19:18). Even if there were other occasions when David met with Samuel that are not recorded, any

discussions between David and Samuel must of course have taken place before Samuel's death, while Saul was still on the throne. From this we conclude that David and Samuel spent time on at least one occasion discussing the details of how worship would be conducted in the temple that was to be built.

Here are four more occasions where the record says that things were done according to what David had commanded:

In the time of Solomon: "And he [Solomon] appointed, according to the order of David his father . . ." (2 Chron. 8:14).

In the time of Hezekiah: ". . . according to the commandment of David" (29:25).

In the time of Josiah: ". . . according to the commandment of David" (35:15).

After the return from Babylon: ". . . according to the commandment of David" (Neh. 12:24).

So we can see that the administration set up by David was in place throughout the time of the kings and was revived after the seventy years in Babylon, yet David never saw the temple!

This study has differed from the previous studies in that it relies on a familiarity with a wide range of scriptures, and an ability to notice details as one reads which might not seem particularly relevant at the time of reading but which provide valuable background information for specific topics. This sort of information can only be gleaned from regular, systematic, careful Bible reading. Again, the importance of making notes that can be easily referred to each time we read Scripture can be seen.

🔍 Record your findings

The importance of making notes on points that are gleaned from our systematic reading cannot be overemphasised. Whilst one might remember, for a time at least, major pieces of exposition, it is most unlikely that little details such as we have adduced in this study will stick in our minds. Better is it that they are noted in your Bible so that when you are embarking upon some specific study the background details that you have found will be readily to hand.

The exhortation that we can draw from this study is that David was focused on the things of the Kingdom, even though he knew he would not be able to build the temple. Further, we realise that this focus was present in his very young years, and did not leave him even when he was fleeing from Saul for fear of his life.