

Watch The Throne: A House For My Name
1 Kings 5:1-9, 6:18-28, 6:11-13

I wonder if you've considered the many different ways that ideas can be communicated

Just up the road in lakeland there's a college called Florida Southern. Some of you all go there and others of you are at least familiar with it, it's a smaller liberal arts school, but it has the distinctive honor of having had a significant majority of its buildings designed by a famous Architect named Frank Lloyd Wright.

-As wonderful as florida southern's campus might be, Wright's most famous architectural structure is a building called, "Falling water." Which will be on the screen. It's considered one of the masterpieces of the architectural world, and the best expression of Wright's desire to see buildings that work in harmony with the natural world around him.

-The building itself is a way of communicating the ideas of the one who created it.

You know one of the more famous buildings in the world is called the, "Winchester Mystery House." It was built by the wife of the man who founded the Winchester Rifle Company. At some point in their marriage he passed away from tuberculosis. In her grief Sarah Winchester went to see a psychic to help her contact her lost loved ones.

-As she got more involved in the practices she became deathly afraid that the ghosts of everyone killed by her husbands rifles would haunt her. So she had a special mansion built to confuse the ghosts.

-There are doors leading nowhere, 40 different bedrooms, and only 1 working toilet. All of this was

done to confuse the ghosts she feared would come for her.

There was a movement that emerged in the 20th century called post-modernism that argued that all truth was relative, that at its core life was a contradiction with no inherent meaning or coherence. You may have heard of post modernism as a way of thinking, or even as a philosophy, but post modernism also became a form of Architecture. Buildings were constructed that were meant to sort of convey the jumbled nature of the world we live in.

-The point being that buildings aren't just spaces to keep the rain out. Sometimes the structures we build are ways of telling deeper truths. Sometimes the structures we build are a way of bearing witness to what we believe about the world.

So I'm not saying this to give you a crash course in architecture theory and practice. We come to a text this evening that it would be easy to glaze over at. We have this very detailed description of the building of the temple. We might be tempted to look at these like we do genealogies or the book of leviticus. This portion of scripture that we are sure is important but not sure how, a part of the Bible we can skip over and get back to the less complicated portions. I want to argue that if we do that, we miss something critical.

-This isn't just a room to keep the rain out, the temple is a building that is meant to tell us something about God, the world, and redemption.

The Better Babel 5:1-9: Any sort of a building project has to start with laying plans and with the gathering of resources. Solomons temple is no different, we aren't told about the planning process but we pick up in chapter 5 with the gathering of resources. But

it's interesting that Solomon doesn't just use the resources of Israel to build the temple.

-We're told that Hiram, king of Tyre hears what Solomon is doing and asks to help. He provides wood from the cedars of Lebanon which were renowned in the ancient world for their strength and beauty.

-We're also told that men from Gibeon offer to help cut the stones that will be used for the temple.

It would be easy to see all of this as just some interesting historical information. But there's more going on here, and the Jewish person reading this has heard this before. This story is sounding familiar...people from the nations are coming together to build something significant...this is like the tower of Babel.

At Babel the nations of the world gather for a massive building project, but there are some differences

-At Babel the people say, "Let us make a name for ourselves" at the temple they say, "Let us make a house for the name of the Lord."

-At Babel the people say, "Let us ascend to heaven" at the temple they say, "Let us make a place for God to dwell among us."

Babel stands as a monument to human rebellion and arrogance, while the temple shows us God's desire not to scatter people but to gather people from every tribe, tongue, and nation around himself.

This is why we go to the nations, this is why we send teams to Scotland, and Africa, and the Middle East. Because God is in the business of gathering the peoples of the world around himself and his Glory and we want to be about the things of God

The Return To Eden 6:19-28: I often joke about the fact that baptists build terrible church buildings. But there's really nothing funny about it because I'm mostly not joking. We tend to see the buildings we worship in as spaces to keep the rain out and nothing more.

-Historically we RED DOORS, PULPITS UP FRONT, CRUCIFORM STRUCTURES

I think this underscores the point that sometimes the choices we make aren't rooted in what we think looks nice, but they're rooted in something much deeper.

In 6:19-28 we hear about the furnishings of the temple, and again we're tempted to skip this and let our eyes glaze over, but the way the temple is decorated is telling us something about the world in which we live. Maybe you missed this...but the temple is covered in flowers, pomegranites, palm trees, gourds. Not just that, but there is gold everywhere. In other texts we read that the entrance of the temple faces east.

Maybe you're not picking up what Solomon is putting down. But the people of Israel's mind goes to one thing when they see the temple.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold

Because what Solomon designs the temple to look like is a garden. Solomon builds a temple that looks like eden. The great longing of the human heart is to return to paradise lost, to return to the presence of God which was withdrawn in Adam's sin.

You know, when a relationship is broken things that you used to love, and cherish, and value suddenly become really painful reminders of what or who you've left behind. So a word of advice, if you're going to have to break up with someone, don't do it in your favorite park, or coffee shop, or restaurant. Do it somewhere you both hate so you won't be bummed out perpetually. Also, don't make your favorite song your, "Us Song" because it's going to take years for you to wash their memory out of that track.

-Solomon's temple is beautiful, it's impressive, it points back to eden. But in the center of it are two Cherubim. Nearly 15 feet high standing at the entrance to the Holy of Holies where the presence of God would dwell.

-It was two cherubim who guarded the entrance to eden and keep adam from returning to the presence of God.

At the heart of this temple is a reminder, "You can never really go back." Only the high priest can enter here, and even he will risk his life. There sits at the heart of this temple a longing to return back to the full presence of God, but an understanding that not even the temple will be enough.

He Dwells Among Us 6:11-13: In the middle of all of this building, the Lord meets with Solomon, and we're not told exactly how. But he relays to Solomon that if Solomon will be faithful he will dwell among his people in the temple.

Can I tell you that this is the persistent desire of God throughout the whole of the scriptures. He walks among adam and even in the garden. He is present among the people of Israel as a pillar of fire and in the tabernacle during their wilderness wanderings. Now, again he says to Solomon...I will dwell among my people, but the terms here are that you must be a faithful king.

-Of course for a season this covenant is upheld. Solomon is a faithful king, and the presence of God fills the temple. But then Solomon turns from the Lord...and the king after him, and the king after that. Israel is divided as a nation, until we come to 500bc. When Ezekiel sees a vision of the presence of the Lord leaving the temple.

-He doesn't come back for hundreds of years. God dwells among Israel no longer. But there is a hope... that one day the presence of God will return

That is until John opens his famous Gospel: In the beginning was the word. The word was with God...and the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Two things have prevented God from dwelling permanently among his people throughout the history of scripture.

-The first is their sin

-The second is the faithlessness of their kings.

At the Cross God deals with our sin, and Christ becomes our faithful king. So that at the end of the book of Revelation the angel can announce to John, "Behold! The dwelling place of God is now with man!"

This is why Jesus says to the religious leaders, "Something greater than the temple is here." He is the temple, he is the priest, he is the sacrifice, he is the king. He is the way we

***must walk and the door through which we must pass if we
are ever to get back to what was lost in eden***