

# The Temple and the Palace

Notes for 12 Jul

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Read: [1 Kings 6-7](#), [2 Chronicles 5-6](#)

Today's section of 1 Kings is a tour guide, particularly in the NLT version referenced above. We are taken around the Temple that Solomon built and we are expected to utter appreciative noises at all the grand things that can be found there.

I'm a bit of an armchair architect. I have a great weakness for those hideously expensive architecture tomes published by the likes of [Phaidon](#) and [Taschen](#).

I think I would have rather enjoyed my tour of Solomon's temple...

But why is it in my Bible? What does it bring to the story? Are we to take any lessons from it?

## The House of God?

I live in Europe and Europe is *full* of spectacular churches. St Paul's in London; the magnificent cathedrals of Salisbury and Lincoln. I wept when Notre Dame in Paris burned, and I've devoured every TV documentary and magazine article on the restoration - I **will** visit one day. Sagrada Familia in Barcelona; the mighty edifices of Koln and Chartres; St Giles and St Mary's in Edinburgh. The list goes on. I once spent a memorable night taking part in the '[Night of the Adoration](#)' in Sacre Coeur in Paris and got to sit, all alone at 1am, in the cathedral to stare at the ceiling and drink it all in.

The modern stuff [is pretty good](#), too. And I really rather like my local Crieff Adventist Church, which dates back 50-some years and was built by the [Maranatha](#) group of volunteers who give generously of themselves to build churches in all sort of places.

Do you ever wonder what God makes of these monuments? Do you think the creator of, say, the rings of Saturn, would be wowed by a gothic steeple? If not, then why do you think we build them?

In one of my amblings across Spain on the Camino de Santiago I spent a day in Leon, home of a very spectacular church. I paid my 6 Euros to visit and [made this comment](#) in my notebook:

*The audio guide said that in the 13th century, when the cathedral was built, the town was a mere 5000 people. That's smaller than my home town in Scotland. I'm never entirely sure if this is a genuine sacrificial act of community worship or some feudal game of "who has the best cathedral" played by the ruling classes, whilst the peasants would really rather just have some more food. I suspect the latter but I suppose we'll never know. In any case the cathedral is magnificent.*

I recall a rather good joke from the 1980s about a terrible fire that consumed part of the ancient York Minster, in England.

Two days before the fire the Anglican Church had consecrated a new Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins. Jenkins, famously, didn't really seem to believe in God - apparently not an impediment

to career advancement in the Church of England - and a [section of the British press](#) took great delight in positing that the fire was divine intervention.

One day, went the joke, God was floating by, and as he hovered above the burned roof of York Minster he thought to himself, "Hmmm! It looks rather nice in there; I must go in sometime..."

## Discussion

- Do you like church buildings? What do they do (or not do) for you?
- Is it sensible for a community to build something like Leon cathedral, when there's a good chance that the peasants would rather eat?
- In amongst the tour guide of 1 Kings 6 there is an interruption (vv 11-14). God says 'Concerning this Temple you are building...!
  - The Temple *you* are building...?
  - Is this Temple not God's idea?
  - Whose idea is it?

What is God saying to Solomon?

- Read this...

*I am sick of your sacrifices. Don't bring me any more of them. I don't want your fat rams; I don't want to see the blood from your offerings. Who wants your sacrifices when you have no sorrow for your sins? The incense you bring me is a stench in my nostrils. Your holy celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath, and your special days for fasting—even your most pious meetings—all are frauds! I want nothing more to do with them. I hate them all; I can't stand the sight of them. From now on, when you pray with your hands stretched out to heaven, I won't look or listen. Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear, for your hands are those of murderers; they are covered with the blood of your innocent victims.*

*Oh, wash yourselves! Be clean! Let me no longer see you doing all these wicked things; quit your evil ways. Learn to do good, to be fair, and to help the poor, the fatherless, and widows.*

...and compare the sentiments with 1 Kings 6 and 7. How do you reconcile the two?

- I once attended a seminar on church growth where the speaker said that if a church spends more than 50% of its income on itself then it has no right to exist and should close down. Discuss!