

Solomon's Porch and the Message That God Is Light — September 8, 2024

1 Kings 7; John 10; Acts 3 and 5; 1 John 1; John 1 and 8

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 7:6, 21; John 10:22–23; Acts 3:1–11; 5:12; 1 John 1:1–10; John 1:4–9; 8:12

“And he set up the right pillar, and called its name Jachin; and he set up the left pillar, and called its name Boaz.” (1 Kings 7:21)

“This then is the message which we have heard from him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)

Eagles and Parrots: The Treasures Hidden in Scripture

There is a saying attributed to a historical figure: when the eagles are silent, the parrots start chattering. The world is full of chattering parrots — noise that occupies, distracts, and fills the hours. The word of God is the eagles' voice, and it contains treasures that a casual glance would entirely miss. First Kings 7:6 describes the porch of Solomon's temple: its length fifty cubits and its breadth thirty cubits, with pillars before it and steps. A verse like this can seem at first to offer nothing beyond an architectural measurement. But in the word of God, everything has meaning, and the measurements of the temple were not arbitrary.

The Numbers of Solomon's Porch: 30 and 50

The number 30 appears at significant points in Scripture. The Lord Jesus began his public service at thirty years old (Luke 3:23). David ascended the throne at thirty (2 Samuel 5:4). Joseph stood before Pharaoh at thirty (Genesis 41:46).

These three — two of them explicit types of Christ — all began their visible service at thirty. This has led to the observation that thirty may speak of responsibility in service before God. The Lord Jesus could say of himself, I always do those things that please the Father. His every word and work was in responsibility before God, and it began, publicly, at thirty.

The number fifty is connected with the year of jubilee in Leviticus 25:10: thou shalt hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty in the land unto all the inhabitants thereof. In the jubilee, debts were cancelled, land was restored, and the man who had labored for years under the weight of what he owed was made free. Fifty is therefore associated with liberty and release from bondage. The dimensions of Solomon's porch — fifty cubits by thirty cubits — carry in them, if these meanings hold, a suggestion of service in responsibility before God, and liberty from what had bound us.

Jachin and Boaz: God's Sovereignty Inscribed on the Pillars

First Kings 7:21 names the two pillars that Solomon set up at the porch of the temple. The right pillar he called Jachin — He will establish. The left pillar he called Boaz — In him is strength. In naming the pillars thus, Solomon inscribed on the most visible architectural feature of the entrance to God's house a confession of dependence: all that is built here, everything that stands here, stands because God establishes it, and the strength in which it stands is his. A man who was responsible for the most magnificent building ever constructed by human hands began that building with those words. God establishes. In him is strength.

Solomon's Porch in the New Testament: Three Appearances

What makes the detail of Solomon's porch remarkable is that it appears three times in the New Testament, each time with moral weight.

First, in John 10:22–23: it was winter, and Jesus walked in the temple in the porch of Solomon. The note about winter is not meteorological; it is moral. A man had been born blind and the Lord had restored his sight. The religious leaders said it was done by the power of the devil. Could there be a deeper winter in the soul than to call the goodness of God the work of Satan? Yet that was the moral condition of the nation as the Son of God himself walked in Solomon's porch. How far they had come from Solomon, who named his pillars He will establish and In him is strength. Now the God who establishes all things stood before them and they called him a demon.

Second, in Acts 3:1–11: Peter and John went to the temple and encountered a man lame from birth at the gate called Beautiful. Peter said, Look on us. The dog trainer presses the same lesson — your dog must look at you, or how will it know what you want? The Lord has goodness for us; the precondition is that we look at him. The lame man leaped up, walked, and entered the temple with them walking and leaping and praising God. And in verse 11, the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. Not many years after the Lord had walked there and been called a devil, the same place was the scene of healing and testimony and the praising of God. Divine grace does not abandon the place where man has failed.

Third, in Acts 5:12: by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders done among the people, and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. The power of the Holy Spirit, sent from the exalted head in heaven, was operative in the same porch. Solomon's porch, built with those dimensions and those named pillars, endured as the place where God showed his mercy and his power — through the winter of Israel's rejection, and out the other side into the early days of the church's testimony.

God Is Light: The Greatest Message That Could Be Given

First John 1:1–5 is John writing from the perspective of one who had been physically present with the Lord Jesus: that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled. John leaned on the Lord's bosom. He was an eyewitness. And he says: the life was manifested and we have seen it. In Christ was the manifestation of divine life. And connected with that manifestation is a message — not of him but from him: God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

This is the greatest message that anyone will ever hear. Not climate change, not political causes, not any of the things the chattering parrots fill the air with. God is light. That is eternal. That will never change. Light by its nature brightens and exposes. Any room is brighter with light. But the quality of light matters enormously. Sunlight will expose every smear and streak on a window that even the brightest artificial light leaves invisible. God as light is the highest and most searching light possible. In him is no darkness at all. And Ephesians 5:8 says that we were darkness — not in darkness, but darkness itself. That was our moral condition. But now are ye light in the Lord.

John 1:4 says: in him was life, and the life was the light of men. And John 8:12: I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. We have life in Christ. Before we had it we were spiritually dead — biologically alive but dead toward God. The light exposed what we were; it also gave life to what the light found dead.

The full force of the truth that God is light only comes home when we consider the cross. It was there that the light of God was most fully displayed. The awfulness of sin was never so clearly seen as when God forsook his own Son in those three hours of darkness. God was there, as light, and it was because he is light that there could be no other sacrifice. The darkness of the cross was the cost of cleansing those who were themselves darkness. If we do not own that God is light, we will never fully value that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us

from all sin. We will never be fully brought to the confession that begins true fellowship: God is light, and I am not. That confession, made honestly, opens the way into the fellowship that is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

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God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*