

And the Word became flesh and Tabernacled among us.

The building of the temple will be our focus in the Sunday evenings through Advent – which fits nicely with the incarnational theme of the season!

I’ve given you an outline of 2 Chronicles 1-9 in the bulletin:

- A. Solomon’s Wisdom and Wealth (1:1-17)
- B. Recognition by the Gentiles (2:1-16) [Hiram declares the LORD’s Love for Israel]
 - C. Temple Building/Gentile labor (2:17-5:1)
 - D. Dedication of the Temple and God’s Response (5:2-7:22)
 - C’. Other Construction/Gentile labor (8:1-16)
- B’. Recognition by the Gentiles (8:17-9:12) [Queen of Sheba declares the LORD’s Love for Israel]
- A’. Solomon’s Wealth and Wisdom (9:13-28)

The Chronicler’s interest in Solomon is particularly focused on how Solomon’s wisdom is for the purpose of building the temple.

Introduction: the New Joshua (1:1)

¹ *Solomon the son of David established himself in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.*

We have again in verse 1, another connection between Solomon and Joshua.

The Chronicler wants you to see that the transition from David to Solomon is very much like the transition from Moses to Joshua.

Moses wanted to lead Israel into the land – but God did not allow him to do so.

David wanted to build a temple for the LORD – but God did not allow him to do so.

But in both cases, God raised up a successor who would complete the work they wanted to do. And in both cases identical language used in their commissioning:

Both Joshua and Solomon are told:

“Be strong and courageous” – Dt 31:7, 23; Josh 1:6, 7, 9 (1 Chron 22:13, 28:20)

“Do not be frightened or dismayed” – Dt 31:8, Josh 1:9 (1 Chron 22:13, 28:20)

“the LORD your God is with you.” – Dt 31:6-8, Josh 1:5 (1 Chron 28:20; 2 Chron 1:1)

Moses and David both make double announcements –

the first time privately before a few leaders (Dt 1 and 1 Chron 22)

the second time publicly before the assembly (Dt 31 and 1 Chron 28).

While we tend to remember the wisdom of Solomon,

it is worth noting that Joshua also receives divine wisdom for his calling (Dt 34)

And like Joshua conscripted the Gibeonites into the service of the tabernacle in Joshua 9,

Solomon conscripts the resident aliens into the service of the temple.

And finally,

Joshua and Solomon both enjoy wholehearted and immediate support from the people –

Dt 34/Josh 1; 1 Chron 29

This last point calls for some comment:

In 1 Kings we learned that Solomon had to deal promptly and quickly with an attempt by his brother, Adonijah, to gain the throne for himself – but with the help of his mother, Bathsheba, Solomon was able to overcome it.

But the Chronicler's point is that whatever minor intrigues may have taken place, Solomon received the overwhelming support of the people and the princes.

There are three themes in our passage tonight:

Solomon's Wisdom,
Solomon's Preparations for Building the Temple,
and Solomon's International Relations

But if you put it that way, you miss how interrelated these themes are.

Because Solomon's Wisdom is given *for the purpose* of temple-building.
And Solomon's International Relations are oriented towards temple-building.

In other words, what the Chronicler wants you to see is that Solomon's mission is to build the temple.

Wisdom, wealth, international trade and diplomacy – all of these things are about temple-building.

We saw last time that Solomon (like Joshua) points us forward to Christ.

And King Jesus is also building a temple – a holy dwelling place for the Spirit.
The Chronicler wants you to see that the temple is at the center of the king's mission.

We'll see this first in the liturgical context of Solomon's Wisdom (verses 2-13), second, in the international perspective on Solomon's wealth (verses 14-17), and third in Solomon's temple-centered foreign policy (chapter 2)

1. The Assembly at Gibeon: Solomon's Wisdom in Liturgical Context (1:2-13)

²Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, to the judges, and to all the leaders in all Israel, the heads of fathers' houses.

Verse 2 tells us that Solomon spoke to all Israel – and particularly to the same group of leaders as David at the end of 1 Chronicles.

And then all the assembly joined Solomon at the high place at Gibeon.

In 1 Kings we are told only that Solomon went to Gibeon to sacrifice to the LORD at the great high place there.

Here in 2 Chronicles we are given a lot more detail:

³And Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon, for the tent of meeting of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there. ⁴(But David had brought up the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the place that David

had prepared for it, for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.)⁵ Moreover, the bronze altar that Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, had made, was there before the tabernacle of the LORD. And Solomon and the assembly sought it out.⁶ And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

So Solomon came to the tent of meeting –
the tabernacle that Moses had built.

You can see again how Solomon is the new Joshua,
because Solomon's visit to the tabernacle
is explicitly connected with the Mosaic bronze altar.

In this way you see something of a chiasmic structure to the story of Israel:
Moses builds the tabernacle;
Joshua defeats Israel's enemies and gives them peace;
Israel fragments in the days of the Judges and of Saul
David defeats Israel's enemies and gives them peace;
Solomon builds the temple.

You can see how all this fits together:
Israel was called to be the second Adam – (Israel is my son, my firstborn)
the one who would succeed where the first Adam failed;
but Israel failed – just like Adam!

Now the story comes full circle:
Solomon is the new Israel (he is the Son of God, adopted by the LORD).
He is called to succeed where Israel failed – where Adam failed.
If Solomon and his sons are faithful and obey God's law,
then God will bless Israel forever.

Remember where Chronicles starts:
Adam is the first word of the book.

Solomon is the new Adam who will return to the garden (the most holy place).

So *worship* is at the heart of what Solomon is all about.
Temple-building is not an end in itself.
The reason why you build the temple is so that God might be worshiped.

As John Piper has said, mission exists because worship doesn't.
The purpose of mission – the purpose of evangelism – the purpose of discipleship –
is so that people would worship God.

And God endows his Son with wisdom, so that he might build the temple.

⁷ *In that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you."* ⁸ *And*

Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to David my father, and have made me king in his place. ⁹O LORD God, let your word to David my father be now fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. ¹⁰Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?" ¹¹God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked long life, but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people over whom I have made you king, ¹²wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like." ¹³So Solomon came from the high place at Gibeon, from before the tent of meeting, to Jerusalem. And he reigned over Israel.

Verses 7-13 then recount the familiar story from Kings.

God appears to Solomon in a dream.

And God says, "Ask for whatever you want."

Solomon's reply is a good example of petitionary prayer:

he starts with what God has done – and what God has said.

When Jesus says "ask and you shall receive,"

he assumes that you have learned how to pray from the scriptures!

If you ask in Jesus' name, then you will receive whatever you ask for!

After all, Jesus is the Son of God – the Son of David –

the one greater than Solomon –

the one to whom God will grant anything that he asks!

If Jesus asks, the Father will do it.

And so therefore, you should ask "in Jesus' name" –

Your prayer requests should be mission-oriented, temple-oriented, kingdom-oriented!

It is not wrong to ask for the healing of the sick –

that is one part of Jesus' mission.

But I fear that the reason why these requests dominate our prayers

is because we do not have a temple-building mission!

If a modern Christian had been in Solomon's shoes,

I fear he would have asked for health and long life.

But Solomon asks for wisdom that he may govern the people of God.

And remember the context:

he has come to Moses' tabernacle,

together with all the Assembly (the church) of Israel,

and has been engaged in the public worship of the LORD.

And therefore Solomon begins his prayer by remembering what God has said and done:

"You have shown great and steadfast love to David my father,

and have made me king in his place.
O LORD God, let your word to David my father be now fulfilled...”

Solomon prays that God will do what he has promised.

That’s an interesting way to start:

God asks, “what do you want for me to do for you?”

And Solomon replies, “do what you promised!”

How often do you pray for God to do what he has promised?

Let me put it this way:

Until you have learned to pray – sincerely –

that God will do what he has promised,

then you will not be prepared to ask for whatever you want!

Your heart must be in tune with what God wants –

you must have a kingdom-centered, a temple-centered focus.

And because Solomon has a kingdom-centered, temple-centered focus,
his one desire is for the wisdom to rule God’s people.

As we saw last time,

God tests the hearts of his people,

not because he doesn’t know what is there,

but because he wants to see what is there!

He wants to see your temple-centered mission

displayed in your life,

so that he might receive all glory and honor through you!

2. Solomon’s Wealth in International Perspective (1:14-17)

¹⁴ Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. ¹⁵And the king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. ¹⁶And Solomon’s import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king’s traders would buy them from Kue for a price. ¹⁷They imported a chariot from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver, and a horse for 150. Likewise through them these were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

In verses 14-17, we see that God gave Solomon not only wisdom, but also wealth.

And we see Solomon’s wealth in International Perspective –

but that international perspective is still a temple-centered perspective.

(Which is interesting, since the temple is for Israel – right?)

Verse 15 is the most famous verse in this section:

“And the king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone,
and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah.”

This is the verse that speaks of the “golden age” of Solomon.
Plainly it is hyperbole.
No one seriously believes that there was as much gold and silver
as there was stone in Jerusalem.
(Have you ever seen pictures of Jerusalem? There is a lot of rock there!!)
But the point is clear:
in the history of Jerusalem there was never a time when there was so much gold.

And the chief focus of this gold, silver, and cedar,
will be found in the construction of the temple – and of Solomon’s palace.

Verses 16-17, though, should not be neglected,
because they show *how* Solomon accumulated his wealth.

Solomon became an international arms dealer.
He imported horses and chariots from Egypt and Kue,
and exported them to the Hittites and Syrians.
What this demonstrates is the importance of holding the territory of Israel
(not so much Judah – as the hill country is irrelevant to the foreign powers)
but if you control the valley of Jezreel,
from Mt Carmel to Mt Gilboa,
then you control the overland trade routes between Egypt and Syria.

If Syria and the Hittites want access to Egyptian goods,
they now have to go through Solomon.

And while “international arms dealer” may not be the most evangelistic sounding title,
Solomon is beginning to become what Israel was supposed to be:

the Seed of Abraham through whom the nations will be blessed.

Jerusalem is becoming the holy place –
the most holy dwelling place for the presence of the LORD with his people.
All the most precious things in the world are gathering in Jerusalem.

Of course, in Jesus we see that this holy temple is the Son of God himself.
Jesus is the place where earth and heaven meet.
Jesus is the place where God meets with man in the flesh.

Jesus is the place where the Spirit of God descends and dwells.

And then Jesus will gather all the most precious things in the world to himself –
as he draws all men to himself through the cross!

And you see this even more clearly in chapter 2:

3. Solomon's Temple-Centered Foreign Policy (2:1-18)

a. Solomon's Letter to Hiram (v1-10)

¹Now Solomon purposed to build a temple for the name of the LORD, and a royal palace for himself. ²And Solomon assigned 70,000 men to bear burdens and 80,000 to quarry in the hill country, and 3,600 to oversee them. ³And Solomon sent word to Hiram the king of Tyre: "As you dealt with David my father and sent him cedar to build himself a house to dwell in, so deal with me.

In Kings we also hear of Solomon's letter to Hiram,
but in Kings the letter is about how God has given him rest on every side,
and so now he is ready to build a temple for the LORD;
and all Solomon asks for is cedar, and woodcutters.

Here (not surprisingly) the focus is exclusively on the temple:

⁴Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the LORD my God and dedicate it to him for the burning of incense of sweet spices before him, and for the regular arrangement of the showbread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed feasts of the LORD our God, as ordained forever for Israel.

Notice that Solomon emphasizes liturgical arrangements.
The Chronicler is reminding people in his day (and ours)
that the LORD our God has ordained certain things that *must be done*
in his worship.

The burning of incense is closely associated with the prayers of the saints.
The showbread and the burnt offerings were part of the sacramental worship of the OT.

The Sabbaths, new moons and feasts were how God structured the liturgical life of Israel.

How should we think about this?

Paul says 'let no one judge you in matters of food or drink,
or in Sabbaths, new moons, and feasts,'
all of these things were shadows – but the substance, the body that cast the shadows –
is Christ.

Jesus Christ *is* the temple of the living God.

He *is* the liturgy of the holy temple.

Think about how the book of Revelation portrays this.
In Sunday school a few weeks ago,
we went through the liturgy of 2 Chronicles 5-7,
and we saw how that liturgy was fulfilled in Revelation 4-19.
Jesus is the substance of the liturgy.

Our worship is all about him.

Solomon saw this in the shadows of his day,

and the reason for this exclusive focus is not hard to discern:

⁵The house that I am to build will be great, for our God is greater than all gods. ⁶ But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him? Who am I to build a house for him, except as a place to make offerings before him?

Solomon recognized that the temple could not “contain” the living God.
The temple was not the “dwelling place” for *LORD*,
but rather a dwelling place for the *name* of the LORD –
a place to make offerings before him.

I don’t object to calling this room “the sanctuary”
because it *is* the place where the temple gathers.
It is the place where we offer ourselves as living sacrifices before him!

But even Solomon understood that *we* cannot build a house to “contain” him.

But Solomon wants this house to be the best, the most glorious temple ever built,
and he realizes that such a temple will require assistance from those outside Israel.

⁷So now send me a man skilled to work in gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and in purple, crimson, and blue fabrics, trained also in engraving, to be with the skilled workers who are with me in Judah and Jerusalem, whom David my father provided.

There are some skilled workers in Israel,
but not enough.

They need a master-craftsman who will oversee the work.
In Moses’ day, they found such men in Bezalel and Oholiab,
men of Israel who were filled by the Spirit with wisdom/skill to do the work.
But now Solomon looks outside of Israel for such a man.

⁸Send me also cedar, cypress, and algum timber from Lebanon, for I know that your servants know how to cut timber in Lebanon. And my servants will be with your servants, ⁹to prepare timber for me in abundance, for the house I am to build will be great and wonderful. ¹⁰ I will give for your servants, the woodsmen who cut timber, 20,000 cors of crushed wheat, 20,000 cors of barley, 20,000 baths of wine, and 20,000 baths of oil.”

And he promises to pay Hiram’s men handsomely.

b. Hiram’s Reply: the LORD Loves His People (v11-16)

¹¹Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in a letter that he sent to Solomon, “Because the LORD loves his people, he has made you king over them.” ¹²Hiram also said, “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, who has discretion and understanding, who will build a temple for the LORD and a royal palace for himself.

And Hiram replies in a way that demonstrates that he is a true worshiper of Yahweh,
as he confesses that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is maker of heaven and earth.
And he declares that the accession of Solomon as king
demonstrates Yahweh's love for his people, Israel.

Already we begin to see in Solomon's day, the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham,
"those who bless you will be blessed" – and through your seed,
"all nations will be blessed."

"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." (Isaiah 56:7)
Isaiah said it first –
but the principle was demonstrated in its very construction.
The nations gathered together to build the house for the name of the LORD.

Even so, at the end of Chronicles, the nations will gather together to tear it down!

But here, the blessing of Abraham has come to Tyre
because Hiram has blessed David and Solomon.

¹³"Now I have sent a skilled man, who has understanding, Hiram-abi, ¹⁴ the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre. He is trained to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, and wood, and in purple, blue, and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and to do all sorts of engraving and execute any design that may be assigned him, with your craftsmen, the craftsmen of my lord, David your father. ¹⁵Now therefore the wheat and barley, oil and wine, of which my lord has spoken, let him send to his servants. ¹⁶ And we will cut whatever timber you need from Lebanon and bring it to you in rafts by sea to Joppa, so that you may take it up to Jerusalem."

And so now Hiram sends Hiram-abi to Solomon.

There are two things you need to see about Hiram-abi.

First, he is a "skilled man, who has understanding."

The word for "skill" is the same word used of Solomon – "wise."

Wisdom and skill both translate the same Hebrew word.

Wisdom for ruling, skill for building – same word.

There is a wisdom of the mind and a wisdom of the hands.

There is a skill in knowing how to bring justice and righteousness in human relations,
and a skill in knowing how to make beautiful things.

Both are essential to Christ's kingdom.

But secondly, Hiram-abi is a Gentile.

His father was a man of Tyre, and whose mother was of the daughters of Dan
(Kings says Naphtali, but Naphtali and Dan were neighbors,
and their people doubtless mingled – so both could easily be true).

Since Oholiab (in Exodus 31) was of the tribe of Dan,
the Chronicler no doubt wanted to show the parallel between Oholiab and Hiram-abi.

Moses' tabernacle was built by Israelites for Israelites.
The key craftsman for Solomon's temple was a Gentile –
and many other Gentiles served in the labor force:
both Sidonian woodcutters,
as well as the resident aliens in Israel.

c. Solomon's Labor Force: the Resident Aliens (v17-18)

¹⁷Then Solomon counted all the resident aliens who were in the land of Israel, after the census of them that David his father had taken, and there were found 153,600. ¹⁸Seventy thousand of them he assigned to bear burdens, 80,000 to quarry in the hill country, and 3,600 as overseers to make the people work.

We saw these numbers of laborers at the beginning of the chapter.
Only now do we hear that they were resident aliens.

Just as Joshua had put the Gibeonites to work as hewers of wood and drawers of water
for the tabernacle,
so now Solomon puts the resident aliens to work in the building of the temple.

You might not think that being put to forced labor is a great deal.
But there is a sense in which that is what Jesus has done to you!

“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,
you are slaves of the one whom you obey,
either of sin, which leads to death,
or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?
But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin
have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching
to which you were committed,
and, having been set free from sin,
have become slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:16-18)

You are not your own – you have been bought with a price.
You do not have discretionary power over what you will do.
Christ has purchased you – you belong to him!

Of course, as Paul concludes in Romans 6:23,
“the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”

You have been conscripted into the forced labor of the heavenly temple –
but you discover when you get to the labor camp,
that you have also been adopted as a son,
and given an inheritance together with the King!

And because you are sons, you may do whatever you please!
So long as “whatever pleases you” resembles Jesus!

This is why Paul will go on in Romans 7-8 to talk about the war between the flesh and the Spirit.
If you walk according to the flesh, you will die.
But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh, you will live.

Your affections – your desires – that which you love and are drawn to –
must be centered on Jesus – on his kingdom – on his temple – on his mission.