

**The Ideal United Kingdom
(1 Chronicles 9:35 – 2 Chronicles 9:31)**

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<p>The Reign of Solomon, part 3: Solomon's International Assistance (2 Chronicles 2:1-18)</p>
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Solomon's International Assistance (2:1-18)

The mention of Solomon's international trade (1:16-17) led the Chronicler to focus next on the international assistance he received in building the temple. This portion of Solomon's reign balances with 8:17-9:12 where Solomon receives international recognition for his accomplishments (see figure 22).

Comparison with 1 Kgs 5:1-16; 7:13-14

This material derives primarily from two portions of the book of Kings. Nevertheless, the Chronicler added, omitted, and rearranged sections of these passages for his own purposes. In addition to insignificant variations due to stylistic changes and textual transmission, five items deserve comment.

First, the most important variation is the omission of 1 Kgs 3:16-4:34. In these chapters the book of Kings illustrates Solomon's wisdom in his judicial decision and governmental bureaucracy. None of this material ran counter to the Chronicler's purposes, but he probably streamlined events in Solomon's life so that the temple project moved quickly into view.

Second, several variations have the effect of enhancing Solomon's role in these events. 1) 2 Chr 2:1 replaces 1 Kgs 5:1. 1 Kgs 5:1 begins with Hiram initiating contact with Solomon. The Chronicler had no reason to deny this fact, but he removed the verse in Kings to emphasize Solomon as solely responsible for the events described here. 2) 2 Chr 2:2 is a displaced summary of 1 Kgs 5:15 which also appears in 2 Chr 2:18. The Chronicler repeated the same information in 2 Chr 2:2 and 2:18 to construct the passage into a symmetrical unit. Moreover, the repetition of the large numbers of workers at Solomon's disposal enhanced his importance. 3) The Chronicler omitted Solomon's offer to let Hiram set the wages for his workers (2:8 // 1 Kgs 5:6) and added a record of Solomon's pledge to pay large sums for Hiram's laborers (2:10). By this means, Solomon remained in complete control of the affair. 4) The Chronicler expanded Hiram's praise of Solomon (2:11-12 // 1 Kgs 5:7). His adulations

focus on Solomon's **discretion and understanding** (2:12) in ways that allude to the Queen of Sheba's words in the balancing portion of Solomon's reign (see 9:5-8). Hiram's elaborate adulations included the Chronicler's belief that the Davidic throne showed that **the Lord loves his people** (2:11).

Third, in two places the Chronicler omitted references to David. 1) As we have seen before (see 1:1-13), the Chronicler turned his attention away from David to Solomon in this material. 1 Kgs 5:3-4 explains why David did not build the temple. The Chronicler omitted these verses; apparently he felt he had sufficiently dealt with this issue earlier (see 1 Chr 17:15). 2) The reference to David choosing Solomon is probably omitted for the same reason (1 Kgs 5:5b).

Fourth, 2:13-14 allude to 1 Kgs 7:13-14. A number of affinities in terminology appear between these passages. In 2:13-14 the Chronicler reported Hiram's plan to send the skilled man **Huram-Abi** (not to be confused with King Hiram) to Solomon. He did not, however, report the actual sending of the **Huram-Abi**.

Fifth, Chronicles abbreviates 1 Kgs 5:14-18 (// 2:15-18) to focus on the numbers of conscripted laborers. This variation probably resulted from his desire to parallel the concerns of the corresponding section of 2:2.

Structure of 2:1-18

The Chronicler's interaction with Kings resulted in three symmetrical segments (see figure 23). Very closely parallel passages report the numbers of conscripted laborers at the beginning and end (2:1-2; 2:17-18). These portions frame Solomon's correspondence with Hiram (2:3-16) which also divides into Solomon's letter (2:3-10) and Hiram's response (2:11-16).

Solomon's Conscripted Laborers (2:1-2)

At this point Chronicles turns to Solomon's construction of the temple. This shift is indicated by the simple assertion that Solomon gave **orders to build a temple** (2:1). Throughout Chronicles, successful building projects appear as signs of divine blessing (see *Introduction: 24) Building and Destruction*). As mentioned above, this verse replaces 1 Kgs 5:1 which indicates that Hiram the king of Tyre contacted Solomon first. The Chronicler did not deny this fact, but did not want to distract from his portrait of Solomon as the indisputable leader of temple construction.

The Chronicler noted that Solomon not only called for **a temple for ... the Lord**, but also a **royal palace for himself**. Solomon's splendid palace comes into focus a number of

times (see 2:12; 7:11; 8:1; 9:3,11), but the details of its construction (1 Kgs 7:1-12) are omitted. The Chronicler may have viewed the amount of time spent on Solomon's palace relative to the temple as a flaw in the king's character (see 1 Kgs 6:38; 7:1). In all events, Chronicles concentrates attention on the surpassingly more important palace (temple) for God.

As in other passages, Solomon said the **temple** would be **for the Name of the Lord** (2:1). The Name of the Lord refers to the immanent presence of God on earth. The invocable powerful presence of God would dwell in Solomon's temple so that Israel could have access to the transcendent God through prayer in and toward the temple. This Name theology focused attention on the importance of the temple not only in Solomon's day but also in the Chronicler's time (see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*).

The Chronicler moved to a description of the conscripted laborers used in temple construction. He briefly drew upon 1 Kgs 5:15 which he repeated again in 2:18. In the ancient Near East, it was customary for kings to have many forced laborers for large building projects. The writer of Kings made it clear that Solomon did not make Israelites his slaves (see 1 Kgs 9:20-22). Yet, the complaints of Northerners against Rehoboam and Solomon imply that Israelites may have been compelled to be supervisors of the workers (see 10:1-4; see also 1 Kgs 5:13-18). 1 Kings 11:28 indicates that Solomon gave Jeroboam charge of the laborers. Along these lines, the **foremen** in 2:2,18 may refer to this arrangement as well. The laborers themselves, however, were **aliens who were in Israel** (2:17).

Mosaic Law prohibited the enslavement of Israelites except for temporary and voluntary indentured service (see Lev 25:39,42). Moses permitted the enslavement of foreigners living in the land (see Lev 25:39-55) as well as prisoners of war (see Dt 20:14; Lev 25:46). Yet, slaves were protected by Mosaic Law far more than in many cultures surrounding Israel. A slave was emancipated if physical harm was done to him and the master was punished if the slave died from a beating (see Ex 21:20,26). Even foreign slaves celebrated the Sabbath with their masters (see Ex 20:10; Dt 5:14). As progressive as Old Testament Law may have been for its time, it still fell short of the divine ideal. The teaching of the New Testament on the subject of slavery (see 1 Cor 7:21; Philemon 1:16), makes it clear that these Mosaic regulations were concessions to the "hardness of heart" (Matt 19:8) because "it was not so from the beginning" (Mt 19:8).

The large numbers of workers show how Solomon put his national resources to the task of building the temple. Solomon's enthusiastic pursuit of temple construction formed a vital aspect of the Chronicler's ideal portrait. The post-exilic readers were to imitate Solomon's devotion as they supported the temple and its services in their day.

Solomon and Hiram Correspond (2:3-16)

Building the temple required materials and skilled workers beyond those available in Israel. For this reason Solomon turned to **Hiram king of Tyre** (An alternative spelling "Hiram" appears in the Hebrew of Chronicles [see NRS, NKJ, NAS]). Tyre was a seaport along the Phoenician coast. From biblical records we know that Hiram was a prominent trader in the ancient world with access to rare goods and skilled workers (see 1 Kgs 5:1,12; 1 Chr 14:1; 2 Chr 2:11,12; 9:21).

The Chronicler's record of contact between Hiram and Solomon divides into two parts: Solomon's letter (2:3-10), and Hiram's response (2:11-16). These materials are similar to the account of 1 Kgs 5:2-12 and 7:13-14, but several variations reveal a distinctive outlook.

Solomon's letter to Hiram (2:3-10) consisted of three requests. Solomon asked for: 1) a supply of **cedar logs** (2:3b-4), 2) a **man skilled** (2:5-7), 3) **cedar, pine, and alnum logs from Lebanon** (2:8-10). Only the third request closely parallels the book of Kings (2:8a // 1 Kgs 5:6a). Consequently, this record of Solomon's requests came from the Chronicler's hand and reflected his chief concerns.

In the first request for **cedar logs** Solomon appealed to Hiram's relationship with **David** (2:3; see 1 Chr 14:1). Just as David had to depend on Solomon to fulfill his plans (see 1 Chr 22:7-10; 29:1), now Solomon depended on David's previous relation with Hiram. This interdependence between David and Solomon was an important dimension of the Chronicler's viewpoint on the United Kingdom. Each of them represented aspects of one ideal which the Chronicler set before his post-exilic readers.

The explanation for his first request (2:4) is part of the largest addition the Chronicler made to Solomon's letter. This temple was for **the Name of the Lord [his] God** (2:4; see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*). Solomon wrote that this temple would be **dedicated** to God for three particular purposes: **incense** (see Ex 25:6; 30:7-8), **consecrated bread** (see Ex 25:6; 30:7-8), and **burnt offerings** (see Nu 28:3; see Lev 1; 6:8-13) **every morning and evening on Sabbaths** (see Nu 28:9-10), **New Moons** (see Nu 10:10) and **feasts** (see Nu 10:10). Many of these elements of worship have already been highlighted in other ideal assemblies (see 1 Chr 16:1; 21:26; 29:21; 2 Chr 1:6; 7:7; 8:12).

The reason for the Chronicler's emphasis on these worship activities appears in words that follow: **this is a lasting ordinance for Israel** (2:4b). Most translations of this verse treat these words as part of Solomon's letter. It is possible, however, that they are the Chronicler's own authorial comment. Whatever the case, the effect is the same. Solomon's plan to observe these elements of worship was not just for his day. The Chronicler stated explicitly that his worship arrangements had been decreed for Israel throughout the Old Testament period, including the Chronicler's post-exilic era (see *Introduction: 14) Standards*).

The second portion of Solomon's letter (2:5-7) is the Chronicler's addition. It consists of an explanation (2:5-6) and a request (2:7). In his explanation, Solomon expressed his plan for the building itself. It **will be great** (i.e. both **large and magnificent** [2:9]) because **our God is greater than all other gods** (2:5). The temple must reflect the supremacy of Israel's God (see Ex 18:11; Ps 135:5).

Beyond this, Solomon acknowledged that no one is **able to build a temple** that is splendid enough **for him**, because the **highest heavens ... cannot contain him** (2:6). No matter how great the temple may be, it would not be magnificent enough to match the grandeur of Israel's God. Solomon drew on these concepts again at the dedication of the temple (see 6:18; see also Ps 139:7-10; Isa 66:1; Jer 23:24; Acts 7:48,49).

It is no wonder that Solomon closed his explanation with an allusion to the humble words of David, "**But who am I?**" Solomon recognized that he was unworthy of this honor. Moreover, he knew he was unable to do anything more than make **a place to burn sacrifices before** God (2:6). The temple could be nothing more than a place to perform earthly sacrifices to honor Israel's transcendent God.

For these reasons, Solomon made a second request. He asked for **a skilled man** (an artisan) who knew how to work with **gold, silver, bronze, iron, purple crimson, blue yarn, and engraving** (2:7). As later descriptions of the temple illustrate, these skills were needed for the various furnishings and decorations of the temple. Hiram's **skilled man** was not to work alone; he was to supervise the **skilled craftsmen** whom **David provided** (2:7).

Solomon's third request was for trees **from Lebanon** (2:8). The forests of Lebanon were renown for producing trees of strength and beauty (see Ps 29:5; 104:16; Song 5:15; Isa 37:24). While this request has a rough parallel in 1 Kgs 5:6a, Solomon's motivation is largely without parallel in Kings. He said that **the temple ... must be large and magnificent** (2:9). To insure Hiram's positive response, Solomon promised to pay the **woodsmen** well for their work (2:10). Once again, expense was not an issue for Solomon. He was willing to spend whatever it took to build an appropriately splendid temple for God. The Chronicler's post-exilic readers must be ready to do the same in their day.

Hiram's Letter (2:11-16)

Hiram sent a letter to Solomon agreeing to meet his requests. His letter divides into three parts: praise of Solomon (2:11-12), report of sending Hiram-Abi (2:13-14), and the request for payment (2:15-16). The first and last portions roughly parallel Kings (2:11-12 // 1 Kgs 5:7-8; 2:15-16 // 1 Kgs 5:9). The middle portion (2:13-14) has no direct parallel in 1 Kgs 5, but corresponds to the account of Hiram's fulfillment of his promise in 1 Kgs 7:13-14.

Hiram began his response to Solomon with extensive praises for the king (2:11-12). Both Kings and Chronicles report how Hiram wrote that God had **given David a wise son** (2:12 // 1 Kgs 5:7). In addition to this, however, more elaborate praises were heaped on Solomon.

First, Hiram claimed that Solomon was king **because the Lord loves his people** (2:11). On several occasions, the Chronicler emphasized that the Davidic line was God's gift of love to Israel (see *Introduction: 5) Royal and Levitical Families*). To counter any misgivings about the legitimacy and necessity of re-establishing David's royal line, the Chronicler seized another opportunity to remind his post-exilic readers that the Davidic line was their divine blessing.

Second, after expanding the praise of God to include **who made heaven and earth** (2:12a // 1 Kgs 5:7), the Chronicler returned to praise Solomon. He added to Kings that Solomon has received **intelligence and discernment** (2:12b). He also urged that Solomon would build **a temple for the Lord and a palace for himself** (2:12c). This last addition recalls 2:1 and demonstrates Hiram's agreement with all that Solomon planned to do. Moreover, it also anticipates the praise which the Queen of Sheba gave to Solomon (see 9:5-8). The Chronicler revealed his own attitude toward Solomon in Hiram's words. Solomon was wise and accomplished much that benefited Israel.

The second portion of Hiram's letter describes how he sent **Huram-Abi** to oversee the artisans working on the temple (2:13-14). As we have seen, a number of correspondences exist between this section and 1 Kgs 7:13. 1 Kgs 7:13 calls this man "Hiram," but the Chronicler used the longer form of the name ("Huram-Abi").

The third portion of Hiram's letter requests that Solomon pay for his services (2:15-16). This portion roughly parallels 1 Kgs 5:9, but has been adapted to match the language of Solomon's promised payment in 2:8-10. This modification also made it clear to the Chronicler's readers that Solomon received full cooperation from Hiram (see 2:1-2).

This correspondence between Solomon and Hiram contributed a significant element to the Chronicler's portrait of relations between Israel and other nations. In later portions of his history, the Chronicler demonstrated the dire consequences of reliance on foreign powers (see 16:1-9; 28:16-21; see also *Introduction: 3) International Relations*). Solomon's actions, however, make it clear that the Chronicler did not prohibit all contact with foreigners. In fact, he honored Solomon for using the help of other nations even in temple construction. The Chronicler may have focused on this feature of Solomon's activity to counter radical exclusivism in the post-exilic community. So long as Israel's cooperative efforts with other nations were in the service of God's purposes and under their supervision, such cooperation was not forbidden.

More on Solomon's Conscripted Laborers (2:17-18)

In balance with the opening of this section (see 2:2), the Chronicler gave additional information on Solomon's conscripted laborers. The first portion roughly parallels 1 Kgs 5:13-17 and reports that Solomon **took a census of all the aliens who were in the land** (2:17). As mentioned above (see 2:2), Solomon did not conscript Israelites as laborers. He numbered the aliens who had survived the conquest (see 8:8) and employed them for work on the temple much as **David his father** had done (2:17; see 1 Chr 22:2). For other examples of census in Chronicles see 1 Chr 21; 27:23-24; 2 Chr 2:17; 14:8; 17:14-19.

The second portion of this material (2:18) is nearly a perfect repetition of 2:2. The expression **with 3,600 foremen over them to keep the people working** is somewhat ambiguous. It may be understood that the 3,600 were from among the laborers (NRS, NAS, NKJ), or it may be taken as a reference to another group (perhaps Israelites) who served over the conscripted laborers (NIV). The latter approach seems best in the light of the fact that David did not conscript Israelites as laborers (see 8:9).

In all events, by repeating this information, the Chronicler highlighted Solomon's exemplary devotion of national resources to the temple project. The Chronicler's post-exilic readers also had to be ready to dedicate the resources of the nation to the temple in their own day.