

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

by Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

<p>The Reign of Solomon, part 4: Solomon's Temple Building Project (2 Chronicles 3:1–5:1)</p>
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Solomon's Temple Building Project (3:1-5:1)

The Chronicler moved directly from Solomon preparing to build the temple (2:1-18) to the construction itself (3:1-5:1). This material balances with his further discussion of the actual construction in 8:1-16 (see figure 22). These chapters focus on various structures, furnishings, and decorations in Solomon's temple. A summary of the temple and its contents may be found in the Introduction to this commentary (see *Introduction: Appendix B - The Structures, Furnishings and Decorations of Solomon's Temple*).

Comparison with 1 Kings 6:1-7:51

The Chronicler depended to varying degrees on 1 Kgs 6:1-51 as he described the buildings and furnishings of the temple complex. A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this commentary, but a number of large scale comparisons will reveal the distinctive emphases of the Chronicler's record.

The following comparison traces the contours of the relationship with Kings (see figure 24). As the comparison indicates, the text of Chronicles and Kings relate in four ways. First, most of the Chronicler's text amounts to rough parallels with sections from Kings. In these portions, small differences appear, but the Chronicler's dependence on Kings is still evident. Particular differences in these sections will be addressed in the comments that follow.

Second, some portions of these chapters very closely parallel the book of Kings. They too will be noted in the comments that follow.

Third, the Chronicler omitted large portions of Kings.

1) He did not refer to 1 Kgs 6:4-20. Apparently, some of the details of the temple did not interest him (1 Kgs 6:4-10; 14-20). Moreover, he did not repeat the conditional promise of divine presence in the temple (1 Kgs 6:11-13). Although the Chronicler mentioned

conditionality in David's speech to Solomon (see 1 Chr 28:9), here he omitted the conditions associated with God's promises to Solomon as he had beforehand (see 2 Sam 7:14b // 1 Chr 17:13; 1 Kgs 3:10-14 // 2 Chr 1:11-12).

2 Chr		1 Kgs
3:1-2	Introduction (loosely parallel)	6:1
	Buildings (3:3-17)	
3:3-4	- Overview of Temple (loosely parallel)	6:2-3
-----	- Details and Solomon's Conditional Promise (omitted)	6:4-20
3:5-7	- Main Hall (loosely parallel)	6:21-22
	- Most Holy Place	
3:8-9	Details (added)	-----
3:10-13	Cherubim (loosely parallel)	6:23-27
3:14	Hiram-Abi (added)	-----
-----	- Details and Solomon's Palace (omitted)	6:28-7:14
3:15-17	- Portico (loosely parallel)	7:15-22
	Furnishings (4:1-10)	
	- In the Priestly Court	
4:1	Bronze altar (added)	-----
4:2-5	Metal Sea (closely parallel)	7:23-26
-----	- Details on Ten Moveable Stands (omitted)	7:27-37
4:6	Ten basins (roughly parallel)	7:38-39a
4:7-8	- In the Main Hall (added)	-----
	- In the Priestly Court	
4:9	Courts Distinguished (added)	-----
4:10	Location of Sea (loosely parallel)	7:39b
4:11-22	Appendix (closely parallel)	7:40-50
5:1	Closing (closely parallel)	7:51

Comparison of 2 Chr 3:1-5:1 and 1 Kgs 6:1-7:51 (figure 24)

2) 1 Kgs 6:28-7:14 also do not appear in Chronicles. Once again, for some unknown reasons certain details do not seem to have interested the Chronicler (1 Kgs 6:28-38; 7:9-14). He also omitted the record of Solomon's palace (1 Kgs 7:1-8). His focus was on the temple instead. Moreover, he may have interpreted the contrast of "seven years" construction for the temple (1 Kgs 6:38) with "thirteen years" construction for the palace (1 Kgs 7:1) as a blemish on Solomon's record.

3) Details regarding "the ten movable stands of bronze" (1 Kgs 7:27-37) are omitted. The Chronicler was less concerned with the detailed descriptions of the stands and more interested in explaining their function (see 4:6,14).

Fourth, new material is added to the account of Kings in four places. 1) 3:8-9 adds information about the Most Holy Place. Gold overlay and **nails** in the room are of particular interest. 2) 3:14 adds information about the skills of Hiram-Abi. 3) The Chronicler added a brief note about the **bronze altar** (4:1) to the record of furnishings in the priestly court (4:1-6). 4) Similarly, he added information regarding the distinction between the **courtyard of the priests** and the **large court** (4:9). The reasons for these additions are not clear. In all likelihood, however, they were motivated by questions related to the reconstruction of the temple in post-exilic times.

Structure of 3:1-5:1

This passage divides into five symmetrical sections (see figure 23). 3:1-2 and 5:1 form a frame for this passage by describing the beginning and ending of Solomon's construction effort. The king's work divides into three parts: the building itself (3:2-17), the furnishings (4:1-10), and an addendum which reiterates and elaborates on the preceding material (4:11-22).

Solomon Begins Construction (3:1-2)

The opening words of this section set this material on par with the first two steps of Solomon's reign, in which he **established himself** (1:1) and **gave orders to build a temple** (2:1). In the third step of his kingdom he **began to build the temple** (3:1). Moreover, this verse also balances with 5:1 where it is said that **all the work ... done for the temple ... was finished**.

3:1-2 differs from its parallel in 1 Kgs 6:1-3 in several important ways. On the one hand, Kings dates this event from the exodus from Egypt. The Chronicler simply noted the day within Solomon's reign (3:2). On the other hand, the Chronicler informed his readers of a fact not presented anywhere else in Scripture. He noted that **the temple of the Lord** was build on **Mount Moriah** which was **the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite** (3:1). The

Chronicler stressed the holiness of the place of temple construction by identifying it with the site where God had shown mercy to Abraham and to David. Abraham prepared to offer Isaac and received a substitute for Isaac on **Mount Moriah** (see Gen 22:1-19). **The threshing floor of Ornan** (3:1) was the **place David had appointed** (3:1). God demonstrated great mercy to David at this threshing floor by forgiving David of his sins and healing the land (see 1 Chr 21:1-22:1). As a result, the Chronicler established that Solomon's temple was located at the place where his readers could find mercy from God as well.

Solomon's Temple Buildings (3:3-17)

The first concern of this material is the central architectural structure of the temple complex. Following the account of 1 Kgs 6:2-3, the Chronicler began with a brief overview of the central building (3:3-4). His record focuses on the dimensions of **the temple** (3:3) (which included the Main Hall and the Most Holy Place) and the **portico** (3:4). Contrary to the NIV, 3:4b should be kept with the first half of the verse (compare NAS, NKJ, NRS). The Chronicler added the fact that the interior of the portico was overlaid with gold.

An unusual insight into the Chronicler's motivations appears in 3:3. Unlike the parallel in 1 Kgs 6:2-3, the Chronicler explained that the measurements he gave were **using the cubit of the old standard** (3:3). The standard size of a cubit in the Chronicler's day was larger than "the old standard" (see Ezk 40:5; 43:13). Here the Chronicler openly revealed his concern to communicate clearly to his post-exilic readers (compare 1 Chr 29:7).

After his quick overview of the central building of the temple complex, the Chronicler narrowed his focus to describe details of its three main sections (3:5-17): the **Main Hall** (3:5-7), the **Most Holy Place** (3:8-14), and the **portico** (3:15-17). His concern with some specific items may seem pedantic to contemporary readers, but they provided his readers with essential knowledge of the splendor of Solomon's temple. These visual images inspired them to reach for this glorious ideal in their own day.

First, the Chronicler dealt with the **Main Hall** (3:5-7 // 1 Kgs 6:21-22). He focused on its glory in two ways. He added that Solomon **paneled the main hall with pine** (3:5). He also added that this paneling was decorated with **precious stones** (3:5). Moreover, rather than simply stating that Solomon "overlaid the whole interior in gold" (1 Kgs 6:22), he specified that gold was overlaid on **the ceiling beams, doorframes, walls, and doors ... and the carved cherubim on the walls** (3:7). Only a few choice people had ever seen the Main Hall of the temple. The Chronicler's detailed description gave his readers a spectacular vision of the room.

Second, the Chronicler turned to **the Most Holy Place** (3:8-14). The last verses of this section parallel Kings (3:10-14 // 1 Kgs 6:23-27), but the opening verses are additional (3:8-9). Once again, the addition focuses on the splendor of the decorations. The text mentions **six**

hundred talents of fine gold on the walls (about 23 tons or 21 metric tons) (3:8), **gold nails** (or "hooks" as it may be translated) each weighing **fifty shekels** (about 1.25 pounds or 0.6 kilograms) and **gold on the upper parts** (3:9).

Abbreviating the record of Kings (3:10-14 // 1 Kgs 6:23-27), the Chronicler described the **pair of sculptured cherubim ... overlaid ... with gold** (3:10). The combined wing span of the cherubs extending from one end of the room to the other was **twenty cubits** (about 30 feet or 18 meters) (3:11,13). These cherubs represented the angelic beings worshipping and ministering around the throne of God in heaven (see Ezk 1:4-28; 10:1-22; Isa 6:2-3; Rev. 4:8-9; 5:8-14).

The Chronicler closed his description of the Most Holy Place by adding 3:14. He mentioned a colorfully decorated **curtain** separating the Most Holy Place from the Main Hall. Kings describes doors at this location (see 1 Kgs 6:31-32; 7:50). A curtain hung at this place in the tabernacle (see Exod 26:31; 36:35). Apparently both doors and a curtain separated the two rooms in Solomon's temple.

Third, the Chronicler skipped a large portion of Kings (1 Kgs 6:28-7:14) to place his discussion of the **portico** next to the other sections of the central temple building (3:15-17 // 7:15-22). His main concern here was the two **pillars** that stood at the top of the stairs leading to the portico. He abbreviated the record of Kings and mentioned the decorative **chains** and **pomegranates** (3:16). His primary concern, however, was the symbolic names of the **pillars** (3:17). The pillar to the left (**south**) was named **Jakin** which means, "He (God) establishes." The pillar to the right (**north**) was called **Boaz** which means "Strength is in him (God)." The pillars were doxological displays of what went on within the walls of the temple. The nation of Israel found strength and was established by the divine presence there.

By mentioning this symbolism, the Chronicler inspired his post-exilic readers to give due attention to the temple in their own day. The pillars of the portico reminded them that the divine presence in the temple was their only hope for safety and victory.

Solomon's Temple Furnishings (4:1-10)

The record of the furnishings for various parts of the temple complex divides into three sections. Notes appear on the priestly court (4:1-6), the Main Hall (4:7-8), and the priestly court for a second time (4:9-10).

First, the Chronicler turned to the priestly court (4:1-6). These verses do not explicitly identify the priestly court as the location, but a comparison of the items here with those of 4:8-10 makes the connection clear. The Chronicler's description consists of an addition of his own (4:1), a closely parallel middle portion (4:2-5 // 1 Kgs 7:23-26), and an omission of 1

Kgs 7:27-27 which allowed him to place the material of 4:6 (// 1 Kgs 7:38-39a) adjacent to this section.

The **bronze altar** mentioned in the Chronicler's addition (4:1) is well-known in Kings and Chronicles. In line with his focus on the colossal dimensions of the temple, the Chronicler mentioned that it was **twenty cubits long, wide, and ten cubits high** (approximately 30 x 30 x 15 feet [or 9 x 9 x 4.5 meters]).

A description of the **Sea** appears next (4:2-5); its use is described later (4:6b). The **Sea** was about 15 feet (2.3 meters) in diameter with about a 44 foot (13.3 meters) circumference (1 Chr 18:8; 2 Chr 4:6,10,15). It held approximately 17,500 gallons (66 kiloliters) of water. The book of Kings mentions "gourds" under the rim of the Sea (1 Kgs 7:24). The Chronicler called them **figures of bulls** (4:3a) or as it may be translated "figures like bulls" (see NAS, NKJ). His words probably reflect his impression of the gourds' appearance. These **twelve bulls** on which it stood (4:3-4) faced in all directions and probably represented the twelve tribes of Israel who came to the temple from all directions.

The last items within the priestly court were the **ten basins for washing** (4:6). The mention of these items caused the Chronicler to add an explanation of their function. The **Sea** was for the **priests for washing** while the **basins** were for **the things (utensils) to be used in burnt offerings** (4:6b).

Second, the Chronicler turned to the furnishings of the **Main Hall** in a short addition to the record of Kings (4:7-8). He mentioned **ten gold lampstands** (4:7,20; 13:11; 1 Kgs 7:49) corresponding to the one lampstand of Moses' tabernacle (see Exod 25:31-39; 37:17-24; 40:4). **Ten tables** were in the room (4:8,19; 13:11; 29:18) corresponding to the one table in the tabernacle (see Exod 25:23-30; 37:10-16; 40:4,22). In addition to these furnishings, Solomon made one hundred **gold sprinkling bowls** (4:8,11,22). The large number of these bowls is known only from Chronicles. Again, the grandeur of Solomon's temple comes to the foreground.

Third, this section ends by returning to the furnishings of the priestly court (4:9-10; compare 4:1-6). A distinction is made between **the courtyard of the priests and the large court** (4:9). Kings reports that there were courts surrounding the temple (see 1 Kgs 6:36; 7:12), but the Chronicler distinguished these two courts along the lines of Ezekiel's descriptions of the post-exilic temple (see Ezk 40-48). The **large court** was for the laity involved in worship; the **courtyard of the priests** was for the priests and Levites only (4:9). His purpose in adding this note was to locate the **Sea** in the priestly courtyard at the **southeast corner** of the temple (4:10).

Reiteration and Elaboration (4:11-22)

This passage breaks the overarching symmetry of this section (see figure 23) and follows the book of Kings closely (// 1 Kgs 7:40-50). Some interpreters have concluded that these verses may have been inserted into Chronicles after its original composition during the centuries of textual transmission (see *Introduction: Translation and Transmission*). It is more likely, however, that the Chronicler simply copied from Kings at this point as an addendum to his main discussion. This material divides into two sections: work attributed to Hiram-Abi (4:11-18) and Solomon's furnishings and decorations (4:19-22).

Only a few comments are necessary for this passage. First, it should be noted that the NIV omits the name Hiram(-Abi) from 4:11a. The Hebrew reads, "Hiram also made ..." The entirety of 4:11 deals with Hiram(-Abi)'s work. Second, many of the items mentioned here have already been described in much greater detail, but some have not appeared before now. Third, the Chronicler may have included these lists which record item after item in order to illustrate further the glory of the temple, revealing it as a place containing things of wonder beyond number (see 4:18).

Solomon Completes Construction (5:1)

The Chronicler closed his account of Solomon's temple construction by quoting 1 Kgs 7:51. This verse balances with the opening verses of this section. There **Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord** (3:1-2); now he **finished the Temple of the Lord** (5:1).

Upon completion of the construction, Solomon **brought in the things his father David had dedicated** (5:1). Chronicles reports David's wars (1 Chr 18:1-20:8) and explains that David had devoted the spoils of battle to **the treasuries of God's temple** (see 1 Chr 18:8,10; 22:3,14,16; 26:26; 29:29). By alluding to this connection between David and Solomon's temple, the Chronicler once again tied the two kings together around their central concern, the temple project. As two sides of this one project, both David and Solomon served as models for post-exilic Israel.