

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

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<p><b>The Reign of Solomon, part 5: Solomon's Assembly to Dedicate the Temple, part 1 (2 Chronicles 5:2-6:11)</b></p>
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*Solomon's Assembly to Dedicate the Temple (5:2-7:10)*

In this section of Solomon's reign we come to the fourth and greatest act Solomon performed, the dedication of the temple. He **established himself** as king (1:1), **gave orders to build a temple** (2:1), **began to build the temple** (3:1), and now **summoned** an assembly to **Jerusalem** (5:2). This assembly is the topic of the Chronicler's record until Solomon **sent the people to their homes** (7:10).

*Comparison with 1 Kgs 8:1-66 and Ps 132*

In this passage, the Chronicler followed two main texts: 1 Kgs 8:1-66 and Ps 132. His record diverges in small ways on occasion. These differences will be addressed in the discussions that follow. On a large scale, however, a number of comments deserve attention.

First, the Chronicler added 5:11-13a. These verses draw attention to details related to the priests and Levitical musicians present at the assembly. In his usual fashion, the Chronicler showed himself much more interested in the priests and Levites than the book of Kings (see *Introduction: 4-9 King and Temple*).

Second, at first glance it appears that Chronicles adds 6:5b-6a, but this is probably not the case. An analysis of 1 Kgs 8:16 suggests that it is more likely that these sentences were originally in Kings and lost through the textual transmission of Kings (see *Introduction: Translation and Transmission*). The repetition of the word "there" in 6:5b-6a triggered the loss.

Third, 6:13 also appears to be added to the record of Kings (// 1 Kgs 8:22). It is more likely, however, that this verse was also lost from the book of Kings through a scribal error (see *Introduction: Translation and Transmission*). The repetition of "spread out his hands" (6:12,13) probably caused a scribe to skip the intervening material.

Fourth, in 6:40-42 the Chronicler replaced 1 Kgs 8:50-53 with portions of Ps 132:1, 8-10. In Kings, Solomon's prayer ends with an appeal to God's redeeming work in the Exodus from Egypt. The Chronicler dropped this theme (see 3:2 // 1 Kgs 6:1; also 6:11 // 1 Kgs 8:21) in order to heighten the importance of the promise to David. This focus fit well with the Chronicler's emphasis on the vital connections between David and Solomon's reigns.

Fifth, the Chronicler diverged from Kings in a small manner in 6:14. 1 Kgs 8:25 reads "walks before me." The Chronicler specified the meaning of this expression by shifting to **walks in my law** (6:14). This change fit well with his emphasis on the Mosaic Law as the standard for Israel (see *Introduction: 14 Standards*).

Sixth, in 7:1b-3 the Chronicler shifted from Solomon's blessing toward the assembly in 1 Kgs 8:54-61 to God's display of approval for Solomon's prayer. He then followed 1 Kgs 8:62-64 closely (// 7:4-5,7) with the exception of an elaboration on the performances of priests and Levites (7:6).

Seventh, in 7:9 the Chronicler replaced the latter half of 1 Kgs 8:65 with an explanation of the connection between the festival of the temple and the feast of Tabernacles. This change may be another indication of his special interest in re-establishing proper worship patterns in the post-exilic community.

### *Structure of 5:2-7:10*

The Chronicler's version of these events divides into six parts which form a symmetrical pattern (see figure 23). This section begins with Solomon calling an assembly (5:2-3) and ends with its dismissal (7:8-10). The assembly opens with sacrifices and musical celebration (5:4-6:2); it closes in much the same way (7:1-7). In the assembly, Solomon speaks twice. He praises God for past blessings (6:3-11); then he prays to God before the people (6:12-42).

### *Solomon's Assembly Gathers (5:2-3)*

The gathering of Solomon's temple assembly is a brief episode dividing into two parts: the king's summons (5:2) and the response (5:3). In 5:2 the Chronicler followed Kings closely, but the language of the opening verse draws attention to several similarities between Solomon and David.

1) Solomon called for a religious assembly. Although the NIV simply says **summoned to Jerusalem** (5:2), the expression translated "summoned" is the same word translated "assembled" elsewhere (see NRS, NAS, NKJ; also compare 1 Chr 13:5; 15:3 [but see "**summoned to assemble**" in 1 Chr 28:1]). For the Chronicler, this wording was often

technical terminology for a religious assembly (see *Introduction: 5) Religious Assemblies*). Like David before him, Solomon's reign involved a number of assemblies which served to inspire the Chronicler's readers to proper worship observances in their day. The purpose of this assembly was **to bring up the ark of the Lord's covenant** (5:2; for the significance of this designation see *Introduction: 13) Covenant*).

2) Beyond this, the groups of people in attendance at Solomon's assembly recollect the assemblies of David. He gathered **elders** (5:2; see 1 Chr 11:3; 15:25) **heads of the tribes** (5:2; see 28:1), and **chiefs** (5:20).

3) Another connection with David appears in the response to Solomon's summons (5:3). The Chronicler followed the language of Kings here (1 Kgs 8:2), but the terminology fit his purposes well. Although the leaders of the nation had been specifically identified as the recipients of Solomon's call, the Chronicler summed up the attendees as **all the men of Israel** (5:3). Thus Solomon's assembly is representative of the entire nation much as David's before him (1 Chr 11:1 // 2 Sam 5:1,3; 1 Chr 13:5 // 2 Sam 6:1; 2 Chr 22:2; 28:1). The Chronicler's theme of "all Israel" united under David and Solomon is apparent (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*).

The Israelites gathered **at the time of the festival in the seventh month** (5:2). The occasion was the annual feast of Tabernacles (see Lev 23:33-43; Num 29:12-39; Deut 16:13-17) which was celebrated the 15th day of the seventh month (i.e. mid-October). The book of Kings notes that the temple was actually completed in the eighth month (see 1 Kgs 6:38). In all likelihood, therefore, this celebration and dedication of the temple took place one month before the final touches on the temple were completed in order to coincide the dedication with the annual feast of Tabernacles.

#### *Solomon's Initial Celebration of the Temple (5:4-6:2)*

The Chronicler followed the book of Kings and reported aspects of Solomon's celebration. His record is very much like 1 Kgs 8:1-13 with the exception of the additional information on the priests and Levites, especially their musical responsibilities (5:11-13a; see *Introduction: 8) Music*). The heart of this passage is 5:7-10 where the ark is placed in the Most Holy Place. On either side are accounts of celebrative worship moving toward the Most Holy Place (5:4-6) and moving away from it (5:11-6:2); see figure 23). At least two aspects of the passage support this outline. First, locations are mentioned explicitly. The celebrants are on the way (5:4-6); they reach their destination of the Most Holy Place (5:7-10); they come out (5:11-6:2). Second, both the first and last portions focus on **priests** (5:5, 11) along with **Solomon** (5:6; 6:1).

*Celebrative Worship Outside the Most Holy Place (5:4-6)*

This passage first attends to the procession toward the Most Holy Place. The procession involved **all the elders** (5:4), the **Levites** (5:4), **priests** (5:5), **King Solomon** (5:5) and **the entire assembly of Israel** (5:6). It was a grand event, much like David's earlier procession of the ark (see 1 Chr 15:25-16:3). The Chronicler's use of the term **assembly** (5:6) raised this event to a prominent place on par with a number of other exemplary religious assemblies (see *Introduction: 5) Religious Assemblies*).

The enormous crowd brought up **the ark and the Tent of Meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it** (5:4). David had already retrieved the **ark** (see 15:25-16:3), but the **Tent of Meeting** and its various **furnishings** had been left in Gibeon (see 1 Chr 16:39; 2 Chr 1:3). Solomon, therefore, completed the centralization of worship in Jerusalem. No longer would worship be split between Jerusalem and Gibeon as it had in David's reign and in Solomon's early years (see 1 Chr 16:37-42; 2 Chr 1:4-5).

Moreover, when the tabernacle of Moses came to rest in Solomon's temple (presumably in some storage chamber), it reflected the covenantal continuity between Solomon's structure and that of Moses (see 5:10). The temple was not a replacement of the tabernacle. It was larger and more splendid, but the temple incorporated and furthered the worship ideology of the Mosaic period. The chief change was that the tabernacle was mobile and that the temple was a permanent structure. This development corresponded to Israel's change from a moving people to a stable empire. In a word, Solomon's temple brought Moses' tabernacle to greater heights.

This passage focuses on the procession **from Zion, the City of David** (5:2) to **the Most Holy Place** (5:7). We do not know when Solomon brought the **Tent of Meeting** and its **furnishings** (5:4) to Jerusalem, but we are told here what happened in its short journey within the city.

The rather vivid portrait focuses on three aspects of the procession. First, the **priests** carried the items from the Tent of meeting (5:5b). Second, **Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel** walked before **the ark** (5:6). Third, as the ark moved, the king and assembly sacrificed **so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted** (5:6).

These descriptions also allude to similarities between this event and David's earlier retrieval of the ark. David's procession also involved Levites carrying the holy items (see 1 Chr 15:2,12-15,26) and sacrifices surrounded the event (see 1 Chr 15:26; 16:1-2). For other parallels between David's and Solomon's processions, see comments on 5:2-3. The Chronicler's hyperbole regarding the number of Solomon's sacrifices raises this event beyond David's earlier procession (5:6b; for the Chronicler's use of hyperbole see comments on 12:14). Large numbers of sacrifices are frequently mentioned to inspire the post-exilic readers to enthusiasm for temple worship (see 1:6; 5:6; 7:4-5; 24:14; 29:32-35; 35:8-9; see also *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*). By maintaining the text of Kings as he

did, the Chronicler not only drew attention once again to the close connections between David and Solomon, but also portrayed Solomon as taking Israel's worship beyond David.

*Placing the Ark in the Most Holy Place (5:7-10)*

The centerpiece of this section is the placement of the **ark of the covenant** (For the significance of this designation see *Introduction: 13) Covenant.*) in **the inner sanctuary**, or **the Most Holy Place** (5:7). Once again, the Chronicler followed the account of Kings very closely. He repeated the visual details of the **wings of the cherubim** (5:7) near the ark of the covenant (see 3:10-13). He noted that they **spread their wings** not only over the ark but also over **its carrying poles** (5:8). Poles were inserted through rings on either side of the ark; they were always to remain in place (see Ex 25:15). To add to the splendor of the scene the Chronicler repeated from Kings that the **poles were so long ... that they could be seen from in front of the inner sanctuary** (5:9). In other words, they could be seen from the Main Hall or **Holy Place** (5:10). The carrying poles of the ark probably extended parallel to the rear wall of the Most Holy Place. Yet, their size made them visible from outside the room.

The text comments that these poles **are still there today** (5:9 // 1 Kgs 8:8). Of course, by the time of the writing of Chronicles the temple had been destroyed and the ark had long disappeared (see *Introduction: Authorship and Date*). This was the case with the book of Kings as well.

Two explanations are feasible. 1) This statement, **still there today**, may be an idiomatic way of saying, "from then on" or "in perpetuity." If so, it simply means that as long as the temple stood, the poles continued to be visible from the Main Hall. 2) The Chronicler (following the writer of Kings) may simply have copied from an earlier record which was composed while the temple actually stood. Whatever the case, it is clear that the Chronicler was not saying that the poles of the ark were present in his own day. For a fuller discussion of the Chronicler's use of this terminology see comments on 1 Chr 4:41.

The passage closes with a brief reminder that this **ark of the covenant** was none other than the one from the days of Moses (5:10). It contained **the two tablets**, but the gold jar of manna (see Ex 16:32-34) and Aaron's staff (see Nu 17:10-11) which were apparently inside the ark at one time (see Heb 9:4) may have been lost while the Philistines had the ark (see 1 Sam 4:10-11; 5:1-6:12). Despite these losses, the text once again makes clear the continuity between Solomon's temple and Moses' tabernacle (see comments on 5:4-6).

*Celebrative Worship Outside the Most Holy Place (5:11-6:2)*

Having placed the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place the priest withdrew to the Main Hall. As noted above, the Chronicler added 5:11b-13 and focused attention on the

activities of the priests and Levites. His addition highlighted several considerations that drew even more attention to the splendor of the event.

First, the Chronicler pointed to the number of people involved. For instance, the number of priests present was unusually large because **all the priests who were there had consecrated themselves regardless of their divisions** (5:11). Rituals of consecration appear frequently in Chronicles as examples of proper worship which the post-exilic readers were to imitate in their day (see *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*). Normally, the priests served according to the divisions David established (see 1 Chr 24:1-19). Here the Chronicler noted that the normal procedures were set aside for this special event. Similarly, **all the Levites who were musicians ... stood on the east side of the altar** (5:12). Once again, the normal divisional rotation was not observed (compare 1 Chr 21:28-22:1; 2 Chr 30:2-3). All the musicians attended worship that day standing directly in front of the bronze altar. Moreover, **120 priests** accompanied the Levite musicians with **trumpets** (5:12).

Second, the quality of the worship stands out. All who played and sang did so **in unison, as with one voice** (5:13). Rather than a variety of songs playing here and there (as was often the case in the daily affairs of the temple), the massive company standing before the altar was entirely unified.

Third, exhilarating doxology characterized the event. The Chronicler piled phrase upon phrase to depict the thrilling time. The worshippers gave **praise and thanks to the Lord ... they raised their voices in praise to the Lord** (5:13). He even went so far as to give a snippet of the well-known words they used in praise, "**He is good; his love endures forever**" (see 1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 7:3; Ezr 3:11 Ps 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 136:1; Jer 33:11).

Fourth, to close off this scene of praise and celebration, the Chronicler returned to the book of Kings (5:13b-6:2 // 1 Kgs 8:10b-13). He noted that the presence of God came into the temple in the form of **a cloud** (5:13b). The **dark cloud** (6:1) is identified as **the glory of the Lord** (5:13b). This glory cloud is none other than the cloud that had appeared at Sinai (see Ex 20:21; Deut 4:11; 5:22). It is alternatively described as dark and fiery (see Exod 14:19-20; Deut 4:11; 5:22). Apparently, it's thick, dark underside veiled the brilliant fiery light of God's glory. In all events, the cloud so filled the Main Hall that the priests could no longer **perform their service** (5:14).

As a result, Solomon praised God for the entry of his presence. He noted that God promised **he would dwell in a dark cloud** (6:1) and connected the blessing on his temple with the great events of Moses' day (see Ex 19:19). Then Solomon concluded with words that reflect the commission he received from his father David. He acknowledged that the purpose of the **magnificent temple** was not for his own glory but for God's permanent dwelling on earth (6:2). The transfer of the ark was complete when the divine presence inhabited the temple just as Solomon and David before him had always hoped.

The Chronicler expanded the description of Solomon's grand worship to inspire his post-exilic readers. When Solomon first set the temple in proper order, the worshipful celebration resulted in large numbers, magnificent music, and dramatic divine presence. By this means the Chronicler sought to motivate his readers to imitate Solomon's devotion to the temple (see *Introduction: 27) Disappointment and Celebration*).

### *Solomon's Praise for the Past (6:3-11)*

With the presence of God established in the temple, the Chronicler continued to follow the account of Kings very closely (6:3-11 // 1 Kgs 8:14-21). In this passage, Solomon addressed the people gathered at the temple complex (see figure 23). This passage begins with a transitional note indicating that Solomon had turned toward the people and blessed them (6:3). His speech (6:4-11) divides into three parts. The first and last paragraphs frame the entire speech with reflections on God's faithfulness to the promises given to David (6:4-6, 10-11). The middle paragraph is Solomon's public explanation of his own role in fulfilling the promises to David (6:7-9).

### *Transitional Introduction (6:3)*

Following the account in Kings (// 1 Kgs 8:14) the Chronicler portrayed the setting of Solomon's praise. The king turned away from the temple and toward the people as he blessed them.

### *Praise for Fulfillment of the Promise to David (6:4-6)*

The focus of this portion of Solomon's praise is that God **fulfilled what he promised ... to ... David** (6:4). Solomon alluded to the promises made to David in 1 Chr 17:4-14. The content of this praise is familiar from previous chapters in Chronicles. Yet, three motifs deserve special attention.

First, this passage enhanced the Chronicler's repeated efforts to connect Solomon and David's actions. Solomon was not acting on his own; he merely served to bring about the divine promise given to David.

Second, Solomon praised God for his involvement from beginning to end. Solomon knew that the promise came to David through Nathan the prophet (see 1 Chr 17:3-4), but he acknowledged God's involvement by saying that God gave the promise **with his mouth** (6:4; see also 6:15; 1 Chr 16:12; 2 Chr 35:22). David and Solomon worked hard on the temple project, but the king insisted that God brought it about **with his hands** (6:4; see also 6:15; 1

Chr 21:13; 28:19; 29:12,14,16; 2 Chr 6:32; 20:6; 30:12). As the rest of his speech indicated, Solomon did not deny the human instruments involved. Nevertheless, in the final analysis the work resulted from divine action, not human plans or efforts (see *Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*).

Third, the temple was to be the place of God's Name. Here the expression **my Name** occurs two times (6:5,6 [six times in 6:3-11]). The Name of the Lord was his immanent divine presence on earth; it was his power accessible to the people of God through calling on his Name in prayer (see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*). The temple was not a mere symbol; it was the place where God's invocable presence was given to Israel. The centrality of this theme in Solomon's temple speeches will be evident throughout this chapter.

#### *Explanation of Solomon's Role (6:7-9)*

Solomon paused from offering his praise to explain why David himself had not built the temple. This explanation has already appeared in Chronicles several times. Nevertheless, we learn here that God told David **you did well to have this in your heart** (6:8). The idea of building a temple for God was appropriate (see comments on 1 Chr 17:12) and God approved of his heart motivations (see *Introduction: 16) Motivations*). Yet, David was a man of war and the temple was to be built only after Israel had gained control of her land in peace (see 1 Chr 22:8-10; 28:3). The Chronicler's post-exilic readers had no reason to think that the temple was somehow a mistake or David's failed project.

Beyond this, we should note that the three main themes of Solomon's speech appear again in this paragraph. 1) The connection between Solomon and David is established in the use of **my father David** twice here (6:7,8 see also 6:4) and in the divine word calling Solomon **your own flesh and blood** (6:9). 2) Solomon noted that the Lord intervened and said that David was not to build (6:9); divine involvement was made evident again (see *Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*). 3) The temple was said to be for the **Name** in each verse (6:7,8,9).

#### *Praise for Keeping the Promise to David (6:10-11)*

Solomon turned back to praise once again. He indicated his amazement at all that God had accomplished. The three main themes of Solomon's praise stand out again. First, Solomon was drawn into close relation with David in at least two ways. 1) He called David **my father** again (6:10). 2) He also declared that he sat **on the throne of Israel** (6:10); Solomon saw his reign as the continuation of David's kingdom.

Second, divine approval is enhanced again as Solomon mentioned the promise of God twice (6:10).

Third, the concept of the temple as the place of the **Name of the Lord** also appears (6:10). The temple was important because the divine presence was attainable there (see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*).

One additional theme also appears at the end of Solomon's praise. He mentioned the placement of **the ark** in the temple (6:11), but said that the ark contained **the covenant of the Lord that he made with the people of Israel**. The parallel in Kings also adds, "when he brought them out of Egypt" (1 Kgs 8:21). The reason for the Chronicler's abbreviation is not clear. Whatever the case, the connection between Solomon's temple and Moses' tabernacle is evident again. Solomon saw his edifice as the continuation of the Mosaic covenant, not its replacement (see *Introduction: 13) Covenant*).