

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

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<p>The Reign of Solomon, part 6: Solomon's Assembly to Dedicate the Temple, part 2 (2 Chronicles 6:12-7:10)</p>

Solomon's Prayer for the Future (6:12-42)

Still following the book of Kings closely, the Chronicler moved from Solomon's praise for blessings in the past to his prayer for Israel's future. This prayer gives the fullest expression of Israel's temple theology found in Scripture. It focuses on the hopes which Solomon attached to the presence of God's Name in the temple.

This material divides in the following manner (see figure 23). Solomon's dedicatory prayer follows an intricate introduction (6:12-13). The prayer itself divides into three main parts. Solomon expressed concern for the future of the monarchy (6:14-17) and the future of the temple (6:18-39). Finally, he combined petitions for the temple and monarchy (6:40-42).

Introduction to the Prayer (6:12-13)

Solomon's dedicatory prayer is introduced by a rather elaborate visual depiction of the scene (compare 6:3). As noted above, these details do not appear in the traditional text of 1 Kgs 8:22, but they were probably lost through textual transmission. Solomon first stood **before the** (bronze) **altar** and then moved to **a bronze platform** measuring approximately 7.5 feet (2.3 meters) long and wide and 4.5 (1.3 meters) high (6:12-13). Before the platform, Solomon **stood ... and spread out his hands** (6:12); on the platform **he stood ... knelt down ... and spread out his hands** (6:13). Standing and kneeling in prayer is common in the Old Testament (kneeling: 1 Kgs 18:42; Ezr 9:5; Ps 95:6; Dan 6:10; standing: Gen 18:22; Lev 9:5; 1 Sam 1:26; 2 Chr 20:5,13,19; Neh 9:2,4; Jer 18:20); spreading the hands is also a normal gesture of praise and pleading in Scripture (see Ex 9:29, 33; 1 Kgs 8:54; Ezr 9:5; Job 11:13; Ps 44:20). All of these actions occurred **in front of the whole assembly ... in the center of the outer court** (6:12-13). The Chronicler already distinguished between the courtyard of the priest and the court of the laity (see 4:9). Here he used the term **outer court** which probably referred to the court of the laity (6:13). These details of Solomon's ritual created an atmosphere of liturgical grandeur and solemnity for the prayer that follows. The use of the term **assembly** (6:12) to describe this gathering placed this event among a number of religious

assemblies which the Chronicler set forth as exemplary for his readers (see *Introduction: 5) Religious Assemblies*).

Praise and Petitions for the Monarchy (6:14-17)

These verses are tied together by the repetition of the words **Lord, God of Israel** (6:14,16,17). After this portion of the prayer, Solomon addressed God differently as **O Lord, my God** (6:19), **my God** (6:40), and **O Lord God** (6:41 [twice],42).

Solomon began his praise and petitions on behalf of the monarchy. The praise of God (6:14-15) expressed Solomon's confidence that **there is no God like you in heaven or on earth** (6:14). Assurance of the incomparability of God over all other supernatural forces often occurs in Scripture after God has demonstrated his supremacy in history (see Ex 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; Dt 4:35,39; Isa 45:5-6). Solomon viewed the completion of the temple as proof that Israel's God was supreme.

The king focused more specifically on God's covenant fidelity. He addressed God as "**you who keep your covenant of love**" (6:14). That God keeps his covenants is expressed throughout the Old Testament (see Lev 26:9; Dt 7:9,12; Jdg 2:1; Neh 1:5; 9:31; Ps 111:5; Dan 9:4). This praise mentions one qualification. God keeps covenant **with [his] servants who continue wholeheartedly in [his] way** (6:14). Conditions applied to each of the major biblical covenants (see Hos 6:7; Gen 9:4-7; 17:10-14; Exod 19:5-6; 20:2-17). The Chronicler included these words from Kings (// 1 Kgs 8:22) because they fit his purposes so well. He wanted his post-exilic readers to keep covenant in their day so they could receive the blessings of God (see *Introduction: 13) Covenant*).

Solomon narrowed his focus even further by remarking that God's covenant fidelity had been demonstrated in his keeping his **promise to David** (6:15). In language reminiscent of his preceding praise (6:3), the king said that God himself spoke and fulfilled his word on that very day (6:15b).

On the basis of what God had already done for David's dynasty, Solomon turned his attention to the future (6:16-17). He asked God to continue fulfilling the promises to David (6:16). In particular, Solomon was concerned with the promise, "**You shall never fail to have a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel**" (6:16). These words allude to the dynastic promises given to David in several places in Scripture (see 2 Sam 7:1-17 // 1 Chr 17:1-15; Ps 89,132). The Davidic line was established as Israel's permanent dynasty. Yet, conditions applied to the individual kings in the family of David. They enjoyed the benefits of this promise only if they **walk before [God] according to [his] law** (6:16). Here the Chronicler varied from the text of 1 Kgs 8:25 ("walk before me") to specify that walking before God meant obedience to the Law of Moses.

Solomon noted that the sons of David must walk **as** (David has) **done** (6:16). David had his share of flaws, even in the Chronicler's idealized portrait. Perfection was not required of Israel's kings. However, basic covenant fidelity of the heart was required of all who sat on the throne of Israel. As the Chronicler's own history illustrated so vividly, kings who forsook covenant loyalty received the curses of the covenant (see *Introduction: 13) Covenant*).

Praise and Petitions for the Temple (6:18-39)

Having praised and petitioned on behalf of the Davidic dynasty, Solomon turned to the second central institution in Israel, the temple. This portion of his prayer divides into two major parts, the second of which consists of eight sections (see figure 23). Beginning with praise (6:18) as he did in the preceding section with praise (6:14-15), Solomon proceeded to a series of petitions on behalf of the temple (6:19-39). He first asked in general terms for the temple to be a place for effective prayers (6:19-21). He then cited seven circumstances in which he hoped prayers in and toward the temple would be heard from heaven (6:22-39). These last seven petitions are marked by the formulaic expression **then hear from heaven...** (6:23,25,27, 30,33,35,39).

Praise (6:18)

Solomon's prayer on behalf of the temple began with a brief word of praise. His doxology acknowledged the transcendence of God and the inadequacy of the temple to contain him. These words recalled Solomon's correspondence with Hiram (see 2:4-6). There he concluded that divine transcendence implied that his temple could only be **a place to burn sacrifices before him** (2:6). In this passage, Solomon dealt with these issues in a slightly different way. It cannot **contain** God, even **the highest heavens cannot** do that (6:18). What then is the value of having the temple? As we will see in the verses that follow, it will serve as a place of prayer in times of trouble.

Petitions in General (6:19-21)

Solomon first offered a general petition for the temple. Despite the fact that the temple cannot provide God a place to dwell, Solomon asked God to do something for him and his temple.

Solomon's emotional state stands out in his petition. In humility he called himself **your servant** four times (6:19 [twice], 20,21). By this terminology the king acknowledged himself to be a submissive vassal under the imperial rule of the divine King. Along with humility, however, Solomon's intensity is evident. He spoke of his requests as **the cry ... the prayer**

which your servant is praying ... the prayer ... and the supplications (6:19-21). This intensity becomes even more evident in the rapid succession of petitions in short order. He asks God to **give attention ... hear ... may your eyes be open ... may you hear ... hear ... hear ... forgive** (6:19-21).

For what did Solomon pray so fervently? Put simply, Solomon asked for the temple to serve as a place for effective prayer. This request was stated in several ways. He asked, "**May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night**" (6:20). In other words, Solomon asked that God watch what happens in the temple all the time (see 6:20; 6:40 // 1 Kgs 8:52; 2 Kgs 19:16; Neh 1:6; Ps 34:15; Dan 9:18). He then expounded this theme by saying, "**Hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place**" (6:20) as well as "**the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel**" (6:21). Solomon earnestly desired that God pay attention both to the kings and people as they pray in and toward the temple.

The basis of these requests appears in 6:20b. Solomon reminded God, "**You said you would put your Name there.**" From the days of Moses God had assured his people that they would one day find the place of his Name (see Deut 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2). Solomon relied on that promise as the basis for God answering prayers in and toward the temple. Instead of God himself dwelling in the temple, Solomon asserted that the temple would only house the **Name** of God (6:20b). As we have seen elsewhere, the Name of God is his invocable power, his accessible presence (see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*). In other words, Solomon saw the temple as the place of access to divine attention. God himself would still **hear from heaven** (6:21), but his approachable, immanent Name would reside in the temple and could be invoked there.

As a result of this divine accessibility, the temple became the heart of Israelite religion. No matter where they were, faithful Israelites in all times and places could turn toward the place of the Name (see Ps 5:7; Dan 6:10; Jonah 2:4). The centrality of the temple in Solomon's day gave rise to the Chronicler's conviction that the temple must be reinstated to its central role in the post-exilic community. Only there could the restored people gain access to their transcendent God in heaven.

Petition Regarding Oaths (6:22-23)

Solomon's first specific petition was that God pay attention to the times **when a man wrongs his neighbor and is required to take an oath** (6:22). This procedure is well documented as part of the service of the tabernacle (see Nu 5:13; Lev 6:3-6; see also Amos 8:14). Oaths were required in cases of default (see Ex 22:7-15), adultery (see Num 5:11-31) and theft (see Lev 6:3-5). Taking an oath was a sacred act involving the potential of divine curse for fraud or violation (see Lev 19:12; Judg 17:1-4; Ezk 17:13-19 Ps 15:4).

Petition Regarding Defeat (6:24-25)

Solomon's second petition concerned situations when the Israelites **have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned** (6:24). The explicit qualification **because they have sinned** (6:24) suggests that not all military failures result from sin (see 16:1; 25:13; 32:1). Even so, defeat and captivity by an enemy is frequently mentioned in Mosaic literature as a covenant curse for national rebellion against God (see Deut 28:36-37,64; Lev 26:17). The prophets also reflect the same perspective (see Isa 8:5-8; Jer 5:10-17; Hab 1:2-11). The Chronicler frequently pointed to military defeat as a judgment for sin, especially in the Divided Monarchy (see 2 Chr 12:5-8; 21:12-17; 24:20,23-24; 25:20; 28:1-7; 33:10-11; see also *Introduction: 23) Victory and Defeat*).

When defeat came because of sin, Solomon prayed that God would hear the people once **they turn back** (see *Introduction: 22) Repentance*) **and confess [his] name** (6:24; see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*). At such a time he hoped that God would **bring them back to the land** (6:25). Solomon's hope of return was based on earlier biblical traditions. The Mosaic covenant explicitly assured that repentance would lead to restoration to the land (see Deut 4:29; 30:1-3). The Chronicler records two times when temporary exile occurred. Northern Israelites exiled Judahites during the reign of Ahaz. No mention of prayer appears in that account (see 28:6-15). Nevertheless, the Chronicler's version of Manasseh's life illustrates Solomon's petition in action. He was exiled and brought back because of his repentance and prayer (see 33:10-13).

Solomon's petition for return to the land was particularly poignant for the Chronicler's post-exilic readers. They had been exiled and returned to the land. Solomon's desire for the temple had been fulfilled in their lives (see 36:23). How much more should they now support the temple and its services?

Petition Regarding Drought (6:26-27)

In his third petition Solomon addressed those times **when the heavens are shut up and there is no rain** (6:26). Once again, he qualified the phenomenon by adding **because they have sinned against you** (6:26 see 6:24). Throughout the Old Testament rain is considered a divine blessing and drought a covenant curse (see Lev 26:3-4; Deut 11:13-14; 28:23-24; Prov 16:15; Jer 3:3; 5:24; Hos 6:3; 10:1; Joel 2:23; Amos 4:6-8).

Here Solomon acknowledged that in such circumstances God must teach Israel **the right way to live** before he once again gives **rain** (6:27). For this reason, he not only asked God to hear **when they pray and confess [his] name** (6:26; see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*). He also insisted that such prayer and confession must take place as the people **turn from their sin** (6:26; see *Introduction: 22) Repentance*).

Although the Chronicler had no specific examples of this covenant curse in his history, his expansion of 7:14 included drought. The early post-exilic community had suffered from drought because of their inattention to the temple (see Hag 1:11). To enjoy fructifying rains they had to give due attention to the temple where their prayers would be heard.

Petition Regarding Assorted Disasters (6:28-31)

Solomon's fourth petition lists a number of disasters: **famine, plague, blight, mildew, locusts, grasshoppers, or when enemies besiege them** (6:28). He enlarged the list to include **whatever disaster or disease may come** (6:28).

Each of these disasters ranks among the various biblical lists of covenant curses.

1) **Famine** comes through natural causes, warfare and siege (see Gen 12:10; 26:1; 41:1-57; Lev 26:25-26; Judg 6:3-6; 15:33-5; Ruth 1:1; 2 Sam 21:1; 24:13 // 1 Chr 21:12; 1 Kgs 18:1-2; 2 Kgs 6:24-25; 25:1-3; 2 Chr 32:11; Job 5:20-22; Ps 33:18-19; Isa 51:19; 14:11-18; 16:4; 21:7-9; 42:13-22; 52:6).

2) The term **plague** refers primarily to diseases of animals (see Ex 9:3; Ps 78:48-50) and people (see Lev 26:25-26; Num 14:12; 2 Sam 24:13 // 1 Chr 21:12; Ezk 5:12; 7:15).

3) The word **blight** ordinarily refers to a natural disaster or an expression of divine punishment for covenant disobedience (see Deut 28:22; Amos 4:9; Hag 2:17). It is often an effect of the very hot, dry wind which can blow destructively over Palestine from the desert and bring severe agricultural hardship.

4) The term **mildew** is often associated with blight arising out of covenant cursing (see Deut 28:22; Amos 4:9; Hag 2:17). If it refers to people (compare the Septuagint of this passage), it speaks of paleness due to fear or a jaundiced condition (see Jer 30:6). If the term is agricultural, it speaks of any variety of fungi.

5) The Hebrew term **locusts** generally refers to locusts that are fully developed and can therefore fly (see Ex 10:4; Dt 28:38; Joel 2:25). The term translated **grasshopper** may refer to locusts at an earlier stage of development, making hopping their primary means of movement (see Isa 33:4; Joel 1:4). At times, they are used as metaphors for invading armies (see Jdg 6:5; Isa 33:4; Jer 46:22-23; 51:27; Joel 2:1-27; Nah 3:15).

6) **Enemies besiege** Israelite cities many times in biblical history. The Chronicler himself noted the siege on Jerusalem in Rehoboam's day (see 12:2), Joash's reign (see 24:23), Amaziah's reign (see 25:23), and Hezekiah's reign (see 32:1-2).

7) **Disease** also appears in a number of situations in the Chronicler's history (see 16:12; 21:15,18-19; 26:19-21; 30:18-20; 32:24). Sometimes these diseases are healed through prayer; at other times, they are not.

Solomon asked God to deal with each individual **since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of men)** (6:30). Mercy was to be shown not according to some outward standard, but according to the inward standard of the heart (see Ps 7:9; 1 Sam 16:7; Jer 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; see also *Introduction: 16) Motivations*). The result of this individual treatment would be that the people would **fear [God] and walk in [his] ways** (6:31).

Petition Regarding Foreigners (6:32-33)

The fifth specific petition regarded **the foreigner who ... has come ... and prays toward this temple** (6:32). At various times in the Old Testament Gentiles converted to the faith of Israel (see Ruth 1:16; 2 Kgs 5:15; Josh 2:9-13). Solomon himself was in a position of influence among the Gentiles (see 1 Kgs 4:21,24 // 2 Chr 9:26; 1 Kgs 4:34 // 2 Chr 9:22-24; 1 Kgs 9:26-10:29 // 2 Chr 8:17-9:28). Moreover, the Chronicler's readers knew that the prophets expected many Gentiles would come to Jerusalem after the exile to worship the Lord (see Amos 9:11-12; Isa 56:6-8; Ps 87; Zech 8:20-32; 14:16-21).

In this passage, Solomon elaborated on his concept of the Name of God in the temple. He said that foreigners may come **because of your [God's] great name** (6:32). Then he expanded his focus to God's **mighty hand and [his] outstretched arm** (6:32). These expressions appear many places in the Old Testament to indicate displays of divine power in dramatic events (see Ex 6:6; Dt 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:8,19; Jer 21:5; 27:5; Ezek 20:33-34;). The Name of God, therefore, is closely associated with the power of God intervening in human history. This power is accessible through prayer in and toward the temple (see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*).

Solomon asked that the sincere prayers of foreigners be answered so that **all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you ... and may know that this house I have built bears your Name** (6:33). Israel's relationship to other nations was a longstanding motif of biblical history. She was blessed to bless others (see Gen 12:1-3). Solomon hoped that this destiny would be fulfilled in part through prayers offered in the temple. As the Chronicler's readers dealt with foreigners all around them, they too could hope that their faith would spread among the nations (see Zech 8:23). But this hope could be realized only if they, like Solomon, gave proper attention to the temple (see *Introduction: 3) International Relations*).

Petition Regarding War (6:34-35)

Solomon's prayer moved next to **when** [God's] **people go to war** (6:34). Military actions took place for many reasons in the Old Testament. Here Solomon had in mind those times "**when you send them**" (6:34). In other words, these are not battles faced as punishment for sin (see 6:24-25), but aggressive warfare ordered by God. Even in these circumstances, the armies of Israel were expected to **pray toward this city ... and the temple** (6:34). Then God would **uphold their cause** (6:35 see 6:39); he would come to their aid and lead them to victory. The Chronicler recorded a number of battles where prayer of this sort led to victory (see *Introduction: 17) Prayer*; see also *Introduction: 23) Victory and Defeat*). The post-exilic readers faced the prospect of warfare in their day. Their only hope for victory was prayer toward **the temple ... built for [God's] Name** (6:34; see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*).

Petition Regarding National Exile (6:36-39)

The seventh petition touched on the potential of exile **to a land far away or near** (6:36). Solomon had already addressed aspects of this topic (6:24-25). He admitted that exile is a potential for the nation in every generation **for there is no one who does not sin** (6:36). Prophets who rejected the possibility of exile were false prophets (see Jer 28:1-17). Yet, Solomon's chief concern here was to focus more thoroughly -even programmatically- on what the exiled people were to do.

Building on the basic Mosaic covenantal structures (see Deut 4:29; 30:1-3), Solomon set down conditions upon which he hoped God would return his people from exile. 1) They must have a **change of heart** (6:37). A deep seated change of affections and loyalties must take place (see *Introduction: 16) Motivations*; see also Kgs 8:48; 2 Chr 7:14; 12:6,12; 30:11; 33:12,19,23; 34:27; Jer 24:7; 29:13). 2) They must **repent** or turn away from their sins (Dt 4:30; 30:2; Isa 19:22; see *Introduction: 22) Repentance*). 3) They must **plead**, that is, ask sincerely and earnestly. 4) These inward changes must be expressed in prayer. "**We have sinned, we have done wrong and acted wickedly**" (6:37). The piling up of confessional language reveals the intensity required in these prayers. 5) They must **turn back to [God] with all their heart and soul** (6:38). No insincerity was acceptable (see *Introduction: 16) Motivations*). 6) This sincerity must be expressed by praying **toward the land ... toward the city ... toward the temple** (6:38). The physical act of turning toward Jerusalem in prayer (see Jonah 2:4,7; Dan 6:11) expressed a reorientation of life toward the only source of deliverance, invoking the Name of God (see *Introduction: 11) Name of God*). The results of this kind of repentance were as expected. God would **hear their prayer, uphold their cause, and forgive** (6:39).

Petitions for the Temple and the Monarchy (6:40-42)

At this point the Chronicler diverged from 1 Kgs 8:50. In the Kings account, Solomon also asked that the captors may "show mercy" to their captives. In all likelihood the writer of Kings had in mind the release of Jehoiachin (see 2 Kgs 25:27-30) as an example of God answering this prayer. The Chronicler did not include this event in Jehoiachin's life and omitted this portion of Solomon's petition. Instead, he moved the focus of the petition more toward the experience of his readers. They had received more than good treatment by their captors. They had been released from exile and returned to the land (see 36:22-23). Having seen the power of prayer toward the land and the city, they now needed to see the power of the Name in the reconstructed temple.

The Chronicler's account of Solomon's prayer closed differently from Kings in another way (see 1 Kgs 8:50b-53). In Kings, Solomon offered the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt as the basis of his requests. The Chronicler dropped this material and replaced it with a summary request (6:40) and a free citation of Ps 132:1,8-10 (6:41-42).

It is difficult to determine precisely how the Chronicler expected his readers to understand this change. On the one hand, it is possible that he added the words of Ps 132 as a report of what Solomon actually said. He may have known this information from some source other than Kings. The beginning of 7:1 (**when Solomon finished praying**) offers support for this understanding.

On the other hand, it is possible that the Chronicler added 6:40 to bring Solomon's actual prayer to an end. The opening word of this verse (**now**) often introduces a conclusion to a speech or prayer. If this is correct, the citations from Ps 132 may have been intended as the Chronicler's own authorial prayer for the temple in his day.

Whatever the case, the passage turns to a combined concern for the temple and the monarchy. Here we find the Chronicler's conviction that the throne and worship center were the central institutions necessary for the full restoration of blessing to post-exilic Israel.

The Chronicler selected pertinent portions of Psalm 132. The Psalm itself begins with the request that God remember David's devotion to finding a home for the ark (Ps 132:1-5). It then recalls the call to travel to the dwelling place of the ark (Ps 132:6-9). The remainder of the Psalm enjoins God to remember his covenant oath to David and rejoices in the blessings that will come to Zion and the king (Ps 132:10-18). The Chronicler began his selection with the priests processing with the ark to Jerusalem (6:41 // Ps 132:8-9). He then closed by enjoining God to remember both his oath and David's faithfulness (6:42 // Ps 132:1a,10).

In so doing, this ending combines the hopes Solomon had for his temple and the Davidic throne. The Psalm asks that God would **come to** [his] **resting place** (6:40). With the **ark of** [his] **might** in the temple, the power of the Name would be accessible to the people. It also requests that the **priests** and **saints** (probably the sanctified laity [see Ps 16:3; 30:4; 31:23; 34:9; 116:15; 149:1,5]) attend to the temple with great joy. Then as a basis for these

requests, the Chronicler selected the Psalmist's appeal to God's promises to David (6:42 // Ps 132:11). In effect, the fulfillment of the temple ideal was the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. Without the presence of God in the temple, the Davidic hope is in vain.

Needless to say, the Chronicler's addition in 6:40-42 spoke directly to his hopes for post-exilic Israel. His message focused on the full establishment of the temple with the priests and people in joyous worship. These concerns were central in his design for the restored nation (see *Introduction: 4-9 King and Temple*).

Solomon's Concluding Sacrifices and Celebration (7:1-7)

Having finished with Solomon's prayer of dedication, the Chronicler continued to follow the account of Kings and recorded further celebration (// 1 Kgs 8:62-66). As noted above, the Chronicler omitted Solomon's blessing of the people (1 Kgs 8:54b-61) and replaced it with God's dramatic acceptance of the prayer and burnt offerings (7:1b-3). He then followed 1 Kgs 8:62-64 (// 7:4-5,7) and added 7:6. These changes were probably motivated by a desire to form a balancing section for the earlier celebration before Solomon's praise and petitions (see 5:2-6:4; see figure 23). The parallels between these passages have led some interpreters to hold that we have here a second account of the same events described in 5:2-6:4. The correspondences are remarkable, but the introductory word, **when Solomon finished praying** (7:1) mitigates against such an interpretation. It seems best to take these verses as reporting an increase of celebration that took place after Solomon's prayer.

The Chronicler's account of these events divides into two vignettes of the wonder of that day (see figure 23). 7:1-3 depicts the response of fire from heaven. 7:4-7 draws attention to the number of sacrifices made.

Divine Fire and Glory (7:1-3)

The Chronicler's first vignette involves three aspects of God's powerful display. First, attention is given to God's blessing toward Solomon. **Fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering** which the king offered (7:1). The descent of fire upon a sacrifice appears elsewhere as a miraculous display of divine approval (see 1 Chr 21:26; Exod 40:34-38; 1 Kgs 18:38; Judg 6:20-22). In this passage the supernatural event demonstrated God's acceptance of Solomon's temple, prayers, and sacrifices.

Second, **the priests** come into focus (7:2). Alongside the descent of fire, **the glory of the Lord filled** the temple (7:2). This glory recalls the smoke that previously halted priestly services inside the Main Hall (see 5:11-6:2). Perhaps the glory had subsided slightly during Solomon's prayers and the priests tried to proceed with their responsibilities. At this point, however, the priests **could not enter the temple** (7:2).

Third, notice is taken of **all the Israelites** in the assembly (7:3). They saw the **fire** consuming Solomon's sacrifice; they also observed the **glory** inside the temple rising **above the temple** (7:3). In response, the assembly **knelt, worshipped, and gave thanks** (7:3). Earlier the priests sang, "**He is good; his love endures forever**" (see 5:13). Now the entire assembly adds its voice to the song (7:3).

This series of expanding notices -- **Solomon** (7:1), **priests** (7:2), and **all the Israelites** (7:3) -- creates an ever widening circle of wonder and joy. The Chronicler reported how God's response to Solomon's prayer overwhelmed all who were there in order to inspire his readers toward re-establishing the temple and its services in their day (see *Introduction: 27 Disappointment and Celebration*).

Numerous Sacrifices (7:4-7)

The second vignette concentrates on sacrifices and divides into three parts. First, **the king and all the people offered sacrifices** (7:4-5). Before Solomon's prayer innumerable sacrifices were made (see 5:6). Here the numbers appear, but they are astounding: **twenty-two thousand ... and a hundred and twenty thousand** (7:5). In all likelihood these numbers are hyperbolic. 144,000 sacrifices in the period of fourteen days (7:8-9) would require at least 7 sacrifices every minute, every day, around the clock. Moreover, grain offerings were made as well (7:7). The purpose of the hyperbole was to indicate that the number of sacrifices was absolutely incredible. (For the Chronicler's use of hyperbole see comments on 12:14.) On a number of occasions Chronicles points to large numbers of sacrifices in order to inspire the post-exilic readers to observe worship with enthusiasm in their day (see 1:6; 5:6; 7:4-5; 24:14; 29:32-35; 35:8-9; see also *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*).

Second, attention shifts to **the priests and Levites** (7:6). They accompanied the sacrifices with **the Lord's musical instruments which King David had made** (see 1 Chr 15:24). They too sang, "**His love endures forever**" (7:6).

Third, a quick note expands the outlook of this report to include the whole assembly as in the preceding vignette (see 7:3). As the music continued **all the Israelites were standing** (7:6). The entire assembly rose to its feet in honor of the Lord.

To heighten the grandeur of the event even further, the text provides an addendum explaining how so many sacrifices could be made. Solomon **consecrated the middle part of the courtyard** for sacrifice (7:7). Temporary altars were erected because the bronze altar **could not hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat portions** (7:7). 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*).

The grandeur of this festival surely inspired the Chronicler's readers to wish for similar experiences. They wanted to exchange their hardships for such joy. Yet, such splendid festivity could occur only if they followed Solomon's example and gave due attention to the temple (see *Introduction: 27) Disappointment and Celebration*).

Solomon's Assembly Dismisses (7:8-10)

The Chronicler's account of Solomon's temple assembly closes with its dismissal. The text mirrors the order of events in 5:1-2 (see figure 22). It sums up the size and length of celebration (7:8-9 compare 5:2) and then reports the king's dismissal of the assembly (7:10 compare 5:1). For the most part, this material follows 1 Kgs 8:65-66. Several comments should be made.

First, in 7:10 the Chronicler added to 1 Kgs 8:66 that the assembly for temple dedication was connected with the Feast of Tabernacles. This information probably reflected an interest in the patterns of worship to be followed in the post-exilic community.

Second, although the Chronicler derived 7:8 from 1 Kgs 8:65, the passage still emphasizes that **all Israel** attended Solomon's assembly (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*). It was a **vast assembly** (7:8; see also 7:9) and therefore stood among a number of religious assemblies which the Chronicler saw as exemplary for his readers (see *Introduction: 5) Religious Assemblies*). The people came from **Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt** (7:8). These geographical notes represent the ideal boundaries of Israel (see Gen 15:18; Num 34:5,8; Josh 15:4,47; 2 Kgs 14:25; 24:7; Isa 27:12; Ezek 47:15,19; 48:1) and reflected the Chronicler's hope for his readers.

Third, the emotional quality of the entire event appears plainly. The people returned home **joyful and glad in heart** (7:10 // 1 Kgs 8:66), an appealing state of affairs for the post-exilic community (see *Introduction: 27) Disappointment and Celebration*).

Fourth, the text connects the reigns of David and Solomon once again. The traditional Hebrew text of Kings reads "to David his servant and to Israel his people" (1 Kgs 8:66). The traditional Hebrew text of Chronicles reads, **for David and Solomon and for his people Israel** (7:10). It is possible that Kings originally had the reference to Solomon, but this is not altogether certain (see *Introduction: Translation and Transmission*). In all events, the Chronicler's text certainly sees Solomon's success as a divine blessing to David and to Solomon together. Moreover, this blessing toward the two ideal monarchs was not for them alone. It was a blessing to the nation as well. As we have seen before, the reigns of Israel's ideal kings were blessings for the nation as a whole (see *Introduction: 4-9) King and Temple*). This final qualification pointed plainly to the way of blessing for the Chronicler's post-exilic readers. The monarchy and temple must be established together.