

1 Chronicles 22: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Date: 07 September 2020

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[0:00] 1 Chronicles chapter 22 Then David said, Here shall be the house of the Lord God, and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel. David commanded to gather together the resident aliens who were in the land of Israel, and he set stonecutters to prepare dressed stones for building the house of God.

David also provided great quantities of iron for nails for the doors of the gates and for clamps, as well as bronze in quantities beyond weighing, and cedar timbers without number, for the Sidonians and Tyrians brought great quantities of cedar to David.

For David said, Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands. I will therefore make preparation for it.

So David provided materials in great quantity before his death. Then he called for Solomon his son and charged him to build a house for the Lord, the God of Israel. David said to Solomon, My son, I had it in my heart to build a house to the name of the Lord my God.

But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, You have shed much blood, and have waged great wars. You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood before me on the earth.

[1:12] Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies, for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days.

He shall build a house for my name. He shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever. Now, my son, the Lord be with you, so that you may succeed in building the house of the Lord your God, as he has spoken concerning you.

Only may the Lord grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel, you may keep the law of the Lord your God. Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the rules that the Lord commanded Moses for Israel.

Be strong and courageous. Fear not. Do not be dismayed. With great pains I have provided for the house of the Lord, one hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver and bronze and iron beyond weighing, for there is so much of it.

Timber and stone, too, I have provided. To these you must add, You have an abundance of workmen, stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and all kinds of craftsmen without number, skilled in working gold, silver, bronze and iron.

[2:24] Arise and work. The Lord be with you. David also commanded all the leaders of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, Is not the Lord your God with you? And has he not given you peace on every side?

For he has delivered the inhabitants of the land into my hand, and the land is subdued before the Lord and his people. Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. Arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God, so that the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, may be brought into a house built for the name of the Lord.

In 1 Chronicles' account of David's census, the story of the staying of the hand of the angel of the Lord at the threshing floor of Ornan, or Orunah the Jebusite, is followed in 1 Chronicles chapter 22 with the account of David's preparations for the building of the temple.

To this point in 1 Chronicles, nothing clear has been said about the succession of the throne after David. Now, in the central part of this chapter, David charges his son Solomon concerning the construction of the temple, an exhortation that can be subdivided into two sections, each introduced with the expression, My son.

Solomon's succession from David on the throne is focused on the completion of the task of building the temple. Like Moses and the Exodus, or Elijah and his mission, David is not able to perform the greatest work to which he has aspired.

[3 : 43] Consequently, the question of who would succeed him and actually build the temple is a very important one. Even if he cannot build the temple itself, though, David is very concerned to do whatever he can to contribute to the work of its construction, purchasing the land for it, gathering the necessary materials, instructing his son concerning it, and preparing the people and skilled workers for it.

The chapter starts with David's commitment to construct the temple on the site of the threshing floor, where the judgment of the Lord over his people ceased. The temple was likely to be located outside of the Davidic city itself, over against it.

Readers of the Bible can be forgiven for finding it a bit confusing sometimes to consider the various mountains or hills of Jerusalem and how they stand relative to each other at different points of the history of the people.

For instance, Mount Zion seems to be a designation that migrated to different hills of Jerusalem on account of their physical, political, social, religious, and symbolic prominence relative to other hills at the given time.

David had some experience in construction projects and realised the scale of the task of building something as grand as the temple. To equip Solomon for the task, David gathered together skilled craftsmen and huge amounts of raw materials.

[4 : 56] Many of the craftsmen were foreign labourers, and many of the most important materials came from surrounding nations. The building of the temple won't merely be an important site for Israelites, but it will be a building that is part of the face that Israel presents to the Gentile nations that surround it.

The cosmopolitan aspects of its construction are indicative both of the way that the temple represents an extension of Israel's field of influence beyond its borders, and also a drawing of Gentile riches and wisdom in.

Israel was seldom the most culturally or technologically advanced nation in its wider region, nor did it possess the degree of mineral wealth enjoyed by many other nations, nor did it have the artisanal skills that other peoples could boast.

It was a priestly people, and they were later scattered as prophets among the nations. Back in the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter 2, the garden is described as having trees and fruits to enjoy. However, the mineral riches are located outside of the garden, in places like the land of Havilah. The impression the reader gets is that one would have to venture outside of the garden to obtain such resources, and then return to dress and glorify the garden with them.

[6 : 06] The temple would be such a new garden of Eden. It will be an Eden that has gathered in riches from many surrounding lands. Israel's importance as a place of trade and commerce with other powers will be seen in the reign of Solomon especially, with spices, various metals, precious stones, artisans, and other resources coming into Israel.

We have some window into this in the Song of Solomon, with all the different spices and other things that it describes. The temple, as an Israelite building of cosmopolitan construction, is itself a material representation of what the nation is itself being fashioned into by the Lord.

When the tabernacle was constructed, there were fewer resources to work with, but many of the resources came from the Israelites' spoiling of the Egyptians in the deliverance of the Exodus. Now the materials for the construction, which again largely come from Gentiles, come from different kinds of relationships with them, a relationship that has a lot more to do with the stature of Israel as a kingdom in the region.

It is a building of messianic significance then. It's a testament to what the glorious Davidic king, who builds it, represents to Israel and the nations around it. It is to be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands.

Something of this aspiration is seen in Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple in 1 Kings 8, verses 41-43, which describes some of the religious significance of this fame of the building throughout the lands.

[7 : 32] Likewise, when a foreigner who is not of your people Israel comes from a far country for your name's sake, for they shall hear of your great name, and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm, when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place,

and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

Back in 2 Samuel chapter 7, David had declared his desire to build a house for the Lord, but had not been permitted to do so. The Lord, however, had promised David that he would build David's house, and that David's son who came after him would be the one to build the temple.

Now David charges Solomon to do this work. We discover the reason why David had not been permitted to build the temple, as he had originally intended. He had shed so much blood. The blood in view here is not merely the blood of David's battles against surrounding enemies, but also the blood of civil war, and the unrighteous shedding of blood under his administration, in cases such as that of Uriah.

The person to build a house needed to be a man of rest, and a man of peace. David's son will be like Noah, whose name means rest. The expectation associated with Solomon is similar to that associated with Noah in Genesis chapter 5 verse 29, and called his name Noah, saying out of the ground that the Lord has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work, and from the painful toil of our hands.

Solomon's name means peace. In Exodus, the tabernacle is presented as a sort of Sabbath tent, a realm of rest that corresponds both to the day of rest, and to the resting of the ark of Noah.

[9 : 13] In 1 Chronicles chapter 28 verse 2, David speaks of the temple as a house of rest. Then King David rose to his feet and said, Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building.

The construction of the temple needs to be undertaken by a man of rest and peace, in a day of rest and peace. The Lord will not sit down on his throne, as it were, until his people have peace on all sides, and a Sabbath rest can be enjoyed in his new Sabbath palace.

As long as blood is being shed, and much more so if it is blood unlawfully shed, rest is still awaited, and the building of the temple as the resting place for the Lord would be premature. Considering all of this should help us to recognize just how great a landmark the building of the temple would be.

It was the symbol of the completion of the work of Israel's redemption, the end of the creation week of the nation, as it were. In 2 Samuel chapter 12, Solomon is given the name Jedediah by the Lord. Here, however, the name Solomon is also spoken of by the Lord, as a name to which he has given significance. Solomon is called Solomon because he is the Shalom man. His name is Peace because he will be the great king of peace.

[10 : 27] Solomon will also be the one in which the Davidic covenant will find its first great fulfillment. The Lord had promised to David in 2 Samuel chapter 7 verses 12 to 16, When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men.

But my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.

Your throne shall be established forever. Although its full fulfillment clearly awaits Christ, the most immediate reference here is to Solomon, in whom the promises made to David will start to bear fruit.

Like Moses charging Joshua, David charges Solomon concerning how he must act. The same sort of expressions that Moses used with Joshua, exhorting him to be strong and courageous, are here used by David to Solomon.

[11 : 37] We can recognize further parallels here. Moses led the struggle by which Israel was delivered from Egypt, and brought them through the wilderness. However, he could not enter in himself.

Rather, Joshua was the one who would give Israel an initial rest in the land. Likewise, David was the one who undertook the great struggle of establishing the kingdom. Yet Solomon would be the one in whom the kingdom entered into rest.

The father sacrificed to make possible the completing work of his son, and the son labored to realize the sacrifices of his father. The unity of mission and purpose between father and son should not be missed.

The story of the books of Samuel were filled with sons who betrayed their father's legacies, who failed to walk in their father's footsteps, or who turned against their fathers. Now we finally find a faithful son.

Solomon will be in great need of wisdom. The task of morality is greatly complicated by rule, as we saw in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Anyone who will exercise the sort of power that Solomon exercised requires great discretion and understanding in order to uphold the law of the Lord and not be led astray.

[12 : 45] Wisdom does not leave behind the law of Moses. Rather, it involves a movement into a deeper relationship with it. The king was supposed to function as a sort of model Israelite, devoting himself to the study of the law, as we see in Deuteronomy chapter 17 verses 18 to 20.

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law, and these statutes and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children in Israel.

Through such lifelong meditation upon the law, the king would learn the deeper principles of wisdom within the law. The book of Deuteronomy is a wisdom text, an exposition of the law that reveals to its diligent students, to those attentive readers and hearers who venture beneath its surfaces, profound insights into the moral order.

The Lord promised that the law would be a source of wisdom for Israel in the eyes of the surrounding nations, and now the king needs to devote himself to realizing this promise. In Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 5 to 8, we have this promise.

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them, and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people, for what great nation is there that has a God so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?

[14 : 32] And what great nation is there that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? The intertwining of law and wisdom that we find in Deuteronomy is not abandoned by the wisdom tradition associated with Solomon, rather it is presented as lying at its very foundation.

David also tells Solomon about the preparations that he has made for Solomon's work of building the temple, and what Solomon will need to do to carry the work forward. David is also concerned to establish a people prepared for Solomon and his work.

He gives the leaders of the people instructions similar to that which he gave to Solomon. King and people must be united in this construction work. Such a great construction would also be an architectural manifestation of the positive relationship between king and people.

It ought to be a revelation of the glories that good authority makes possible. David gives Solomon and the leaders of Israel a great commission, similar to other commissions that we find elsewhere in scripture, not least the commission that concludes the books of the Chronicles, in 2 Chronicles 36, verse 23.

Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him.

[15 : 52] Let him go up. A question to consider. How will the temple itself be a house of wisdom? How will the temple itself be a house of wisdom?