

1 Chronicles 28: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 0 0] 1 Chronicles chapter 28 David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the officials of the tribes, the officers of the divisions that served the king, the commanders of thousands, the commanders of hundreds, the stewards of all the property and livestock of the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men, and all the seasoned warriors.

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.

But God said to me, You may not build a house for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood. Yet the Lord God of Israel chose me from all my father's house to be king over Israel forever, for he chose Judah as leader, and in the house of Judah my father's house, and among my father's sons he took pleasure in me, to make me king over all Israel.

And of all my sons, for the Lord has given me many sons, he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. He said to me, It is Solomon your son who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.

I will establish his kingdom forever, if he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules, as he is today. Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God, observe and seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you forever.

[1 : 3 6] And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a whole heart, and with a willing mind. For the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every plan and thought.

If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. Be careful now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary.

Be strong, and do it. Then David gave Solomon his son the plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy seat, and the plan of all that he had in mind for the courts of the house of the Lord, all the surrounding chambers, the treasuries of the house of God, and the treasuries for the dedicated gifts, for the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, and all the work of the service in the house of the Lord, for all the vessels for the service in the house of the Lord, the weight of gold for all golden vessels for each service, the weight of silver vessels for each service. The weight of the golden lampstands and their lamps. The weight of gold for each lampstand and its lamps. The weight of silver for a lampstand and its lamps. According to the use of each lampstand in the service. The weight of gold for each table of the showbread. The silver for the silver tables. And pure gold for the forks, the basins and the cups. For the golden bowls and the weight of each. For the silver bowls and the weight of each. For the altar of incense made of refined gold and its weight, also his plan for the golden chariot of the cherubim, that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the Lord. All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the Lord, all the work to be done according to the plan. Then David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. For the Lord

God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished. And behold the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God. And with you in all the work will be every willing man who has skill for any kind of service. Also the officers and all the people will be holy at your command. In the concluding chapters of 1 Chronicles, David addresses the assembly of Israel. The opening verse of chapter 28 is an extensive list of all of the officials and luminaries of the nation who are included. These concluding addresses prepare Israel for the great building project of the temple and for the succession of the throne from David to Solomon. A building project on the scale of the temple would require the entire nation to be united and pulling together. It would require peace and security in the land, wise governance, strong supply chains and a well-ordered workforce. The building of the temple would finally secure the centralization of the worship of the nation as the Lord had required of it in Deuteronomy chapter 12 verses 5 to 14. But you shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. And there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the Lord your God has blessed you. You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes, for you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance that the Lord your God is giving you. But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety, then to the place that the Lord your God will choose to make his name dwell there. There you shall bring all that I command you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vowed to the Lord. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male servants and your female servants, and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.

Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, but at the place that the Lord your God will choose in one of your tribes. There you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. Now, after countless years of a moving, relocating or divided sanctuary, and of various sites of worship, Israel will finally have the central single sanctuary that the Lord intended for them to have. The political significance of this development for the nation is immense.

[6 : 12] The centralization of worship would exert a centripetal force on the nation, a nation that was always in danger of fragmenting along its regional and tribal fault lines. The establishment of a central sanctuary also went hand in hand with the establishment of a king, who would build and maintain that central site of worship, and ensure that people didn't simply worship the Lord in whatever way seemed right in their own eyes. David's desire had been to build the temple himself, as a house of rest for the Ark of the Covenant and the footstool of God. The Ark and the mercy seat over it represented the Lord's throne.

The Ark as the footstool of the throne was the place where worship was directed towards. However, David was not permitted to build the temple himself. He was a man of war, a man who pacified the enemies on all sides and secured the throne in the land, so that the man coming after him could reign over a peaceful and firmly established kingdom, and so that he could build the temple.

Building a settled house of rest for the throne of the Lord before peace was secured on all sides would be premature. David recounted the way that the Lord had graciously chosen him, choosing Judah among the tribes to be their leader, Jesse's house from Judah, David from among his brothers, and from all of David's sons, Solomon, as the appointed successor. It was in Solomon that the promise of the Davidic covenant would be realized, if Solomon remained steadfast in keeping the word of the Lord. The promise of the covenant was conditional upon faithfulness to the law of Moses. This was the case for the people in general, and also for Solomon himself, to whom David now turned, addressing him in the presence of the larger gathering of the nation's leaders. Solomon has the assurance of the Lord's favor and promise, and the honor of being commissioned to build a house for the Lord, which should inspire him to labor faithfully. His service of the Lord must be sincere, from an undivided heart and with a willing mind. If he seeks the Lord, the Lord is there to be found by him. However, if he rejects the Lord, the Lord will reject him. David delivers the plans of the temple and its service to Solomon. The plans of the temple had all been delivered to David by the Lord, and he had written them down, much as the Lord had delivered the plans of the tabernacle to Moses on Mount Sinai. However, David does not have to climb a mountain and have a theophanic revelation to have the plans of the temple delivered to him. The Lord gives the plans to David more directly, in a way that seems to conscript David's own creativity to the cause. In the building of the tabernacle, Moses had been given the plans, and Bezalel had been given wisdom for the building.

In the building of the temple, David was given the plans, and Solomon was given great wisdom for the building, as he would be the lead temple builder. Solomon would be assisted by wise master craftsmen like Hiram. In scripture, as James Jordan has observed, we see a number of cases of God giving the blueprints of his house to a prophet, who appoints a lead tent maker or builder, who then enlists further craftsmen and builders to assist him. All of this anticipates the way that the Lord builds the house of his church. The temple is not merely designed for a magnificent appearance, or for narrow functional purposes, but for a deep symbolism. The precision of the plans and their execution is necessary for the preservation and the communication of this meaning. As Moses had charged Joshua to be strong and courageous, David charges his son Solomon. David's speech here to the leaders of Israel and to Solomon is closely parallel to Moses' speech to Israel and Joshua before his death, exhorting the nation and committing them to the oversight of his successor.

For instance, the words of David's exhortation to Solomon are very similar to those of Moses to Joshua in Deuteronomy chapter 31 verses 7 to 8. Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

[10:13] David and Moses are similar in a number of respects, much as Moses was unable to enter into the land of rest on account of his sin at the waters of Meribah and his association with the rebellious people.

David is unable to build a temple on account of his shedding of blood. Solomon's building of the temple is presented as a completion of the exodus in many ways. He is a new Joshua. However, David dies just short of entry into the fulfillment. This happens because David is a man of war and has shed blood. In some respects, this is simply a matter of David's work being preparatory. However, there is also an element of judgment. Shedding blood almost invariably has negative connotations in scripture, connotations that I suspect it also has here.

A question to consider. How does the way that David describes Solomon's position relative to the Davidic covenant suggest that the divinely granted stature of Solomon's throne would exceed his own?