



Second Chronicles - Chapter One

II 1 Chronicles 10:1-2 Chronicles 9:31 - The United Kingdom of David and Solomon (continues)

Summary of Chapter One

Once Solomon was established as the king over all Israel, he gathered all the leaders to him and they went to Gibeon to make offerings on the altar in front of the Tabernacle. While he was there the Lord appeared to him and said that Solomon could have whatever he asked for. He did not ask for wealth or power but for the wisdom to lead God's people. The Lord granted him that but also said he could have the power and wealth he did not request. In fact, he would have the opportunity to become the greatest king anywhere in the world.

Although the country was at peace with its neighbours, Solomon strengthened his army with many horses and chariots. He also traded well, making gold and silver common in Jerusalem and bringing in plenty of cedar for his building projects.

II 1 Chronicles 10:1-2 Chronicles 9:31 - The United Kingdom of David and Solomon

The second major section of 1-2 Chronicles concerns the reigns of David and Solomon over the whole people and land of Israel, and overlaps the division of Chronicles into two scrolls. The rule of these two kings is presented as a unity, in that David makes the essential preparations for what Solomon completes.

David is the dominant personality and human subject of interest from Chapter 11 to the end of the first book. With regard to his own rule and contributions to the kingdom, four achievements stand out in particular:

1. David conquers Jerusalem and brings the Ark of the Covenant there, as a precursor to the temple that Solomon will build (Chapters 11 and 15).

2. He secures peace for the land so that Solomon may complete his task (Chapters 18-20).
3. He provides Solomon with the plans for the temple and the wealth to build it (Chapters 22 and 28-29).
4. He organises the personnel for the future temple and the kingdom that Solomon will inherit (Chapters 23-27).

The two kings are bound together as well in the establishment of an enduring dynasty in the line of David, in which both the temple and the kingship will testify to God's unending covenant with David (1 Chronicles 17:11-14).

Chapters 10-12 of First Chronicles recount the establishment of David's kingship over Israel in two episodes: the death of Saul and the end of his dynasty (1 Chronicles 10:1-14), and the transfer of power over the nation to David (1 Chronicles 11:1-12:40). The Chronicler presents these events in a strikingly different way from 1-2 Samuel. Presupposing his readers' familiarity with the earlier accounts, he omits most of the subsidiary episodes and details to concentrate on his central theme: David's entry into kingship inaugurated a permanent change for good in Israel's relationship with God. In short, David's rule was the instrument of God's own kingship in Israel, and he was raised to that office by the prophetic word for the salvation of the people.

Here, in the second volume, the Chronicler turns his attention to the reign of Solomon and, in particular, the building of the temple.

II.f 2 Chronicles 1:1-2:18 - Solomon's Temple Preparations

God provides Solomon with the wealth, material, and workers to build the temple.

II.f.i 2 Chronicles 1:1-13 - Solomon Requests Wisdom

Solomon took the leaders of the nation to Gibeon to worship the Lord at the tabernacle. While he was there the Lord granted his request for wisdom and promised great wealth and power as well.

¹ Solomon son of David established himself in his kingdom; the Lord his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.

2 Chronicles 1:1

Solomon son of David established himself in his kingdom; the Lord his God was with him and made him exceedingly great. Solomon made a great start to his reign as king, and God blessed it. He had been left with almost every possible advantage by his father David and his kingdom was strong and secure.

In this he was blessed in much the same way as his great ancestors: <<At that time Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, said to Abraham,

'God is with you in all that you do'>> (Genesis 21:22), and: <<The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master>> (Genesis 39:2).

² Solomon summoned all Israel, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, the judges, and all the leaders of all Israel, the heads of families. ³ Then Solomon, and the whole assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for God's tent of meeting, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made in the wilderness, was there. ⁴ (But David had brought the ark of God up from Kiriath-jearim to the place that David had prepared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.)

2 Chronicles 1:2-4

Then Solomon, and the whole assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon. Solomon's journey to the Mosaic tabernacle and altar at Gibeon, like David's mission to retrieve the ark in 1 Chronicles 13:1-16:43, is presented as a public enterprise that involves all Israel; refer also to 1 Kings 2:4. Like David, Solomon maintains continuity with the Mosaic covenant as the foundation of his own reign. Solomon made these special sacrifices at Gibeon because the tabernacle of meeting with God was there. Although the Ark of the Covenant had been brought to Jerusalem and was located in the place David had prepared for it, the tabernacle itself stayed at Gibeon.

The Mosaic tabernacle was never intended as a meeting place for the people, it was always the place where the people gathered to meet with God.

Much will be made of the removal and non-removal of high places in Chronicles. However, here the high place that was at Gibeon and others like it were an acceptable place of worship because the people did not yet have a temple as their focal point for meeting with God.

The progress of tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant in the Promised Land can be traced:

- Joshua brought both the ark and the tabernacle to Shiloh; refer to Joshua Chapter 18.
- In the days of Eli the ark was captured and the tabernacle wrecked; refer to 1 Samuel Chapter 4, Psalm 78:60-64, Jeremiah 7:12 and 26:9.
- The ark came back to Kiriath-Jearim; refer to 1 Samuel 7:1-2.
- Saul restored the tabernacle at Nob; refer to 1 Samuel Chapter 21.
- Saul moved the tabernacle to Gibeon; refer to 1 Chronicles 16:39-40.

- David brought the ark to Jerusalem and built a temporary tent for it; refer to 2 Samuel 6:17 and 2 Chronicles 1:4.

There are several reasons to explain why David did not bring the tabernacle from Gibeon to Jerusalem:

- He may have believed if the tabernacle was there the people would be satisfied with that and they would lose the passion and vision for the temple God wanted built.
- It may be that the tabernacle was only moved when it was absolutely necessary, as when disaster came upon it at Shiloh or Nob.
- David simply focused on building the temple, not continuing with the tabernacle.

⁵ Moreover, the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made was there in front of the tabernacle of the Lord. And Solomon and the assembly inquired at it. ⁶ Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the Lord, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt-offerings on it.

2 Chronicles 1:5-6

Moreover, the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made was there in front of the tabernacle of the Lord. This was the same altar made in the wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land; refer to Exodus 36:1-2. This altar was at least five hundred years old and had received many sacrifices over Israel's long history since the exodus.



The Bronze Altar

Bezalel was the master craftsman of the tabernacle, who was assisted by Oholiab. Refer to Exodus 31:1-11. In 2 Chronicles 2:11-16 Solomon, the temple builder, is likened to Bezalel and the master craftsman of the temple Hiram-abi is associated with Oholiab.

And Solomon and the assembly inquired at it. Solomon and the people of God sought the Lord at the place of atoning sacrifice. This was the OT equivalent to 'coming to the Cross' in seeking God. This was an important event marking the ceremonial beginning of Solomon's reign. Solomon wanted to demonstrate from the beginning that he would seek God and lead the kingdom to do so as well.

And offered a thousand burnt-offerings on it. This almost grotesque amount of sacrifice demonstrated both Solomon's great wealth and his heart to use it to glorify God.

⁷ That night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, ‘Ask what I should give you.’ ⁸ Solomon said to God, ‘You have shown great and steadfast love to my father David, and have made me succeed him as king. ⁹ O Lord God, let your promise to my father David now be fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. ¹⁰ Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?’

2 Chronicles 1:7-10

That night God appeared to Solomon. Solomon’s faithful seeking leads to a night time appearance of God in a dream, according to 1 Kings 3:5. This was one of the more significant dreams in the Bible, in which God invites Solomon to ask in prayer for whatever he desires, providing an interesting link between the Father and the Son Jesus: <<*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you*>> (John 15:7).

Other significant dreams include Jacob’s Dream at Bethel in Genesis 28:10-22, Joseph’s Dreams of Greatness in Genesis 37:1-11, Daniel’s visions of Christ coming into heaven in Daniel 7:13-14 and the various dreams of Joseph in Matthew’s Gospel that told him to remain with Mary when she was pregnant, to flee to Egypt and again when it was time to return.

Solomon’s request that God will fulfil his promise to David made in 1 Chronicles 17:23 looks forward to the completion of the temple in 2 Chronicles 6:17, while his request for wisdom and knowledge is focused not on selfish ambition but on the need to govern God’s people wisely.

Ask what I should give you. This was an amazing promise. God seemed to offer Solomon whatever he wanted. This was not only because Solomon sacrificed one thousand animals. It was because his heart was surrendered to God, and God wanted to work something in Solomon through this offer and his response.

The natural reaction to reading this promise of God to Solomon is perhaps to wish for such a promise. Christians do have such promises:

- <<*Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you*>> (Matthew 7:7).
- <<*I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it*>> (John 14:13-14).
- <<*And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us*>> (1 John 5:14).

The problem for many Christians, then, is not whether they will receive anything when they ask, but whether they will bother to ask at all!

You have shown great and steadfast love to my father David. Before responding to God's offer and asking for something, Solomon remembered God's faithfulness to both David and now to Solomon himself.

For you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. God's covenant promise to Abraham: <<*I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted*>> (Genesis 13:16) was being fulfilled in Solomon's day.

To go out and come in before this people. This was a Hebrew expression that meant, 'That I may fulfil my duties before this people.' Solomon asked for the knowledge and wisdom necessary to be a good king. Such words referred originally to military leadership, for example in 1 Samuel 18:13 and 1 Chronicles 11:2, but are here broadened into representing good governmental administration in general.

¹¹ God answered Solomon, 'Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honour, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king, ¹² wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honour, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like.' ¹³ So Solomon came from the high place at Gibeon, from the tent of meeting, to Jerusalem. And he reigned over Israel.

2 Chronicles 1:11-13

God answered Solomon. God grants Solomon's request and also promises him riches, possessions, and honour that he did not request. This theme is taken up again at the end of the Solomon narrative in 2 Chronicles 8:1-9:28.

Because this was in your heart. God was pleased by what Solomon had asked for, in that he knew his great need for knowledge and wisdom. God was also pleased by what Solomon did not ask for, in that he did not ask for possessions, wealth, honour, or the life of those who hate you. Solomon's request was not bad. It is specifically stated in 1 Kings 3:10 that the speech pleased the Lord. Yet the question remains whether this was the best Solomon could have asked for. Solomon did his job well, as well or better than anyone. Yet as his falling away in the end showed in 1 Kings 11:1-11, there was something lacking in his spiritual life. There is no sign in his biography that he ever had the deep inward devotion of his

father David. After the poet-psalmist came the prosaic and keen-sighted shrewd man of affairs.

There is an interesting comparison where in certain church congregations there are many who ask God for the gift of tongues, yet too few seem to ask for the gift of prophecy or generosity or other gift that would truly benefit others.

Wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honour, such as none of the kings had who were before you. God not only answered Solomon's prayer, he answered it beyond all expectation. Solomon did not ask for riches and wealth and honour, but God gave him those also. God's answer was a beautiful instance of the overflowing love and grace of the divine heart. All the things Solomon set aside for the sake of wisdom were also given to him.

It is the fear of the Lord that is the true beginning of wisdom: <<And he said to humankind, "Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding">> (Job 28:28), <<The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practise it have a good understanding. His praise endures for ever>> (Psalm 111:10), and: <<The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility goes before honour>> (Proverbs 15:33).

Appearing in his dream, God answered Solomon's prayer and made him wise, powerful, rich, and influential. His reign was glorious for Israel. At the same time, his end was tragic. It can be fairly said that Solomon wasted these gifts God gave him. Although he accomplished much, he could have done much more - and his heart was led away from God in the end; refer to 1 Kings 11:4-11.

In the possession of such wisdom Solomon was unparalleled in Israelite history, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like, as Hezekiah was unparalleled in trust (2 Kings 18:5), and Josiah in obedience to the Law of Moses (2 Kings 23:25).

So Solomon came to Jerusalem. And he reigned over Israel. Solomon actually reigned, or began his reign at least, in the great wisdom God gave him at Gibeon. A famous example of this wisdom is found in 1 Kings 3:16-28, where he wisely judged between two mothers who each claimed the same baby as their own.

II.f.ii 2 Chronicles 1:14-17 - Solomon's Military and Commercial Activity

Solomon strengthens the army throughout the land and makes gold, silver and cedar wood plentiful commodities.

¹⁴ Solomon gathered together chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ The king made

silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. ¹⁶ Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue; the king's traders received them from Kue at the prevailing price. ¹⁷ They imported from Egypt, and then exported, a chariot for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred and fifty; so through them these were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

2 Chronicles 1:14-17

These verses are taken from 1 Kings 10:27-29 and repeated with some modifications at 2 Chronicles 9:25-28. This section demonstrates the fulfilment of God's promise of wealth.

Solomon gathered together chariots and horses. The famous stables of Solomon show what a vast cavalry he assembled for Israel. Unfortunately, it also shows that Solomon did not take God's word as seriously as he should. In Deuteronomy 17:16, God spoke specifically to the future kings of Israel: <<*Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the Lord has said to you, 'You must never return that way again'*>>.

In comparison to the reign of David, there were few military conflicts during the reign of Solomon, yet he still saw the importance of a strong defence. Perhaps there were few military conflicts because Solomon had a strong defence. As commented on in the previous chapter, the remains of Solomon's fortress and stables at Megiddo can be seen today.

The king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone. When Solomon's great wealth is considered, it can be seen that he originally did not set his heart upon riches. He deliberately asked for wisdom to lead the people of God instead of riches or fame. God promised to also give Solomon riches and fame, and God fulfilled his promise. It should also be considered that Solomon gave an eloquent testimony to the vanity of riches as the preacher in the Book of Ecclesiastes. He powerfully showed that there was no ultimate satisfaction through materialism. No one has to be as rich as Solomon to learn the same lesson. Certainly, Solomon presided over a prosperous and wealthy kingdom. Yet the Chronicler is also warning the reader here. He assumes that they know of the instructions for future kings of Israel in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. God blessed Solomon with great riches, but Solomon allowed that blessing to turn into a danger because he disobeyed and multiplied silver and gold for himself.

Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue. At the end of this great description of Solomon's wealth and splendour, a note of warning is given. This was in direct disobedience to Deuteronomy 17:16.

Kue, also known as Cilicia and Keveh, was in what is now southern Turkey, at the east end of the Mediterranean, and was a prime ancient supplier of horses.

Six hundred shekels of silver is about 15lbs or 6.9 kg, and one hundred and fifty equates to 3.75lbs or 1.7 kg.

These were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram. This may explain why Solomon broke such an obvious commandment. Perhaps the importation of horses from Egypt began as trading as an agent on behalf of other kings. From this, perhaps Solomon could say, "I'm importing horses from Egypt but I am not doing it for myself. I'm not breaking God's command." Many examples of gross disobedience begin as clever rationalisations.

It is hard to know in what order Solomon's compromise was expressed. Yet it is possible to say that this disobedience to this seemingly small command began the downfall of Solomon:

- First, in disobedience he multiplied horses for the service of his kingdom and he obtains them from the Egyptians (1 Kings 4:26 and 10:28-29).
- Then, because of these connections with Egypt he married Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings 3:1).
- Then, because he started by marrying an Egyptian, he married many other foreign women (1 Kings 11:1-4).
- Then, because of the presence of the foreign wives he built temples to their gods for their use (1 Kings 11:7-8).
- Then, because of the presence of these temples, he began to worship these other gods himself (1 Kings 11:4-5).