



Second Chronicles - Chapter Four

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

II.g 2 Chronicles 3:1-5:1 - Solomon's Building of the Temple (continues)

Summary of Chapter Four

The temple's furnishings communicated the same message as that signified by the structure of the building: the presence of the holy God in the midst of his people, and his gracious provision of atonement and forgiveness. For the Chronicler's own generation, the fact that these vessels had been returned from their Babylonian captivity, as recorded in Ezra 1:3-11 and 6:5, was a sign as well that they were still God's covenant people and the heirs of his promises to David and Solomon.

II.g.ii 2 Chronicles 4:1-5:1 - Furnishings of the Temple

Refer to the chapter summary above.

¹ He made an altar of bronze, twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and ten cubits high.

2 Chronicles 4:1

He made an altar of bronze. Solomon's altar stood outside the temple. Perhaps it stood in front of the temple entrance, just as Moses' altar had stood before the entrance of the tabernacle: <<***You shall set the altar of burnt-offering before the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting***>> (Exodus 40:6), although it may have stood in the northeast corner, opposite the bronze sea basin in the southeast corner.

The idea behind the Hebrew word for altar is essentially, 'killing-place.' This was the place of sacrifice, the centre for worship and service for the priests

and the people. Just as in the tabernacle, the altar was the first main object to be met as one entered the sanctuary court. It demonstrates that God may be approached only through sacrifices.

Twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide. Essentially, this altar was large, about 30 feet or 10m square, and was about twice as large as the altar originally built for the tabernacle; refer to Exodus 27:1-2.

Ten cubits high. The altar was raised significantly. The altar was set up high so that all the people might see the burnt-offerings, and be reminded of their sins and of their Saviour: <<*I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no saviour*>> (Isaiah 43:11); for the ceremonial law was their gospel.

² Then he made the cast sea; it was round, ten cubits from rim to rim, and five cubits high. A line of thirty cubits would encircle it completely. ³ Under it were panels all round, each of ten cubits, surrounding the sea; there were two rows of panels, cast when it was cast. ⁴ It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; the sea was set on them. The hindquarters of each were towards the inside. ⁵ Its thickness was a handbreadth; its rim was made like the rim of a cup, like the flower of a lily; it held three thousand baths. ⁶ He also made ten basins in which to wash, and set five on the right-hand side, and five on the left. In these they were to rinse what was used for the burnt-offering. The sea was for the priests to wash in.

2 Chronicles 4:2-6

Refer to the comments made on 1 Kings 7:23-47 for the various details of the temple building.

Then he made the cast sea. The sea was a large, circular water tank, located outside the southeast corner of the temple (v.10) and used by the priests for their ceremonial cleansing before they entered the temple. It corresponded to the bronze basin that had stood between the entrance to the tabernacle and the Mosaic altar; refer to Exodus 30:18-21. The huge laver was more than 15 feet or 5m across.

It seems as though its design was a lesser version of what can be found in heaven, the true and everlasting temple of God: <<*and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal*>> (Revelation 4:6a), <<*And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands*>> (Revelation 15:2).

It stood on twelve oxen. This large pool of water was set upon sculptured oxen. The oxen probably signified the twelve tribes of Israel, especially as they were encamped around the four sides of the tabernacle in the wilderness; refer to Numbers 2:1-31. NT commentators believe it pointed to the twelve apostles who carried news of the 'water of life' all around the world.

It held three thousand baths. First Kings 7:26 reads two thousand baths. The difference may be due to a copyist's error or, since this version was written following the return from exile, it could be a reference to the Babylonian bath which was less volume than the Hebrew equivalent.

He also made ten basins in which to wash. In the temple courtyard there were ten bronze wheeled stands that held ten basins filled with water: five on the south side of the temple, five on the north side. They were used to rinse off the animal parts that were used for the burnt-offerings; refer to 1 Kings 7:27-38 and 2 Chronicles 4:6. Each stand was 6 feet or 1.8m square and 4.5 feet or 1.4 m high. Each basin was 4.5 feet or 1.4 m in diameter and held 240 gallons or 909l of water.



Bronze Basin and Stand

⁷ He made ten golden lampstands as prescribed, and set them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north. ⁸ He also made ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the right-hand side and five on the left. And he made one hundred basins of gold.

2 Chronicles 4:7-8

He made ten golden lampstands as prescribed. In contrast to the tabernacle, with its one seven-branched lampstand or menorah and table; refer to Exodus 25:31-36, Solomon's temple had ten of each, although 1 Kings 7:48 mentions only one table. The work of the temple required lampstands for light and tables to hold the showbread, the bread that represented the continual fellowship of Israel with God. The temple fittingly displayed a greater light and a greater dynamic of fellowship.

He also made ten tables and placed them in the temple. The tables were apparently for showbread, i.e. 'the bread of the Presence' (v.19), refer also to 1 Chronicles 9:32; a perpetual bread offering to Yahweh, through which Israel consecrated itself to God: <<***And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me always***>> (Exodus 25:30).

And he made one hundred basins of gold. These ‘sprinkling bowls’ were not particularly associated with the tables by seem rather to have been used for collecting the blood of sacrifices, which was then sprinkled about the altar in the temple services of atonement.

⁹ He made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court; he overlaid their doors with bronze. ¹⁰ He set the sea at the south-east corner of the house.

2 Chronicles 4:9-10

He made the court of the priests. This was also known as the inner court, the court of the temple open only to the priests. This was a feature that also corresponded to the tabernacle; refer to Exodus 27:9-19.

The great court was the outer court, the place in the temple precincts open to the assembly of Israel as a whole.

These two courts are a reminder that, under the old covenant, the people did not have direct access to God but had the priests as intermediaries. Since the death and resurrection of Jesus, Christians now have direct access to God.

¹¹ And Hiram made the pots, the shovels, and the basins. Thus Hiram finished the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of God: ¹² the two pillars, the bowls, and the two capitals on the top of the pillars; and the two lattice-works to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the top of the pillars; ¹³ the four hundred pomegranates for the two lattice-works, two rows of pomegranates for each lattice-work, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars. ¹⁴ He made the stands, the basins on the stands, ¹⁵ the one sea, and the twelve oxen underneath it. ¹⁶ The pots, the shovels, the forks, and all the equipment for these Hiram-abi made of burnished bronze for King Solomon for the house of the Lord. ¹⁷ In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredah. ¹⁸ Solomon made all these things in great quantities, so that the weight of the bronze was not determined.

2 Chronicles 4:11-18

And Hiram made the pots, the shovels, and the basins. Hiram was half Israelite and half Gentile, and he was the best craftsman around. Solomon hired him to do all his work; that is, the fine artistic work of the temple. These articles were of special note for the Chronicler, because these were some of the only articles that were recovered and used from the first temple period into the days of the

Chronicler. The bronze vessels and furnishings were located in the temple entrance and court, while those in the interior, the place of greater holiness, were made of gold.

The emphasis on the temple vessels, as well as the association between the tabernacle and the temple, underlines the continuity represented by the temple. The return of the temple vessels to the second temple was one of the key signs that postexilic Israel remained a worshipping community of covenant people; refer to Ezra 1:7-11, 6:5 and 8:24-34.

Solomon made all these things in great quantities, so that the weight of the bronze was not determined. The weight was not measured. This was as it should be. There was no attempt to keep an accurate account of what was given to the service of God. Even Solomon's left hand did not know what his right hand did. There is a tendency in people to keep a strict account of what they give to God, but true devotion supersedes such calculation.

¹⁹ So Solomon made all the things that were in the house of God: the golden altar, the tables for the bread of the Presence, ²⁰ the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold to burn before the inner sanctuary, as prescribed; ²¹ the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of purest gold; ²² the snuffers, basins, ladles, and firepans, of pure gold. As for the entrance to the temple: the inner doors to the most holy place and the doors of the nave of the temple were of gold.

2 Chronicles 4:19-22

So Solomon made all the things that were in the house of God. Hiram takes responsibility only for the work in bronze, while Solomon has charge of the work in gold. Hiram may himself have been full of skill, intelligence, and knowledge and a worthy successor, to some extent, to Bezalel; but the authors are eager to portray Solomon as the one who pre-eminently embodies these qualities; refer to 1 Kings 3:4-15 and 4:29. These items would later be removed and taken to Babylon: <<**He carried off all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the Lord, which King Solomon of Israel had made, all this as the Lord had foretold**>> (2 Kings 24:13). Ultimately, though, God would have his revenge: <<**You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven! The vessels of his temple have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know; but the God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honoured**>> (Daniel 5:23). Thus prophecy was fulfilled: <<**For thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the pillars, the sea, the stands,**

and the rest of the vessels that are left in this city, which King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon did not take away when he took into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon King Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim of Judah, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem – thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels left in the house of the Lord, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall stay, until the day when I give attention to them, says the Lord. Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place>> (Jeremiah 27:19-22).

The bronze altar that was made by Hiram was for the purpose of offering sacrifices. The golden altar was placed inside the most holy place and was to be used by the high priest to burn incense to the Lord: <<*Behind the second curtain was a tent called the Holy of Holies. In it stood the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which there were a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat. Of these things we cannot speak now in detail*>> (Hebrews 9:3-5).

The tables for the bread of the Presence. The table is one of three items in the Holy Place; like all the items, its pieces are to be either overlaid with gold or made of it. The bread of the Presence consisted of twelve flat loaves of bread, symbolising the twelve tribes of Israel. Facing the lampstand, they enjoyed the perpetual light of divine blessing.



The Table for the Bread of the Presence

The wooden table, overlaid with pure gold, was 3 feet long, 1.5 feet wide and 2.25 feet high or 1 m x 0.5 m x 0.7 m. It held the twelve loaves of the bread of the Presence, which were holy. Wooden poles, overlaid with gold, were inserted through the rings of the table when the table was transported.

The bread of the Presence refers to twelve loaves of unleavened bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, which were baked fresh each week and placed in the Holy Place as an offering to God. The old bread was removed and was only to be eaten by the priests, although King David did famously and controversially request the bread in a time of special need, something Jesus taught as being appropriate: <<And he said to them, 'Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions.' Then he said to them, 'The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath>> (Mark 2:25-27), thus providing insight as to how the law was in fact a gracious gift of God and not a restrictive practice or rite.

The Most Holy Place was separated from the nave, i.e. the Holy Place, by inner doors covered in or even made of gold as well as the veil or curtain: <<And Solomon[made the curtain of blue and purple and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and worked cherubim into it>> (2 Chronicles 3:14).

^{5:1} Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of the Lord was finished. Solomon brought in the things that his father David had dedicated, and stored the silver, the gold, and all the vessels in the treasuries of the house of God.

2 Chronicles 5:1

Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of the Lord was finished is a summary statement, again recalling that the temple was the joint enterprise of Solomon and David; refer to 1 Chronicles 17:8 and 22:2-16. This was the great achievement of Solomon's life. He began this ambitious project shortly after he came to the throne, and now it was finished, certainly much to his satisfaction.

Solomon brought in the things that his father David had dedicated. This is a reminder of just how much David did for the temple. He even designed, made, and dedicated some the furnishings of the temple.