



Second Chronicles - Chapter Six

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

II.h 2 Chronicles 5:2-7:22 - The Dedication of the Temple (continues)

Summary of Chapter Six

Solomon addresses the assembly and reminds that it was the Lord who chose Jerusalem as a place to build his temple. He also states that the Lord had chosen David and his family as the kings over his people and that he was pleased that David had a heart for building the temple. However, the task of building the temple was to be Solomon's and this he has now done.

Solomon then kneels on a raised platform so that the assembly could see him and he prays to God. He gives thanks to the Lord that David and his descendants have been chosen as kings. He also asks God to hear the prayers of both his people and the foreigners who come to the temple to pray to him. He asks that the Lord will judge fairly and that he will forgive sins. Also, when the people's sin becomes so bad that the Lord has to send them into exile and they then repent of their sin, that the Lord would hear them and return them to the land he had given to his people.

II.h.ii 2 Chronicles 6:1-11 - Dedication of the Temple

The Chronicler follows his source quite closely in his presentation of Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple; refer to 1 Kings 8:12-50a. Yet, whereas the earlier version finishes with an appeal to the exodus under Moses as the basis of God's relationship with Israel (1 Kings 8:50b-53), the Chronicler focuses instead on the Davidic covenant.

For the Chronicler's own postexilic generation, the temple signified God's promise to David of an enduring kingdom, however restricted Israel's present circumstances might seem. As the focal point of God's presence on earth, the temple also stood

as a constant visible encouragement to prayer, as indicated by the different circumstances of need envisioned by Solomon in his prayer (vv.12-42).

¹ Then Solomon said, ‘The Lord has said that he would reside in thick darkness. ² I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to reside in for ever.’

2 Chronicles 6:1-2

The Lord has said that he would reside in thick darkness. The cloud of God’s glory has a long association with his presence. The coming of the ark into the temple and the appearance of the cloud of God’s glory are sure signs that the new worship arrangements have the divine blessing; notice the connection to the thick darkness in Exodus 20:21, Deuteronomy 4:11 and 5:22. The God of the exodus and Sinai has come reside in his temple, dwelling with his people.

I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to reside in for ever. Solomon rightly sensed that the presence of the cloud meant that God dwelt in the temple in a special way. As long as this did not slip into a superstitious misunderstanding, it was good to recognise a special place to come and meet with God. Language experts say the poem is incomplete and fragmented, and that it apparently had another opening line in its original form.

³ Then the king turned round and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. ⁴ And he said, ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David, saying, ⁵ “Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any of the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, so that my name might be there, and I chose no one as ruler over my people Israel; ⁶ but I have chosen Jerusalem in order that my name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.” ⁷ My father David had it in mind to build a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. ⁸ But the Lord said to my father David, “You did well to consider building a house for my name; ⁹ nevertheless, you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.”

2 Chronicles 6:3-9

Then the king turned round and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. The king blesses his people in the name of their God, while they stand as an act of reverence to the Lord.

Who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David. Solomon recognised that the temple was the fulfilment of God's plan, more than David's or Solomon's. David and Solomon were human instruments, but the plan and the work were God's.

Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt. Solomon pressed the remembrance of the exodus. Although it had happened five hundred years earlier, it was just as important and real for Israel as the day it had happened.

I have chosen Jerusalem. Moses had instructed the people that God would choose such a place and it was to be the place where they would gather to worship God and for their various festivals: <<*But you shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there. You shall go there, bringing there your burnt-offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, your votive gifts, your freewill-offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks*>> (Deuteronomy 12:5-6).

I have chosen David to be over my people Israel. This is not just David the man but the perpetual line of David who would reign until the exile and would ultimately lead to the permanent Kingship of Christ.

The name of the Lord. In Solomon's speech and also in the prayer that follows the word 'name' is used to avoid saying that God himself actually dwells in the temple. God's presence in the temple was real for God's 'name' represents all that he is, and the people would get his attention by calling on his name, but he was not to be thought of as 'living' in the temple, as was imagined of the false gods of other nations; in any sense that would detract from the reality of his transcendence.

In biblical usage a person's name represents the person's character, everything that is true about the person. The name, i.e. character and attributes, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is the same as the name, i.e. character and attributes, of Jesus Christ. In fact, in Matthew 28:19, the word name, the Greek word *onoma*, is singular, indicating that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share one name, i.e. one character and set of attributes.

You did well to consider building a house for my name; nevertheless, you shall not build the house. Although Solomon built the temple and not David, Solomon adds a reminder of the extensive preparations David made for the temple. David prepared for the temple in every way he could short of actually building it, and he was happy for the credit and honour for building it to go to his son Solomon. This confirms that David's disqualification was not due to David's sin, but because the concept of God's rest must be regarded as the unique and final stage in building the temple associated with the name of God.

¹⁰ Now the Lord has fulfilled his promise that he made; for I have succeeded my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built the house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. ¹¹ There I have set the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord that he made with the people of Israel.’

2 Chronicles 6:10-11

Now the Lord has fulfilled his promise that he made; for I have succeeded my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel. Solomon recognised that his succession of David on the throne of Israel was a significant thing. He was the first king to follow his father as a hereditary monarch, and was living proof that God keeps his promises to those who are faithful.

There I have set the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord that he made with the people of Israel. The chief glory of the temple was that it was the resting place for the Ark of the Covenant, a representation of God’s covenantal presence with his people: <<*All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees*>> (Psalm 25:10), and: <<*Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!*>> (Psalm 50:5).

II.h.iii 2 Chronicles 6:12-42 - Solomon’s Prayer of Dedication

The Ark of the Covenant has arrived in the temple, and Solomon has addressed the people about the meaning of the event. He now turns to address God, reflecting on the nature of God’s ‘dwelling’ in the temple and offering a sevenfold petitionary prayer, with each section involving a plea that God should ‘hear from heaven’ for those who will approach him in the temple complex or by praying towards the temple from far away.

The prayer is important for understanding the Books of Chronicles as a whole, for it places both the temple and the law in wider perspective. The temple is an important building, but God is not confined by a building and is certainly not dependent on it. He will survive even its destruction, and will hear his people’s prayers when they go into exile. Likewise, obedience to the law is very important, but Solomon holds out hope for restoration, even when the people fail to obey.

¹² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands. ¹³ Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the court; and he stood on it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands towards heaven. ¹⁴ He said, ‘O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant in

steadfast love with your servants who walk before you with all their heart — ¹⁵ you who have kept for your servant, my father David, what you promised to him. Indeed, you promised with your mouth and this day have fulfilled with your hand.

2 Chronicles 6:12-15

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord. Solomon did not dedicate the temple from within the building itself. It would be inappropriate for him to do so because he was a king and not a priest. The holy place and most holy place were only for chosen descendants of Aaron: *<<Aaron and his sons shall wear them when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place; or they will bring guilt on themselves and die. This shall be a perpetual ordinance for him and for his descendants after him>>* (Exodus 28:43). Instead, Solomon stood in the courtyard before the entrance to the holy place.

And spread out his hands. This was the most common posture of prayer in the OT. Many people in modern times close their eyes, bow their head, and fold their hands as they pray, but the OT tradition was to spread out the hands toward heaven in a gesture of surrender, openness, and ready reception. This is a posture that is often reflected by those who are part of charismatic congregations.

Charles Spurgeon commented concerning this prayer, “It is worthy of remark concerning this prayer that it is as full and comprehensive as if it were meant to be the summary of all future prayers offered in the temple,” and again, “One is struck, moreover, with the fact that the language is far from new, and is full of quotations from the Pentateuch, some of which are almost word for word, while the sense of the whole may be found in those memorable passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.”

Solomon had made a bronze platform, and he stood on it. Because Solomon was a king and not a priest, he offered the prayer of dedication from a specially constructed platform before the altar of burnt-offerings, in front of the temple entrance. It was three cubits high, about 4.5 feet or 1.4m, so that the whole assembly could see and hear him clearly.

There is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant in steadfast love with your servants who walk before you with all their heart. Solomon recognised that God was completely unique. The pretend gods of the other nations could not and must not be compared to him in any way. Scripture often reminds the people of God’s covenant-keeping qualities: *<<If you heed these ordinances, by diligently observing them, the Lord your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors>>* (Deuteronomy 7:12), *<<I said, ‘O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his*

commandments'>> (Nehemiah 1:5), and: <<*I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, 'Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, keeping covenant and steadfast love with those who love you and keep your commandments'*>> (Daniel 9:4).

You who have kept for your servant, my father David, what you promised to him. In bringing the temple to completion, the Lord has kept the promise he declared to his servant David: <<*He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever*>> (2 Samuel 7:13). Solomon rightly first thanked and praised God for his past fulfilment of promises. Solomon called upon God to keep the further promises that he has made. This is the great secret to power in prayer - to take God's promises to heart in faith, and then to boldly and reverently call upon him to fulfil the promises.

It should always be remembered that no one can command God to fulfil a prayer request nor should they ever expect him to answer a prayer that is not within his will.

Charles Spurgeon comments, "God sent the promise on purpose to be used. If I see a Bank of England note, it is a promise for a certain amount of money, and I take it and use it. But oh I my friend, do try and use God's promises; nothing pleases God better than to see his promises put in circulation; he loves to see his children bring them up to him, and say, "Lord, do as thou hast said." And let me tell you that it glorifies God to use his promises."

This kind of prayer lays hold of God's promise. Just because God promises does not mean that the promise is owned by the believer. Through believing prayer like this, God promises and the believer appropriates. If they do not appropriate in faith, God's promise is left unclaimed.

¹⁶ Therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant, my father David, that which you promised him, saying, "There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children keep to their way, to walk in my law as you have walked before me." ¹⁷ Therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant David.

2 Chronicles 6:16-17

Therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant, my father David, that which you promised him; let your word be confirmed. Solomon called upon God to keep the promises that he made. As already stated but worth repeating, this is the great secret to power in prayer - to take God's promises to heart in faith, and then boldly and reverently call upon him to fulfil the promises. This kind of prayer lays hold of God's promise. Just because God promises does not mean that the believer possesses that promise. Through believing prayer like this, God promises

and the petitioner appropriates. If Christians do not appropriate in faith, God's promise is left unclaimed.

¹⁸ 'But will God indeed reside with mortals on earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built! ¹⁹ Have regard to your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you. ²⁰ May your eyes be open day and night towards this house, the place where you promised to set your name, and may you heed the prayer that your servant prays towards this place. ²¹ And hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray towards this place; may you hear from heaven your dwelling-place; hear and forgive.

2 Chronicles 6:18-21

But will God indeed reside with mortals on earth? Although God will dwell in the temple, it is not to be thought of as the only place where God is, but as a special place where his name is, a place toward which his eyes and ears are open: <<*Thus says the Lord: Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is my resting-place? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word. Whoever slaughters an ox is like one who kills a human being; whoever sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever presents a grain-offering, like one who offers swine's blood; whoever makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol*>> (Isaiah 66:1-3a).

How much less this house that I have built! Christians should be glad that Solomon said this. From his statement in vv.1-2 it might have been thought that he drifted towards a superstitious idea that God actually lived in the temple to the exclusion of other places. It was important to recognise that, although God had a special presence in the temple, he is far too great to be restricted to the temple.

The infinite God cannot be contained within space let alone any manmade structure, yet he has made the temple the point of contact and immediate communication with his people.

And hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray towards this place. Solomon asked God to incline his ear towards the king and the people when they prayed towards the temple. For this reason, many observant Jews still pray facing the direction of the site of the temple in Jerusalem for, even though the building was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, the location is still associated with God's name and all that entails.

May you hear from heaven your dwelling-place; hear and forgive. Solomon asked God to incline his ear towards the king and the people when they prayed from the temple. For this reason, many observant Jews still pray facing the direction of the site of the temple in Jerusalem. The hearing of prayer is done in heaven, which is (if anywhere is) the dwelling-place of God. Even then, however, God cannot be limited to any one place for he is omnipresent; he cannot, strictly speaking, dwell in even the highest heaven. He cannot be confined by space. In fact, God is not bound by any dimensions.

Prayer in or towards the temple will come before God in his heavenly dwelling place because his name is on the temple, which signifies both his spiritual presence in that place and his ownership of it, and is thus an invitation to pray there in confident faith. The NT equivalent is prayer offered in Jesus' name, the purpose of which is to bring glory to God: *<<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).

Hear and forgive. Solomon knew that the most important thing Israel needed was forgiveness. This was the greatest answer to prayer Israel could expect from God.

Introduction to 2 Chronicles 6:22-40

Solomon offers some representative situations in which Israelites and even foreigners not living in the land should offer prayer at or towards the temple, seeking forgiveness, vindication, and divine help.

²² 'If someone sins against another and is required to take an oath and comes and swears before your altar in this house, ²³ may you hear from heaven, and act, and judge your servants, repaying the guilty by bringing their conduct on their own head, and vindicating those who are in the right by rewarding them in accordance with their righteousness.

2 Chronicles 6:22-23

If someone sins against another. This is the first of seven specific petitions. It concerns a legal case in which difficulties over evidence or witnesses make it impossible to resolve the case in any normal way; refer to 1 Kings 3:16-28. A priestly ritual is involved here, similar to that recorded in Numbers 5:11-31. God himself is invoked as judge to condemn the guilty and clear the righteous individual, i.e. hear from heaven, and act, and judge your servants. Solomon asked the God who can see what man cannot - who knows the hidden heart of a person - and to enforce from heaven the oaths made at the temple.

And comes and swears before your altar in this house. The temple grounds were used as a place to verify and authorise oaths. When a dispute came down to one

word against another, Solomon asked that the temple would be a place to properly swear by. However, Jesus may have taught against such oaths being taken: <<*Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, “You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.” But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King*>> (Matthew 5:33-35), although it is the city and not the temple that he specifically refers to. He does however state that: <<*whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears by it and by the one who dwells in it*>> (Matthew 23:21).

The Law of Moses provided for oaths to be taken in the sanctuary to determine guilt or innocence if there were no witnesses to an offence.

²⁴ ‘When your people Israel, having sinned against you, are defeated before an enemy but turn again to you, confess your name, pray and plead with you in this house, ²⁵ may you hear from heaven, and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land that you gave to them and to their ancestors.

2 Chronicles 6:24-25

National defeat is included among the curses for covenant breaking. Exile is one possible punishment.

When your people Israel, having sinned against you, are defeated before an enemy. The second, third, and fourth petitions concern defeat in battle, and subsequent exile from the land, drought (vv.26-27), and assorted perils such as famine, pestilence, and siege (vv.28-31). In each case the cause of the problem is sin, and the main requirement of the situation is forgiveness, although divine instruction is also requested (v.27). Many times in their history, Israel suffered defeat and could only cry out to God. It was even worse when the defeat was because they had sinned against the Lord himself: <<*And those of you who survive shall languish in the land of your enemies because of their iniquities; also they shall languish because of the iniquities of their ancestors*>> (Leviticus 26:39), and: <<*Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgement*>> (Psalm 51:4).

Israel should have learned from their ancestors’ mistakes during the time of the Judges where they turned away from the Lord, an enemy persecuted them, they cried to the Lord for help and he raised up a saviour. It was a time of which it was said: <<*In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes*>> (Judges 21:25). Yet they had always had a King, the Lord himself, yet they went their own way. Today, the church too must learn the lessons from the past and not go their own way.

But turn again to you, confess your name, pray and plead with you in this house, may you hear from heaven, and forgive the sin of your people Israel.

Solomon asked God to hear the prayers of a defeated, yet humble and penitent Israel. God answered this prayer of Solomon, and he forgives and restores his defeated people when they come in humble repentance.

And bring them again to the land that you gave to them and to their ancestors.

In the Chronicler's day this had been fulfilled for those who had been in Babylon and had chosen to take up the opportunity to return. However, at the time Solomon prayed this exile was no doubt the furthest thing from their minds.

²⁶ 'When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, and then they pray towards this place, confess your name, and turn from their sin, because you punish them, ²⁷ may you hear in heaven, forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send down rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

2 Chronicles 6:26-27

When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you. Drought was a constant threat for the agriculturally based economy of Israel. If there was no rain, there was no food. Although droughts could and did occur naturally in the region, Solomon also knew that God could bring them about as judgement on a sinful and rebellious people.

And then they pray towards this place, confess your name, and turn from their sin, because you punish them, may you hear in heaven. Solomon does not take it for granted that God would forgive and hear his repentant people. God's good response to repentance comes from his grace and mercy, not from justice.

Charles Spurgeon adds his comments to this concept, "It is not therefore to be wondered at that, when Solomon dedicated to the Lord the temple which he had built, his great petition was that God would hear every prayer that should be uttered in that place or toward that place. He wished the temple always to be to Israel the token that God's memorial is that he hears prayer."

Teach them the good way in which they should walk. God has already done this by giving them the Scriptures to obey: <<*He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord*>> (Deuteronomy 8:3), <<*But this command I gave them, 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you'*>> (Jeremiah 7:23). Ultimately,

those who abide by the teaching of God walk in the truth: <<*Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free'>> (John 8:31-32). This was something that John admired in others: <<*I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father*>> (2 John 4), and: <<*I was overjoyed when some of the friends arrived and testified to your faithfulness to the truth, namely, how you walk in the truth*>> (3 John 3).*

²⁸ 'If there is famine in the land, if there is plague, blight, mildew, locust, or caterpillar; if their enemies besiege them in any of the settlements of the lands; whatever suffering, whatever sickness there is; ²⁹ whatever prayer, whatever plea from any individual or from all your people Israel, all knowing their own suffering and their own sorrows so that they stretch out their hands towards this house; ³⁰ may you hear from heaven your dwelling-place, forgive, and render to all whose heart you know, according to all their ways, for only you know the human heart. ³¹ Thus may they fear you and walk in your ways all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our ancestors.

2 Chronicles 6:28-31

All knowing their own suffering and their own sorrows so that they stretch out their hands towards this house. Solomon recognised that some plagues are easily seen, but other plagues or afflictions come from within the heart. Many are cursed by a plague that no one else can see, but lives in their own heart. Solomon asks God to answer such a plague-stricken person when they humbly plead at the temple. A person does not have to be sinless or righteous to have their prayers answered at the temple. They could be a guilty, stricken by the plague of their own heart and still find a gracious God when if they come in true, humble repentance: <<*But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us*>> (Romans 5:8).

For only you know the human heart. The emphasis is on God's intimate knowledge of and concern for each individual among his people.

Charles Spurgeon commented, "A great many men think they know the plague of other people's hearts, and there is a great deal of talk in the world about this family, and that person, and the other. I pray you let the scandals of the hour alone, and think of your own evils". Jesus teaches something similar: <<*Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbour, "Let me take the speck out of your eye", while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first*

take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye>> (Matthew 7:3-5).

³² 'Likewise when foreigners, who are not of your people Israel, come from a distant land because of your great name, and your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm, when they come and pray towards this house, ³³ may you hear from heaven your dwelling-place, and do whatever the foreigners ask of 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 your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.

2 Chronicles 6:32-33

Likewise when foreigners come from a distant land because of your great name and pray towards this house. The fifth petition turns from Israelites to the foreigner or Gentile who has heard of the Lord's great name, mighty hand, and outstretched arm, qualities seen in: <<*Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of power, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?>> (Deuteronomy 4:34), and: <<*Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day>> (Deuteronomy 5:15), and prays toward the temple. Solomon desires that this person, too, would know answered prayer and that all the peoples of the earth should know God's name and fear him; refer to Isaiah 2:1-5 and 56:6-8, and Luke 7:1-10.**

The temple was in Israel but it was always intended to be a house of prayer for all nations: <<*these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples>> (Isaiah 56:7). God wanted the court of the Gentiles to be a place where the nations could come and pray. The violation of this principle made Jesus angry. When he came to the temple and found the outer courts - the only place where the Gentile nations could come a pray - more like a market than a house of prayer, he drove out the money-changers and the merchants: <<*Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of**

prayer for all the nations”? But you have made it a den of robbers’>> (Mark 11:15-17).

Your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm calls to mind God’s deliverance in the exodus: *<<I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go>>* (Exodus 3:19-20). Solomon envisions Gentiles making pilgrimage to pray at the temple because of what they have heard about this event. On the temple as a place of prayer for all nations, refer also to Isaiah 2:2-4 and Zechariah 8:20-23.

Solomon asked God to hear the prayer of the foreigner out of a missionary impulse. He knew that when God mercifully answered the prayers of foreigners, it drew those from other nations to the God of all nations.

³⁴ ‘If your people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to you towards this city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ³⁵ then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause.

2 Chronicles 6:34-35

If your people go out to battle against their enemies. The sixth petition, like the second, is concerned with war, but this time the focus is not on defeat as a result of sin but on victory in God’s cause, i.e. by whatever way you shall send them. Solomon prayed with the idea that God should answer the prayers for victory made in foreign lands towards the temple, but only when they battle where God has sent them, as in the case of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh: *<<and when they received help against them, the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried to God in the battle, and he granted their entreaty because they trusted in him>>* (1 Chronicles 5:20). This was not a blanket request for blessing on every military campaign. The army is envisaged as fighting to bring God’s justice to the earth, not as a way of exerting their own political influence or seeking to gain power and wealth for themselves.

Exile from the Promised Land is presented as the climax of punishments on account of sin, not just the disobedience to God but the flagrant worship of idols, which so angered the Lord.

³⁶ ‘If they sin against you – for there is no one who does not sin – and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to a land far or near; ³⁷ then if they come to their senses in the land to which they have been taken captive, and repent,

and plead with you in the land of their captivity, saying, “We have sinned, and have done wrong; we have acted wickedly”;³⁸ if they repent with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity, to which they were taken captive, and pray towards their land, which you gave to their ancestors, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name,³⁹ then hear from heaven your dwelling-place their prayer and their pleas, maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

2 Chronicles 6:36-39

If they sin against you – for there is no one who does not sin. This is a succinct OT statement of the principle most clearly stated by Paul: <<*since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*>> (Romans 3:23). The sense that sin is all-pervading dominates, epitomised in one of the clearest biblical statements about sin’s universality. No greater indication of the need for a place of atonement and forgiveness could be given.

And you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to a land far or near. The seventh petition returns to the question of defeat and exile, the major concern of the prayer. If exile should take place, and if the people should repent and pray towards their land, the city of Jerusalem, and its temple, i.e. the house, then God is asked to regard them once more as his people and maintain their cause. They are the Lord’s heritage or inheritance, the people God brought out of Egypt; Solomon implicitly looks for a ‘second exodus,’ from a different land, to match the first one.

Solomon prays that Yahweh will respond to the heartfelt repentance of his people in exile and their intercession towards the temple. A great example of this in practice is seen in the case of the exiled Daniel, who put his own life at risk to pray to God: <<*Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open towards Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously*>> (Daniel 6:10). Bodily posture was a part of prayer, especially for exiles like Daniel, who consciously prayed in the direction of Jerusalem.

One of the major underlying themes of the entire prayer is the recognition of God’s overwhelming grace and mercy for a sinful, disobedient people.

⁴⁰ Now, O my God, let your eyes be open and your ears attentive to prayer from this place.

⁴¹ ‘Now rise up, O Lord God, and go to your resting-place, you and the ark of your might.’

Let your priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation,
and let your faithful rejoice in your goodness.

⁴² O Lord God, do not reject your anointed one.

Remember your steadfast love for your servant David.'

2 Chronicles 6:40-42

Now, O my God, let your eyes be open and your ears attentive to prayer from this place. In place of the ending to this prayer in 1 Kings 8:50b-53, an appeal to God's mercy shown in the exodus, the Chronicler inserts a version of Psalm 132:8-10, which concerns the transfer of the ark into the temple. It functions here as a prayer that God will once again come in power and grace for the Chronicler's generation and their temple, as he had done for the people and temple of Solomon's day.

Now rise up, O Lord God, and go to your resting-place, you and the ark of your might. This conclusion of prayer has Numbers 10:35-36 in mind, when Israel moved the Ark of the Covenant, the tabernacle, and the whole camp of Israel from place to place through the wilderness during the exodus. Solomon used the phrasing of that passage to emphasise that the Ark of the Covenant and the symbol of God's presence would wander no more and had finally come to its final resting place.

O Lord God, do not reject your anointed one. Remember your steadfast love for your servant David is a prayer for Solomon himself and for other the Davidic descendants, the recipients of God's covenant promise of steadfast love for David. For the Chronicler, this enduring covenant is now the basis of the relationship between God and his people. Ultimately, the Anointed One will be Jesus.