



Second Chronicles - Chapter Seven

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/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Seven

God's twofold answer to Solomon's prayer through the appearance of the glory of the Lord in vv.1-3 and the words from God in vv.12-22 takes readers to the heart of the Chronicler's message of repentance and restoration. The Chronicler is acutely aware of Israel's sinfulness, knowing that this will result in exile; but against this bleak fact he highlights the Lord's undeserved restorative mercy and forgiveness toward his people, for which the temple is the visible symbol. The assurance that the temple is indeed the divinely sanctioned place of atonement and prayer should encourage the Chronicler's own postexilic generation to respond accordingly, confident that God will grant a greater measure of restoration and blessing. Ultimately, salvation will come not through a material building but through the one whom the temple foreshadows: <<Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body>> (John 2:19-21).

II.h.iv 2 Chronicles 7:1-11 - Solomon Dedicates the Temple

As Solomon's prayer came to an end, fire came down from heaven and consumed the offerings and the temple was filled with the glory of the Lord. Solomon dedicated the temple to God and he consecrated the courtyard so that a great number of animals could be sacrificed, providing food for all the people in a great seven day festival. After that the people returned to their homes.

¹ When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. ² The priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. ³ When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshipped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying,

‘For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures for ever.’

2 Chronicles 7:1-3

These verses mark an addition to 1 Kings Chapter 8. A parallel with David: <<*David built there an altar to the Lord and presented burnt-offerings and offerings of well-being. He called upon the Lord, and he answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt-offering*>> (1 Chronicles 21:26) and Moses is intended here: just as a divine fire consumed the burnt-offering in the newly erected Mosaic tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord was visible to the people: <<*Moses and Aaron entered the tent of meeting, and then came out and blessed the people; and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. Fire came out from the Lord and consumed the burnt-offering and the fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces*>> (Leviticus 9:23-24), the fire from heaven that consumed the sacrifice signalled acceptance of the temple and the priests' ministry there, while the glory of the Lord appeared on the temple, and the people worshipped.

This is one of the remarkable instances in the OT of God sending fire from heaven to consume a sacrifice. It was a dramatic and visible proof of God's approval, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

The priests could not enter the house of the Lord. This repeats the occasion first described in: <<*Now when the priests came out of the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to their divisions), all the levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kindred, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with one hundred and twenty priests who were trumpeters, it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the Lord, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever', the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to*

minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God>> (2 Chronicles 5:11-14).

All the people of Israel bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshipped and gave thanks to the Lord. The people responded with a combination of reverence and worship. Their awe-filled praise glorified the goodness and mercy of God. One might think that consuming fire from heaven might make them more aware of the power and judgement of God. Yet the whole situation seems to have made them more aware of the goodness and mercy of God.

For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever. Seeing all they could of God's great works, they could not help having this strong emphasis on the goodness and mercy of God. Variations on this refrain from Psalm 136 occur several times in the book, i.e. 1 Chronicles 16:34, and 2 Chronicles 5:13, 7:6 and 20:21, and may indicate a link between the author and the temple singers.

Introduction to 2 Chronicles 7:4-10

The dedication of the temple at the Festival of Tabernacles (2 Chronicles 5:3) entailed vast numbers of sacrifices (v.5) and involved the whole nation in its broadest extent (v.8). Unity, joy and gratitude to God are the keynotes of this festival.

⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the Lord.

⁵ King Solomon offered as a sacrifice twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. ⁶ The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the Lord that King David had made for giving thanks to the Lord – for his steadfast love endures for ever – whenever David offered praises by their ministry. Opposite them the priests sounded trumpets; and all Israel stood.

2 Chronicles 7:4-6

Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the Lord. As wonderful as the program and the praise were, they could not replace the sacrifices. God still had to be honoured through blood sacrifice, both for atonement and as a demonstration of fellowship with God.

King Solomon offered as a sacrifice twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. This is a staggering - some commentators state almost grotesque - amount of sacrifice. Each animal was ritually sacrificed and a portion was dedicated to the Lord, and a portion given to the priests and the people. It was enough to feed a vast multitude for two weeks - the seven day consecration of the temple and the seven day festival that followed.

The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the Lord. On such a great occasion everyone must perform their tasks.

⁷ Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the Lord; for there he offered the burnt-offerings and the fat of the offerings of well-being because the bronze altar Solomon had made could not hold the burnt-offering and the grain-offering and the fat parts.

2 Chronicles 7:7

The priests had so many sacrifices to administer that they specially consecrated the area in front of the temple to receive sacrifices, because the bronze altar Solomon had made could not hold the burnt-offering and the grain-offering and the fat parts.

⁸ At that time Solomon held the festival for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. ⁹ On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly; for they had observed the dedication of the altar for seven days and the festival for seven days. ¹⁰ On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their homes, joyful and in good spirits because of the goodness that the Lord had shown to David and to Solomon and to his people Israel.

2 Chronicles 7:8-10

At that time Solomon held the festival for seven days. From the time of year and the length of this festival, it is generally understood that this was the Festival of Tabernacles, extended beyond its normal seven days on this special occasion.

Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt designates the whole of Solomon's empire. From Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. This phrase designates the whole Solomonic empire and is analogous to similar phrases in: <<*from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, even to the border of Egypt*>> (1 Kings 4:21), and: <<*from Tiphseh to Gaza*>> (1 Kings 4:24). Presumably Lebo-hamath, which means 'entrance to Hamath,' therefore lay to the north of Hamath itself in central Syria on the river Orontes. This picture of a happy, unified kingdom stretching from Egypt to the Euphrates, i.e. went to their tents, joyful and in good spirits, very much corresponds to the picture given in 1 Kings Chapter 4.

Lebo-hamath was the furthest point north that the twelve spies reached early on during the exodus: <<*So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath*>> (Numbers 13:21). See below.



The Journey of the Spies

Because of the goodness that the Lord had shown to David and to Solomon and to his people Israel. This account of the dedication of the temple ends where the story of the temple began - with David, not Solomon. The writer remembers that it was David's heart and vision that started the work of the temple.

¹¹ Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's house; all that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the Lord and in his own house he successfully accomplished.

2 Chronicles 7:11

Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's house. First Kings Chapter 7 goes into more detail about Solomon's palace. It seems that his palace was even more spectacular than the temple, based on the number of years it took him to build it.

All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the Lord and in his own house he successfully accomplished. It was the end of a job well done, a job that began with Solomon's father David.

II.h.v 2 Chronicles 7:12-22 - God's Second Appearance to Solomon

One night the Lord again appeared to Solomon and acknowledged that he had heard the prayer and would act according to the repentance of the people in each given case. He also confirmed that his promises of a continuous line on David's throne would remain forever if his people followed his ways but he warned that if they turned away from the Lord, he would send them into exile.

God's reply to Solomon's prayer is presented immediately after the account of the dedication, although in fact 13 years had elapsed, in which time the palace was also completed; refer to 1 Kings 7:1 and 9:10. The Lord's appearance at night corresponds to his first appearance to Solomon at Gibeon, at the beginning of his reign; refer to 2 Chronicles 1:7.

¹² Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: 'I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. ¹³ When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴ if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. ¹⁶ For now I have chosen and consecrated this house so that my name may be there for ever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time.

2 Chronicles 7:12-16

Then the Lord appeared to Solomon. The Chronicler's addition to 1 Kings 9:3-4 provides a succinct summary of the central message of the book: the meaning of the temple and the response that God looks for in his people. This was actually the second great appearance of God to Solomon: *<<When Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord and the king's house and all that Solomon desired to build, the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had*

appeared to him at Gibeon>> (1 Kings 9:1-2). The first is described in 1 Kings 3:5-9 as well as 2 Chronicles 1:7. It was good of God to appear to Solomon the first time; it was even more gracious of God to grant a unique appearance to Solomon the second time.

After Solomon built the temple and his palace he came to the most dangerous period of his life, a season after great blessing and accomplishment. God graciously gave Solomon a fresh revelation of himself before this dangerous period. However, the decline in his life had already begun with the taking of foreign wives that would eventually lead him into apostasy.

I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. The great prayer of Solomon in 2 Chronicles Chapter 6 meant nothing unless God heard the prayer. The true measure of prayer is if God in heaven answers the prayer. The temple is for sacrifice as well as prayer. The OT understanding of worship regularly joins sacrifices of atonement, dedication, or thanksgiving, with prayer as the material expression of the worshipper's inner disposition.

As stated in the section introduction, this answer seems to have come many years after the actual dedication of the temple. Yet God also gave Solomon an immediate answer of approval at the time of dedication, when the sacrifices were consumed with fire from heaven and the glory filled the temple.

When I shut up the heavens is a summary reference to the divine punishments mentioned in Solomon's prayer; refer to 2 Chronicles 6:26-28.

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves. God's purpose above all is to forgive his penitent people and heal their land. The specific vocabulary of this verse, i.e. **humble themselves**, **pray**, **my face, and turn**, describes different aspects of heartfelt repentance and will recur throughout Chapters 10-36.

Heal their land includes deliverance from drought and pestilence as well as the return of exiles to their rightful home; refer to 2 Chronicles 6:38. For the Chronicler, this includes the restoration of the people to their right relationship with God: ***<<And though the Lord persistently sent you all his servants the prophets, you have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear when they said, 'Turn now, every one of you, from your evil way and wicked doings, and you will remain upon the land that the Lord has given to you and your ancestors from of old and for ever'>>*** (Jeremiah 25:4-5), and: ***<<It may be that they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil way, that I may change my mind about the disaster that I intend to bring on them because of their evil doings>>*** (Jeremiah 26:3).

This wonderful promise is in the context of God's promise to answer prayer from the temple which he chose to hallow with his presence. God promised

something special to Israel when they did humble themselves and did pray and seek God's face. There is something naturally humble in true prayer because it recognises that the answers are not in self but they are in God alone. God promises something special to humble, praying people.

The phrase my people who are called by my name had its first application to the people of Israel as they lived in the land God promised them. Nevertheless, the same God who made this promise to Israel still reigns in the heavens and will still respond to his humble praying people today.

And turn from their wicked ways. This great promise of answered prayer also includes the condition of repentance. As the people of God humble themselves, pray and seek the face of God, they must also turn from their wicked ways. It was not enough to merely turn their heart to God; they must also turn their life to God.

I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. God simply promises to hear the prayer of his humble, prayerful, seeking, repentant people. He will bring forgiveness to his people and healing to their land.

Healing throughout the OT has a mixture of spiritual and physical applications. Sometimes healing is specifically equated with forgiveness, e.g. Psalm 41:5, Isaiah 53:5 and 57:18-19, and Hosea 14:4; at other times it relates to physical healing, e.g. Genesis 20:17, Numbers 13:20, 2 Kings 20:5 and 20:8. When it is applied to the land, as here, it can refer to bringing the exiles back to the Promised Land: <<*For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, says the Lord, because they have called you an outcast: 'It is Zion; no one cares for her!'*>> (Jeremiah 30:17), and: <<*I am going to bring it recovery and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first*>> (Jeremiah 33:6-7), or restoring the land and its people to peace and security: <<*Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the Lord; and I will heal them*>> (Isaiah 57:19).

Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive. The invitation to prayer and repentance is sealed with the strong assurance of God's presence and attention in the temple. God promised a special attention to the prayers offered from the temple which Solomon, the son of David had built. Christians can be much more confident of his attention to their prayers when they offer them in the name of Jesus, the Son of David. He is better access to God than even the temple was.

For now I have chosen and consecrated this house so that my name may be there for ever. The building was Solomon's work, done in the power and inspiration of the Lord. The consecration of the building was God's work. Solomon could build a building, but only God could hallow it with his presence.

My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. The idea of God having a heart is extremely rare in the Bible, and only other explicit reference speaks of God

suffering heart pains because of the evil of humanity: <<*And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart*>> (Genesis 6:6), with further example in Genesis 8:21, 1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22. It is hard to think of a more intimate way to indicate God's nearness, or a greater encouragement to prayer.

¹⁷ As for you, if you walk before me, as your father David walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, ¹⁸ then I will establish your royal throne, as I made covenant with your father David saying, "You shall never lack a successor to rule over Israel."

2 Chronicles 7:17-18

Here is a summons to Solomon to be obedient to the Law of Moses as the grounds for establishing his throne.

If you walk before me, then I will establish your royal throne. God's answer to Solomon's previous prayer had a great condition. If Solomon walked before God in obedience and faithfulness, he could expect blessing on his reign and the reign of his descendants, and the dynasty of David would endure forever. God did not demand perfect obedience from Solomon. David certainly did not walk perfectly before the Lord, and God told Solomon to walk before me, as your father David walked. This was not out of reach for Solomon. God knows that humans are weak and only expects their hearts to be for him, when their actions fail them.

You shall never lack a successor to rule over Israel: <<*But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days*>> (Micah 5:2). Messianic hopes for the continuation of the Davidic line continued to be affirmed in the Chronicler's time, even though the last Davidic king had been deposed in 586 BC.

¹⁹ 'But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, ²⁰ then I will pluck you up from the land that I have given you; and this house, which I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. ²¹ And regarding this house, now exalted, everyone passing by will be astonished, and say, "Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this house?" ²² Then they will say, "Because they abandoned the Lord the God of their ancestors who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods, and worshipped

them and served them; therefore he has brought all this calamity upon them.”’

2 Chronicles 7:19-22

But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments then I will pluck you up from the land. The positive promise is followed by a negative promise. If Solomon or his descendants turn away and forsake God and his word, then God promised to correct a disobedient Israel. The statement if you turn aside and forsake my statutes is addressed to the people as ‘you’ in v.19 is plural; refer also to the comments made on 1 Kings 9:6-9. While the temple signified God’s will to forgive and restore, the stubborn rejection of his statutes and commandments would lead to God’s rejection of both people and temple; refer to Deuteronomy 29:22-28 and the associated comments. The decisive factor, as shown throughout the rest of the book, is whether the call to repentance is heeded.

And this house, which I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight. God answer to Solomon’s prayer was not an unqualified promise to bless the temple in any circumstance. God blessed the temple and filled it with the glory of his presence, but he would cast it out of his sight if the kings and people of Israel forsook the Lord. With such a glorious temple, Israel would be tempted to forsake the God of the temple and make an idol of the temple of God. Here the Lord made them know that he could never bless this error.

And will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples; everyone passing by will be astonished. Under the Old Covenant, God promised to use Israel to exalt himself among the nations one way or another. If Israel obeyed he would bless them so much that others had to recognise the hand of God upon Israel. If Israel disobeyed he would chastise them so severely that the nations would be astonished at the hard work of God among his disobedient people, and they would know that the Lord has brought all this calamity on them.

Because they abandoned the Lord the God of their ancestors who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods, and worshipped them and served them; therefore he has brought all this calamity upon them. The manner in which these disobedient people have been destroyed is truly astonishing: no nation was every so highly favoured, and none ever so severely and publically punished.