

## **Dr. August Konkell, Chronicles, Session 13, Solomon, the Temple Builder**

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This is Dr. August Konkell in his teaching on the books of Chronicles. This is session 13, Solomon, the Temple Builder.

We ended our last session with David giving the mandate to the Assembly of Israel that they needed to support Solomon in the temple building endeavor.

So, we move on today with the reign of Solomon. In the Chronicler's view, there is a whole new era that begins with the reign of Solomon. This is already made evident in David's speech back in chapter 28.

David says that God has designated Solomon to be the successor on my throne, and he relates that to the Hebrew word shalom. That may be a word that you are familiar with, but the Hebrews use that word in multiple different ways. But essentially, it means peace in a rather comprehensive sense.

So, with Solomon, the Chronicler sees a new era beginning. It is the eerie era of peace and of rest. David does not qualify to build the temple because he was a man of war and had shed much blood.

Now, it is interesting that the Chronicler approves, essentially, of David's expansion of the empire, which is a war of aggression. So, though the Ammonites and the Arameans had attacked Israel, David, in conquering them, extended the control of his territory far up into the area of Aram and all around Ammon and Moab and Edom and Philistia. So that becomes David's empire, and he gains that empire by conquest, and by war.

The Chronicler implicitly indicates that there is a moral issue. David is a man who has shed much blood and, therefore, does not qualify to build the temple. But now we have Solomon, and his name reminds us of peace. He is the one who now represents God's rest, and he then is the one who becomes qualified to build the temple, which symbolizes the reign of God.

So, in our outline of Chronicles, we move to a whole new section. The first section of Chronicles dealt with the identity of the nation and then with the establishment of the kingdom and the preparations for the temple. Now, we come to the temple itself, and that begins with the reign of Solomon.

So, the next large block in Chronicles, all the way up to the end of chapter 9, is going to deal with Solomon, the building of the temple, and the grandeur of his reign. In

Chronicles, Solomon is a man of peace. Solomon is a man who, in every way, represents the ideals of the kingdom of God.

We don't hear anything about some of the failures of Solomon, which we have in Kings. That's not the part that the chronicler wishes to focus on. Instead, he wants us to see God's plan and God's intent for his own kingdom.

As we look at these whole first nine chapters, we may not immediately be aware that there really is a structure to them. We sometimes call this a chiasmic kind of structure or a palistrophe-type structure, in which the point with which you begin is also the point with which you end. And you develop towards the main point and then repeat the topic on the way back.

This is the kind of structure that we will point out from time to time. We have already seen it in the chronicler's presentation of David. It may be that this was really a mnemonic device, that it's a way of remembering the content, the material, and being able to identify where it is.

But what we have is Solomon, beginning with Solomon. He is a person who seeks the Lord, and we've pointed out already the importance of the word seek in the chronicler's scheme of things. Then we have the vision at Gibeon, where Solomon is granted the gift of wisdom, a statement about Solomon's power, wealth, and influence.

Then, the main point, and we can see that this occupies virtually everything about Solomon, the building of the temple. And then, we hear more about Solomon's great trade and wealth. We see his international notoriety with the visit of the Queen of Sheba from the area of Arabia, and then the conclusion of Solomon's wisdom and his wealth.

So that more or less is the structure that the chronicler uses to present his Solomon. He also uses a similar structure in order to present the building of the temple itself. So, we begin with the provision of labor and materials in chapter 2. The structure and its furnishings were given to him by David.

The dedication of the temple, the dedication of the people. Here is the consecration of the temple and the reminder of its function, where we get some of the warnings about disobedience, unfaithfulness to the covenant that we had before. And then back to the way in which the materials and everything else were provided for Solomon.

So, we begin here with the preparations for the temple. Another one of these chiasms is where we see the conscription of the labor force in chapter 2, verse 2. Solomon's letter to Hiram in 2:3 to 10. Hiram's response to Solomon and then the

labor force are in chapter 2. So here we have the temple structure and its furnishings given to us in chapter 3, verse 1 to chapter 5, verse 1. We have the founding of the temple itself, where the chronicler gives us a bit of information that is unique to him.

Here he goes all the way back to Genesis and to the story about Abraham and the test with the giving up of his only son Isaac as a gift to Yahweh. And this takes place on Mount Moriah. Now, the actual geography and the location of Mount Moriah are not self-evident in Genesis, but the chronicler identifies that mountain with the same one that David had designated for the temple site on the threshing floor where the plague was stopped.

And so, the temple is going to be built on that mount. We can understand why, in tradition, this has become a very, very desired and sacred hill for all the people of Jewish faith and of Jewish background in modern times. Of course, as we well know, it was taken over by the Muslims and they've built their own shrine on the top of that hill, which has resulted in a perpetual conflict between the two groups, especially along the wailing wall, where the Jewish people are still permitted to come to pray.

The wailing wall is essentially what remains of some of the foundations of the temple as Herod had built it. So, it's the closest that they are able to get to Mount Moriah, as the chronicler calls it here. Then we have the whole structure of the temple given to us in 3 verses 3 to 7 and the furnishings of the temple, which are in chapters 3 and 4. So, here I want to move on to another PowerPoint to talk a little bit about the structure of the temple and its function, as well as the way that David gave it to Solomon.

To do this, I'm going to go back to the book of Exodus because the temple of Solomon is really designed and modeled along the lines of the Tabernacle. It is all the same dimensions. It has all the same structures and features of symbolism.

It's just a little larger. Now, by Roman standards of temple building, the temple was still a small space, but it was certainly much, it was double the size of the tabernacle. So, this is the essential structure of the Tabernacle, the way that it was in the wilderness, and Solomon's temple is designed along this very same line.

So, around the outside, what you have is the court in the tabernacle. This was a walled curtain. But of course, in Solomon's construction, this all became the outer court of a wall.

And then within that court, positioned precisely in a symmetrical fashion, was the building itself. So, this represents the east. Unfortunately, south and north should be reversed on this slide.

This represents east. And the east side of the building itself was in the center of the court. In the case of the tabernacle, we then had the building, which in the case of the tabernacle was portable and movable, as being 30 cubits.

So, the most sacred space at the back of the tabernacle, where the throne of God resided, was precisely 10 cubits by 10 cubits by 10 cubits. In Solomon's temple, that is doubled. So that becomes 20 cubits by 20 cubits by 20 cubits.

And this, instead of being 20 cubits, is 40 cubits. In front of the curtain is the altar of incense, which represents the presence of God, which is in the curtain behind. And, of course, incense is generated not only daily to remind everyone of the presence of God but especially when we have the Day of Atonement. The incense that is thrown upon the altar is a protection from the glory of the most holy place.

So, the priest is protected. Then what we have is the table of bread, which shows God's provision within his creation. And we have the menorah, or the branched candlestick, which gave light.

So, as we shall see, especially in our next set of presentations, all of this is meant to represent creation. It is meant to represent the fact that God is present in his creation but does not actually have any kind of physical presence there. Rather, he belongs to the holy.

The holy is simply another dimension. The holy is a dimension that is not bound by the only dimensions we know, time and space. We measure everything in terms of space because we're corporal beings.

We live in a physical world. So, we measure not only the earth in terms of space, but we measure planets beyond the earth in terms of space. These are the same kinds of terms that we use to measure the earth itself.

It's kind of ironic how we do this in terms of talking about space beyond the earth. We use time. And time again, this is a limitation that simply doesn't belong to the holy.

It doesn't pertain. It's not a relevant dimension. And what really is time? Well, Genesis 1, verse 14 tells us what time is.

It's something that was given to us as a gift by God. God put the sun and the moon in place, and they give light. But by that, we are able to measure the seasons and the hours.

And as humans, we are compelled to live by time. Time for us, then, is measured in terms of a year by the orbiting of the earth around the sun, which we know only by

looking at the stars, which remain in their fixed positions as far as our earth is concerned. So, it's really all very relative.

The whole way in which we talk about space and time is completely relative to the way we do things here on earth, which is the only way that we can do them. The Israelites said there's another dimension. There's a dimension that's called the holy.

And the dimension, which is God's realm of the holy, is one in which time is created, in which space is created. So, the time and the space are represented by this portion of Solomon's temple, but the holy is completely separate. And as we shall see, this holiness in the case of the temple is represented by darkness, just to show that it's another dimension that is not dependent on the light, the way the earth is dependent on the light.

And it's another dimension in which we don't measure things by light in terms of time. It's just darkness. So, it's a whole different sphere.

It's of course a picture, it's a metaphor, to try to help us understand that we are fully dependent on God. God who we can understand only in terms of our own physical limitations as humans. We can understand him only in a relative sort of way in the sense of his person and his being.

We can know him, of course, truly. We can know truly what God wills and what God desires of us. But the temple is a constant reminder about the holy.

We mentioned earlier on the death of Uzziah. And that was such a harsh punishment for the simple act of trying to study the Ark because symbols that are going to represent the holy in the realm of the common, the earth and the creation, and so forth, those symbols have to be known to not simply belong to the features of this earth. This Ark is not just another box.

Now, we also have in the outer court a large altar of bronze on which the offerings are conducted. And then we have what in Kings is called the sea. Chronicler doesn't refer to it that way.

The sea seems to also have a symbolic kind of representation in Kings, in that it represents the order from which creation was made. The sea is identified with that which is before creation, whatever that is. But in Chronicles, this is much more of a practical, pragmatic function, which has to do with cleansing in relation to the sacrifices.

Then, the dimensions of holiness are implicit in Chronicles, as he describes in detail the furnishings of the temple. But the throne room itself, which is the most holy place, is all plated with gold. And the cherubs are all plated with gold.

And then there is the holy place, and then there is the court. So, there are three levels of the temple. The holy place, of course, is accessible only to the priests because it is only the priests who can serve as the mediator between us as finite people and God.

The way in which rule is represented in ancient times, and the chronicler is going to talk about this, is in terms of what the Bible calls cherubim. These are composite creatures: an ox and a lion, an eagle, and a human. They seem to represent a domain over all of the areas: the domestic, the animal wildlife, the birds, and the human.

These cherubim are familiar in the ancient Near East, because they are always used to represent dominion and rule and a throne. And so we have the same sort of thing in the chronicler's description of Solomon's temple. Now, I have actually stood beside this particular creature in the British Museum.

It is huge. My head comes up to about there on this animal. It was moved to the British Museum from Iraq, back in the days of the British Empire, when they moved everything around the world the way that they wanted to.

But you can see here the wings of the eagle, the feet of the ox and the body of the ox, the, I should say, the body of the ox and the legs of an ox, the feet of a lion, and then, of course, the person's head. And these stood in the palace of Ashurbanipal. But this was commonly known in Palestine.

This is an inscription that comes from Palestine. But here is a throne that comes from Megiddo. And you can see how the throne was designed and represented.

And the description in Chronicles would suggest to us that this is the idea that lay behind the way in which God's rule was to be represented by the cherubim in the most holy place. The cherubim in the most holy place are huge. The holy place is 20 cubits in width.

And the tips of the cherubim touch either side of the wall. So they're absolutely huge. Here is a more normal human throne.

Here you have the footstool, which, in the most holy place in the temple, will be represented by the ark. Inside the ark is the covenant. The covenant represents the relationship between humans and God.

It contains the 10 words, which we often refer to as the 10 commandments. But they're really much more than commandments. They state the values that are very important to life and family.

And the recognition of the holiness of God. Here, you see forming the sides of the throne, the wings of the eagle. Here you see the head of the man on the front of the throne chair.

And here is the lion's body. In this case, it's the body that is the lion. And the hooves are the ox.

But you still have the same four creatures: the ox, the lion, and the wings and the man. And then, of course, the king himself is sitting on the throne.

So, this kind of image was familiar in the days of Solomon. And no doubt, it is still known in the days of the chronicler when he describes Solomon's temple. However, the chronicler adopts Solomon's temple and describes Solomon's temple as he found it in his scriptural writings.

As he found it in the book of Kings. One more diagram of a cherub. As we can see, these inscriptions come in various kinds of forms.

But here's the footstool, the lion's body, the ox feet, and so forth. The wings of the eagle. So, the most holy place may have been something like this.

What is unique about the most holy place is that there's no seat for the throne. There doesn't need to be a seat for the throne because all the cherubs are doing in this most holy place is representing dominion. They're representing God's dominion.

So, the wings of the cherub touch in the middle, and then they touch the two walls. And we see the footstool there, which is the ark, which sits at the front of the most holy place. And, of course, as we know, the top of the ark is gold-plated.

It is called a kaphodet in Hebrew. But kaphar, or to atone in Hebrew, is just a way of showing, expressing that transgressions against the covenant, failures of the covenant, can here be represented as forgiven. So that is why there is a day of atonement when the blood is sprinkled on the top of the kaphodet.

The curtain is pulled back, the incense is thrown on the altar, and the blood is sprinkled on the top of the kaphodet. Inside, of course, are the tablets and the cherubim, which are inside the most holy place. So this wouldn't have been something that the people of the Chronicler's day would have ever actually seen.

Now the temple was rebuilt, it was restored. We don't know anything about the ark in the second temple period. So just exactly what the replication was of the temple when it was restored, we don't know.

But that isn't so important to the chronicler as the fact of everything that it symbolizes. In their scriptures, they knew that life is in the blood. Therefore, the ransom, the penalty that can be paid for the transgression of the covenant against the one who gives life, is represented by blood.

And the day of atonement is a way in which the whole of the people, all of the nation of Israel, is atoned for by the priest in sprinkling the blood on the top of the altar or the kaphodet. So as the chronicler goes through the various kings and the various times when these celebrations are observed in his day, it is these concepts that are to be clear. They aren't laid out explicitly in chronicles, and they aren't actually laid out explicitly anywhere.

We're going to see that the Psalms make much more allusion to some of these things. However, this is the symbolism of the temple. And, of course, for us as Christians, these symbols all come to be fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ as the writer to the Hebrews is at pains to point out.

So, the writer to the Hebrews makes clear that Jesus is the Lamb. Jesus is the one who provides the redeeming blood. Jesus is the temple.

Jesus is the most holy place. It's not an allegory. The temple is not an allegory in terms of each part of the temple representing some different aspect of Jesus.

Rather, Jesus himself in his person, in becoming one of us as a human, represents everything that the temple represented. That is why Jesus can say in John chapter 2, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The disciples came to understand that the temple was representing his body.

And so, for Christians, the body of Jesus displaces the need for any of the physical representation that was present in previous times and in the days of the chronicler. So, as we read Chronicles, in some ways, the significance and meaning of atonement, the significance and meaning of the work of Jesus upon the cross, is meant to be an enlightenment for us. To help us understand how we may have a relationship with the most holy God.

Even though we are finite, even though we fail to keep his covenant the way that we should, this is a way of representing how God's mercy may operate. How forgiveness may take place and how the relationship may be there in spite of our failings. The temple, as we read about it in Chronicles, should not just be a building of grandeur.

Because in many ways, in human terms, in comparison with other great buildings of the ancient past, it really wasn't all that great. It was a magnificent building. It was covered with gold.



It had the cherubim etched on the walls everywhere on the inside of the holy place, as the chronicler says, the tree of life was there. It represented all of creation. It was a magnificent place.

For the chronicler in his time, this was critically important. So, the temple needed to be built, and its function, worship, needed to take place.

And his dedication to the importance of this is seen in that this is what our life is about. Our life in this world is to show the presence and the glory of God. And we do that as is appropriate to our time.

And in the chronicler's time, the way that that took place was through the representation of God in his temple and his people around it, giving them praise. This is why so much of the book of Chronicles is devoted to the temple and the great majority of the life of Solomon is devoted to the temple. This is Dr. August Kunkel in his teaching on the books of Chronicles.

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