

## **Dr. August Konkell, Chronicles, Session 15, Kingdom of Solomon**

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This is Dr. August Konkell in his teaching on the books of Chronicles. This is session 15, Kingdom of Solomon.

The Chronicler is really concerned about us and his community understanding God, who God is, what it means to be part of his kingdom in this world.

So, he has presented the reign of Solomon, and he will present the reigns of all of the kings to keep our focus on these essential features. The greatest part of his story, therefore, is devoted to the temple, but that isn't quite the whole story about Solomon. His other point is that those who look to God as the life giver and those who trust God can expect that God is going to care for them and God is going to bless them.

Now, this isn't unconditional in that sense, and the Chronicler will illustrate that there are various kings that come into dire straits. And as we know from the book of Kings, Solomon himself came to be very conflicted at the end of his kingdom. But that does not take away from the greatness of his kingdom as it was given to him by God.

So, the conclusion of Solomon's account here in chapters 8 and 9 is to bring us back to some of those things that were a part of Solomon's kingdom. Here he really repeats most of the material that we already have in Kings, but we see the international influence of Solomon. He, in the presentation of Chronicles, is not some minor player in world affairs, but rather he truly does represent significance in terms of the presence of God.

And so, Lebanon and Syria, the two territories that are just to the north of Israel, are of great interest in Solomon's reign. They are interested in Solomon. There's economic activity that goes between them.

Essentially, there's a relationship in which the Phoenicians lend some of their resources, which are timbers and skills, and maritime activities, to Solomon. Solomon, in turn, supplies Lebanon with food, with grain, because that is found in abundance in Israel, particularly in the Jezreel Valley. And then, of course, Syria, which is the territory to the north around Damascus and so forth, is in close relationship with Solomon.

Here, the Chronicler refers to the way in which Solomon did his taxation. There is something in the Bible that's called the Mass. Essentially, this is conscripted labor.

Now, in Kings, we see that the conscripted labor also pertained to certain Israelites in the building of the Temple, in that every Israelite had to dedicate a portion of the year to working in the quarries or working with the timbers in order to build the Temple. But Solomon depicts it. The Chronicler depicts Solomon as relying exclusively on the non-Israelite residents, the gerim, as they're called in Hebrew, as being the ones who supplied the labor. I often marvel at these things, even the much more recent buildings in Europe and England.

Given the tools that they had, one wonders how much human labor must have gone into building them, hewing timbers and hewing stones the way that they were. Of course, I guess the best example is still the Pyramids of Egypt, which are fitted together so very precisely with huge stones. To this very day, we don't really know how they could place these things together.

But as the Book of Job points out, it was the lot of most humans in the ancient world to simply be slaves to the king. It's not portrayed quite that grimly by the Chronicler, but the element is there. Those people who weren't the native landholders, the ones that Moses had allotted territory, but the ones who had been living there, could choose to become Israelites.

But the ones who didn't become Israelites lived among them, and they were the ones who often paid the biggest price in terms of taxes. And then, of course, we have temple worship at the Feast of Tabernacles. Now, I mentioned this already earlier on, but the Feast of Tabernacles is the one that takes place in the fall.

It's about our time of October when this takes place, and it begins on the 14th of the month, as they all do. However, this is the month in which we also celebrate the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, in which the temple is purified, and all of the people are purified through the ritual associated with that day. So, in this chapter, the Chronicler gives us an example of worship at the Feast of the Tabernacles during Solomon's reign.

Then we see some of the grandeur of Solomon's kingdom in terms of his international influence, with his maritime activities way down at the Gulf of Aqaba. Now, Phoenicia would have been the territory to the north, where Solomon would have conducted his trade largely through the Phoenicians and through their ships. But the Phoenicians also assisted Solomon, according to the Chronicler, on the southern part of the nation, on the Gulf of Aqaba, on the Red Sea, so that trade went both west and south and east.

This is, of course, a matter of fact in history. We know that these nations conducted an enormous amount of business and trade, had great skills in navigation, and sailed

to great lengths. So, really, according to the Chronicler, a ship's journey could be up to three years.

The reason a ship's journey is up to three years is because they have to wait for the seasons and the favorable winds so that the ships can sail. And, of course, they were going large, large distances. So, this was not a very simple matter, but it certainly was important and was carried out.

We know very well the story of the Queen of Sheba, who comes to visit Solomon and is impressed with all of his kingdom and its glory, which is even more than what she had heard. We have here a description of the royal pageantry. The ceremonial shields are described in great detail.

In kings, there were two kinds: a full body-length shield and the smaller shield that you hold in your hands. But these were not used in warfare at all. They were used as part of pageantry to show the military powers of a nation, much in the same way we have military parades and other things.

The Chronicler describes Solomon's throne as being one of six steps, which probably means that the platform on which the throne itself sat was the seventh step. Most thrones had seven steps. And he describes the lion's heads or the cherubim that sat on each step.

And so, those would be very reflective of the pictures which we saw earlier on. A magnificent throne that included ivory and so forth. And then the commercial and military trade given in more detail here in what's called a Tarshish ship.

Tarshish ship does not reference the place. There is a place called Tarshish. But the ship probably gets its name from the long distance of Tarshish.

Tarshish ship was a large cargo ship capable of sailing great distances with a lot of freight. These were a very common kind of cargo transportation. And this is what Solomon was engaged in.

Then, a cavalry can't be maintained without horses and the breeding of horses and the training of horses. And here we read of Solomon's dealing with Egypt, and also with areas in southern Turkey, in which he trained horses and traded in horses to build his cavalry. And then, finally, we have an epitaph to the rule of Solomon.

So, in the chronicler's version of Solomon, the kingdom ends in grandeur. It ends with a very positive portrayal of all that God would ask for: a man of peace, a person of shalom. Now, there was another aspect to Solomon's kingdom.

We know that he ended up in complete conflict with his main military leader, Jeroboam, that Jeroboam fled to Egypt for safety. And Jeroboam is going to show up in the chronicler's story. But he doesn't show up during the reign of Solomon.

The reign of Solomon is depicted in the most ideal fashion to show us what the kingdom of God is meant to look like in the ideal.

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