

The Ideal United Kingdom (1 Chronicles 9:35 – 2 Chronicles 9:31)

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The Reign of Solomon, part 8: More on Solomon's Building Projects (2 Chronicles 8:1-15)
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More on Solomon's Building Projects (8:1-15)

Following the overall pattern of Kings (1 Kgs 9:10-28) the Chronicler gave more information on Solomon's building projects. This portion of his history marks another major step in Solomon's career. Solomon had **established himself** (1:1), **gave orders to build a temple** (2:1), **began to build** (3:1), **summoned to Jerusalem** (5:2), **had finished the temple ... and the royal palace** (7:11). Now we learn that **at the end of twenty years...Solomon rebuilt** (8:1).

Moreover, it helps to note that this portion of his record balances with 3:1-5:1 in a number of ways (see figure 23). Both passages deal with construction (compare 8:1-6 and 3:1-4:22); each mentions the completion of the temple (compare 8:16 and 5:1); both focus on Solomon's provisions for the temple (compare 8:12-15 and 4:1-5:1). These similarities indicate that the Chronicler included this portion of Solomon's reign as a thematic parallel with 3:1-5:1.

Comparison with 1 Kgs 9:10-28

In addition to several insignificant stylistic changes, the Chronicler made some notable omissions and additions. Four of these variations deserve comment.

First, the Chronicler only roughly followed 1 Kgs 9:10-14. He omitted Hiram's displeasure with the cities Solomon had given him and spoke instead of Solomon rebuilding the cities once Hiram had returned them. The Chronicler's account does not contradict Kings; it simply supplements it.

Second, the Chronicler entirely omitted 1 Kgs 9:15-17a. The record of forced labor and Pharaoh's gift did not interest him at this point. He moved to related topics later in the chapter (see 8:7-11).

Third, the Chronicler expanded the report on Pharaoh's daughter (8:11 // 1 Kgs 9:24). Both accounts speak of Solomon moving her **to the palace he had built for her**. The Chronicler, however, added an explanation of Solomon's motives which extol his concern for the sanctity of the temple. The king said that his wife could not live **in the house of David ... because the places the ark of the Lord ... has entered are holy** (8:11b). This change fit well with the Chronicler's desire to treat Solomon as Israel's ideal king.

Fourth, the Chronicler slightly modified 1 Kgs 9:25 (// 8:12) to draw attention to the bronze altar. Then he added three verses (8:13-15) describing what Solomon ordained to be done in its vicinity. These changes were designed to instruct the Chronicler's readers in worship practices for their own day.

Structure of 8:1-15

The changes which the Chronicler made to the record of Kings formed his account into a series of interrelated reports (see figure 23). The Chronicler first described a series of Solomon's successes throughout the land (8:1-6). He then qualified the nature of his forced labor (8:7-10), and supplemented Solomon's provisions for the temple (8:11-15).

Solomon's Widespread Construction Projects (8:1-6)

This part of the chapter focuses on how Solomon was successful in building **whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territory he ruled** (8:6). In the ancient Near East, kings were often praised for their extensive building projects. The Chronicler frequently described royal building projects to illustrate divine blessings on Judah's kings (see *Introduction: 24) Building and Destruction*). Solomon is his greatest example of such blessing.

8:1-2 reports Solomon's rebuilding of cities returned to him by Hiram. As we have seen above, 8:1-2 only roughly parallels the record of 1 Kgs 10-17a. The Chronicler omitted that Solomon first gave these cities to Hiram and that Hiram was displeased with them (see 1 Kgs 9:10-14). Instead, Chronicles simply reports what Solomon did with these cities after Hiram returned them. Undoubtedly, the Chronicler's readers knew the other details from the history of Kings. The Chronicler drew attention to Solomon's improvements of the sites.

Moreover, the Chronicler added that Solomon **settled Israelites in them** (8:2). By shifting the attention of his account in this manner, he upheld Solomon as an ideal for his post-exilic readers. He was concerned with rebuilding and repopulating the land of Israel in his day. (For the Chronicler's geographical hopes see comments on 2:42-55.) Solomon showed what could be done in this regard when the kingdom's central institutions (temple and monarchy) were in proper order.

The Chronicler also omitted 1 Kgs 9:15-17a in order to list other building projects. Solomon took **Hamath, Zobah** (8:3); he **built up Tadmor**, and constructed **store cities in Hamath** (8:4). These northern districts established Solomon's control over the major trade routes to the north. Moreover, he also **rebuilt Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon as fortified cities** (8:5). These cities guarded the main route from Jerusalem to the coast. They were vital for the trade and defense of the capital city. In addition to these sites, Solomon also built **his store cities** and places to house his **chariots** and **horses** (8:6). This list was intended as a mere sample of all that Solomon had accomplished. It illustrated well that Solomon was a successful builder. His successes made him an exemplary king for the Chronicler's post-exilic community as it longed to rebuild the nation.

Solomon's Extensive Labor Force (8:7-10)

The Chronicler returned to follow the book of Kings closely (// 1 Kgs 9:20-23) and gave additional information on the labor forces Solomon employed in his building projects. This topic has come up before in the reign of Solomon (see 2:2,17-18), but the earlier report left some questions unanswered. Here the Chronicler presented an explanation that he thought was important for his post-exilic readers.

The discussion of Solomon's laborers divides into two parts. 8:7-8 reports that Solomon conscripted many different groups of people from those who remained in the land after the conquest. Beyond this, the text makes it clear that Israelites did not serve as conscripted laborers. They held positions of authority such as **fighting men, commanders of ... captains, chariots, charioteers and chief officials** (8:9-10). Apparently these Israelites and others had responsibilities in **supervising the men** of the labor force (8:10; see 2:1-2). For the Chronicler's use of the terminology **to this day** see comments on 5:7-10 and 1 Chr 4:41.

This information was important for the Chronicler's day. It made at least two things clear to the post-exilic community as it contemplated the enormous task of rebuilding the nation. Foreign assistance in the projects was acceptable. Yet, the people of Israel themselves were not to become slaves in the work. Their status as free citizens was to be maintained despite the needs of the nation (see *Introduction: 3) International Relations*).

Solomon's Temple Construction (8:11-15)

As the Chronicler continued to follow the book of Kings (// 1 Kgs 9:24-25), he offered more information related to Solomon's work on the temple. His lengthier discussion of these matters appears in 3:1-5:1,10. Here he considered two items brought up by Kings, but he expounded on both themes.

The first portion of these verses reports Solomon's treatment of Pharaoh's daughter (8:11 // 1 Kgs 9:24). Solomon moved Pharaoh's daughter away from the temple complex **to a house he had built for her**. The Chronicler then added an explanation of Solomon's motivations. The king knew that **the places the ark of the Lord has entered are holy**. Solomon's precise thinking is not clear. He was obviously concerned to have the ark surrounded only by what was holy. Yet, it is not evident whether the problem with his wife was that she was a woman or that she was a Gentile. Women were restricted from full access to the temple in the Old Testament period. Even so, the preceding context concerns Gentiles laboring for Solomon and the separation of Israelites from them (8:7-10). In this light, Solomon's concern here may have been that Pharaoh's daughter was not converted to the religion of Israel (see 1 Kgs 11:1-5). This well-known fact may have motivated the Chronicler to demonstrate that Solomon recognized the threat his Gentile wife posed to the holiness of the temple.

The final portion of this section looks more directly at the temple (8:12-15). The opening verse parallels the record of Kings (8:12 // 1 Kgs 9:25), but omits the reference to "burning incense" (1 Kgs 9:25) in order to focus attention on the **altar ... that he had built in front of the portico** (8:12). The architectural elements of the temple take center stage.

The Chronicler added a lengthy description of the ceremonies surrounding the bronze altar which Solomon had built (8:13-15). This report of activities ordained by Solomon fall into two sections. First, many activities were **commanded by Moses** (8:13), namely the **daily requirement** (see Ex 29:38) for **Sabbaths** (see Nu 28:9), **New Moons** (see Nu 10:10), and **annual feasts** (see Ex 12:17; Nu 28:16-25; Ex 23:16; Nu 29:12-38). By this means, the Chronicler approved of Solomon's many ordinances for worship. Second, the **divisions of the priests ... Levites and gatekeepers were in keeping with the ordinance of his father David** (8:14). They were what **David the man of God had ordered** (8:14; see 1 Chr 23:6; 24:1; 25:). Solomon insured that **they did not deviate** (8:15) from David's instructions. The emphasis of this additional information is evident. Solomon did all things in the proper manner. At this highpoint in Israel's history, the temple and its services functioned according to Mosaic and Davidic instructions. The Chronicler made it clear that this was to be the policy in his own day (see *Introduction: 14) Standards*).