

Solomon's Reign – Building and Tearing Down Yahweh's House

I. Introduction

1. The dynamic of judgment and promise that marked David's reign continued with Solomon: *His reign arose out of the conflict in David's house, yet he was Yahweh's chosen successor in whom He would advance His covenant promises to David. **Solomon was the starting point of the Lord's pledge to build David a house, and Solomon was the son of David chosen to build the Lord's house.*** * cf. 2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 28:1-6
2. Thus the scriptural text treats the temple episode as the focal point of Solomon's life and reign, but also highlights how the glory of his accomplishments was overshadowed by his many failures. Like his father, then, Solomon's reign was a study in contrasts.
 - a. He was a man of supernatural wisdom who manifested incredible foolishness;
 - b. He presided over Yahweh's kingdom as His appointed and uniquely endowed ruler (1 Chron. 29:23-25), yet he sought security and national well-being in human alliances.
 - c. He was Yahweh's beloved image-son who gave his attention and affection to other gods.
3. But, as with his father David, the true significance of Solomon's life and reign is found in his role in the salvation history that reached its climax in Jesus the Messiah.

II. Solomon's Reign (1 Kings 1-11; 2 Chronicles 1-9)

A. Building Yahweh's House

The Scripture presents Solomon as the preeminent prototype of the covenant son promised to David (cf. 1 Chron. 28:1-10 with 2 Sam. 7:18-19), *and the focal point of this correspondence was Solomon's work in building the Jerusalem temple* (1 Chron. 22:1-10). This is why the scriptural account devotes so much space to this endeavor.

1. David highlighted this task when he identified Solomon as his successor (1 Chron. 28-29), and Solomon made building the temple his priority as king. He spent the first four years of his reign establishing his throne and completing the preparations that David had begun. When everything was in place, Solomon started the colossal construction project on Mount Zion which lasted for seven and a half years. And when the temple structure and all of its furnishings were finally completed and in place, Solomon then orchestrated and presided over a massive dedication celebration that lasted fourteen days. * 1 Kings 8
2. Solomon's temple was unparalleled in Israel's history and reflected his own power, wealth and glory, but it was closely modeled after the tabernacle. It followed God's prescription at Sinai, but with the various features and components greatly enlarged and aggrandized.
 - a. The relative dimensions of the structure were preserved but the overall size was doubled. * cf. 1 Kings 6:2, 20 with Exod. 26
 - b. Likewise, the ark of Yahweh's presence was still overshadowed by two golden cherubim with their wings extended toward each other, but now they filled the entire expanse of the inner sanctuary from wall to wall. * 1 Kings 6:23-28

3. In this way Solomon showed that He regarded the temple as the ultimate realization of what the tabernacle had signified and anticipated. *It wasn't a new sanctuary as such, but the earthly consummation of the previous sanctuary. The temple fulfilled the Davidic Covenant's pledge of a permanent house for Yahweh, but it also fulfilled the oath of a central sanctuary.*
4. And when all was complete, Solomon declared its significance with a glorious dedication that climaxed with his prayer of petition and blessing as Yahweh's chosen son-king.
5. Echoing his father's actions (2 Sam. 6:12-18), Solomon presided over the ark's transfer to its new residence on Mount Zion, also punctuating that move with sacrificial offerings, but, in his case, more than could be numbered (2 Chron. 5:1-6). And when the ark was installed in the Holy of Holies and the Lord's *shekinah* descended and filled it, Solomon, too, offered a priestly benediction on behalf of the sons of Israel (cf. 2 Samuel 6:18 with 1 Kings 8:6-14).
6. But beyond what David had done, Solomon then interceded for the people – and the nations – with a long prayer of praise and petition. *The compilers of Kings and Chronicles recorded this prayer almost identically, which indicates its crucial importance to this episode, but as it contributes to the scriptural storyline that stretches from Eden to the new heavens and earth.*

Solomon was speaking as the covenant son of David appointed to build Yahweh's house. And because the covenant with David advanced His covenants and promises going back to Eden, Solomon's prayer of dedication ultimately implicated God's determination and design to banish the curse and restore all things to Himself in a son of David.

- a. Solomon began by addressing the temporal aspects of God's covenant with his father, but he recognized that it transcended those things: *The house he had built for Yahweh was only a material representation of His true dwelling place. *6:18-21*
 - b. Just as the covenant looked to a Davidic son beyond himself, Solomon understood that the sanctuary associated with the covenant son transcended the temple he had built. *In Solomon's conception, Yahweh's ultimate design for His house was that it should be a place of forgiveness, cleansing and refuge for Israel and all the nations. Thus it symbolized and served the Lord's intent, covenanted to Abraham, that Israel, by its faithful ministrations of sonship, should mediate His blessing to all the earth's families.*
 - c. Reflecting the temple's universal relevance and Israel's role on behalf of the world, Solomon closed his prayer by blessing the people: *He reminded them that the Lord had chosen them for Himself and fulfilled His marvelous promises to them, evident in the unspeakable glory of the Israelite kingdom and His sanctuary now firmly established on Mount Zion. Yahweh's **hesed** – His enduring commitment to the covenant relationship – had secured all of these blessings, and Solomon held his Israelite brethren up to Him with the confident hope that He would continue to dwell in their midst – despite their unfaithfulness – thus leading them to know, love and serve Him in all truth and sincerity. In that way they would fulfill their calling on behalf of the world. * 8:55-61*
7. Yahweh responded to Solomon afterward in a vision in which He reaffirmed His covenant with David, specifically as it involved the two-fold promise of a **house** (2 Chron. 7:12-22): *He would put His name forever in the house David's son built for Him, and He would likewise build David's house as promised. At the same time, He reiterated that His commitment was contingent upon the faithfulness of the Davidic kingship. **His covenant with David depended on a truly faithful son for its fulfillment.***

B. Dismantling Yahweh's House

Solomon was the son of David chosen by Yahweh to establish the glory of His kingdom and build His dwelling place in Jerusalem. The Lord loved him and endowed him with transcendent wisdom and understanding to shepherd His people with His mind and heart, and so bear truthful witness of Him to the watching nations (cf. 2 Sam. 12:24-25; 1 Kings 3:3-4:34, 10:1-29). *Solomon brought David's house, throne and kingdom to the pinnacle of their glory, and yet also surpassed his father in tearing them down.*

1. David took another man's wife, but Solomon amassed multitudes of foreign wives and concubines who led him away from his God. * 1 Kings 11:1-8
2. David fell prey to the abuse of power in a few isolated instances, but Solomon used his power to accumulate almost unimaginable wealth and resource in violation of the Lord's directive. * cf. Deut. 17:14-20 with 1 Kings 10:26-29; 2 Chron. 1:14-17
3. David employed his faithful soldiers to orchestrate Uriah's death, but Solomon subjected multitudes of his own people to harsh labor in his service. * cf. 1 Kings 11:26-28, 12:1-15
4. And when Yahweh responded to Solomon's offenses by stripping him of ten tribes and giving them to Jeroboam, Solomon sought to kill him. * 1 Kings 11:9-40

Yahweh had decreed a sword against David's house, and Solomon's kingship was an effective instrument of that sword and its destructive work. Solomon – the Davidic king characterized by singular wisdom and glory and the chosen covenant son who built Yahweh's house and brought David's house to its pinnacle – would not fulfill the promise of the covenant. He would not be the one through whom Yahweh would establish an everlasting house, throne and kingdom for David. That awaited another son – a priestly king who would not fail as David and Solomon had.

III. Conclusions

1. David established the kingdom promised to Abraham through military conquest and the devotion of the Israelite people. Solomon then ruled that kingdom – Yahweh's kingdom – as a king distinguished by unnatural wisdom in the context of unprecedented peace and unparalleled splendor. Such was the uniqueness of Solomon's kingdom that its glories were lauded throughout the region, bringing great distinction to the God of Israel.
2. Solomon's kingdom was the envy of the nations, but this attention became a point of failure and culpability. The man who had been earnest in his desire to rule wisely and faithfully in Yahweh's name (1 Kings 3:3-15) showed himself to be just another human ruler who used his power and resource to his own advantage. Thus Solomon's abuses and unfaithfulness whetted the Lord's sword and furthered His judgment against David's house; the sword raised against it was now going to cleave David's kingdom (ref. again 1 Kings 11:9-13).
3. As Solomon had failed to fulfill the sonship defined in the covenant with David, so it would be with the sanctuary he built: *it would not fulfill Yahweh's promise of an enduring dwelling on the earth.* Solomon's prayer showed that he understood God's intent for a sanctuary to which all mankind would come and encounter and worship Him, but he could not know that neither his temple, nor the one that would later replace it, would fulfill that role. *No, Yahweh would build His own house in and upon the Son of David, so that the glory that filled that house would be His glory manifested in His image-children.* * John 1:14-18; 2 Cor. 3:1-18