

Tonight we are looking at the building of the temple.

Last time we saw that Solomon understood very well  
that God does not dwell in buildings.

Michael Wilcock comments on this passage that

“Solomon would have his people approach God ‘in spirit and in truth’.

They are to see the temple as a matter of convenience, ‘a place to burn incense’;  
man needs such a prop, because deprived of a place and form of worship  
he is in the nature of things only too likely not to worship at all.”

(Wilcock, 129)

Worship in spirit and in truth  
does not mean worship without form and place.

And the temple provides a place of worship that focuses on the problem of sin.

The first thing you see when you walk into the temple  
is the bronze altar.

The altar was 30 feet by 30 feet (nearly as big as this room).  
It was 15 feet high (almost to the top of the ceiling!).

Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.

The temple ritual would remind you day after day, year after year,  
of the necessity of the shedding of blood for sin.

Is there a danger that ritual can get monotonous?

Sure.

But there is a far greater danger!

Charles Williams once noted that “The Church...provides for a monotony of pardon.

It used to be blamed for compelling its members  
ritually to declare themselves ‘miserable sinners’ day by day,  
but it knew very well that if they did not do it ritually they would not do it at all.”  
(quoted in Wilcock, 129)

As we confess our sins every Sunday,

we are forced to see ourselves the way God sees us.

And the result should be

that we confess our sins to God and one another more and more every day.

Chronicles starts with an interesting twist:

### **Introduction: The Work Begun (3:1-2)**

<sup>1</sup> Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD<sup>[a]</sup> had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the

*threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. <sup>2</sup>He began to build in the second month of the fourth year of his reign.*

In verses 1 and 2 we hear about the “where” and the “when” of Solomon’s temple-building.

We are told that it was “on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite –  
the same place where David offered the sacrifice  
to avert the blow of the angel of death,  
as he reached out to strike down Jerusalem.

The identification of the place as “Mount Moriah” is found only here.  
Indeed, the only other reference to “Moriah” is found in Genesis 22,  
in the story of how Abraham offered his son Isaac  
in the Mountains of Moriah.

The connection is intentional.

The temple in Jerusalem will be built in the same place where Abraham offered his son.

What happened when Abraham offered his son?

God sent an angel to stay his hand,  
and provided a ram in place of Isaac.

And all through the history of the church  
people have seen the symbolism of how our heavenly Father  
offered his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in our place,  
as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

## **1. The Temple (3:3-17)**

### **a. The Vestibule (3:3-4)**

<sup>3</sup>*These are Solomon’s measurements<sup>[b]</sup> for building the house of God: the length, in cubits<sup>[c]</sup> of the old standard, was sixty cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits. <sup>4</sup>The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits long, equal to the width of the house,<sup>[d]</sup> and its height was 120 cubits. He overlaid it on the inside with pure gold.*

Chapter 3 offers a greatly reduced sketch of the temple.

The book of Kings is far more detailed.

Just as the people of God worshiped at the mountain of God in Moses day,  
so also the people of God will worship in a man-made mountain in Solomon’s day.

The tabernacle was supposed to be seen as Mt. Sinai tipped over on its side,  
with the place of offering at the base of the mountain;  
the holy place “part way” up the mountain –  
where the 70 elders of Israel could go;  
and the most holy place at the top of the mountain,  
where only Moses could go to speak with God.

In Moses’ day, when the tabernacle was completed,

the glory-cloud – the presence of God’s Spirit –  
descended from Mt Sinai and entered the tabernacle.

In Solomon’s day, the glory of the LORD will fill the temple.  
As Psalm 68:17 will say, “Sinai is now in the sanctuary.”

And, if you think about it, since Jesus is the true temple (John 3)  
Jesus is the God-made mountain where we worship God  
(As Jesus said in John 4, neither on this mountain or in Jerusalem, will you worship,  
but in *him*.)

This is reinforced by the architectural language in the book of Kings.

In 1 Kings 6:3 we are told that the temple has a “face”

The word translated “front” literally means “face.”

In verses 5 and 8 the temple has “ribs”

The side chambers are literally “ribs.”

And in 7:39 the temple has “shoulders.”

The building of the temple in 1 Kings 6 parallels the creation of Eve in Genesis 2.

The word for “side chambers” is the same word used in Gen 2:21,  
often translated “rib.”

And after taking a rib, the Lord closed up the flesh “underneath”--  
the word used in 1 Kings 6:6 to refer to the “lower” story.

And not least interesting is the fact that the LORD literally “built” Eve in Gen 2:22,  
which is the same word used in Kings to refer to Solomon building the temple.

So the temple is not only “human” in its form,  
it is particularly female.

It is in this way the “bride” of the new Adam (Solomon).

This fits neatly with the way that Paul talks about the church as the bride of Christ.

And indeed, even when Paul talks about the *body* of Christ,  
he is very frequently using the imagery of marriage.

The church as body and the church as bride are interrelated.

And the body-language generally has feminine characteristics.

This is why the prophets and apostles frequently use maternal language regarding the church.  
We are God’s temple–

we are the place where the seed (the Holy Spirit)

is planted and grows as it is nourished by the Word and sacraments and prayer.

The Chronicler assumes all this background,  
and summarizes the building description more briefly,  
focusing instead on the *glory* of the temple –  
especially the Holy place and Most Holy Place.

In fact, if you just read Chronicles,  
you would never understand what the temple looked like.

The Chronicler assumes that you know the account in Kings and focuses on certain parts of the temple.

Chronicles starts us in the vestibule –  
a square room around 30 feet by 30 feet (somewhat smaller than this one)  
with a towering 180 foot ceiling, overlaid with gold.

The gold draws our eyes and our minds to the glory of the Lord.

**b. The Nave (3:5-7)**

<sup>5</sup> *The nave he lined with cypress and covered it with fine gold and made palms and chains on it.*  
<sup>6</sup> *He adorned the house with settings of precious stones. The gold was gold of Parvaim.* <sup>7</sup> *So he lined the house with gold—its beams, its thresholds, its walls, and its doors— and he carved cherubim on the walls.*

As you look into the nave you would see a long 90 foot by 30 foot room –  
with gold covered walls with palms and chains, adorned with precious stones,  
and carvings of cherubim in the cypress walls, overlaid with gold.

The cherubim were the guardians of the sanctuary.  
Adam had been the original cherub – he had been called to guard the holy place in Eden.

And when he failed, he was cast out of the garden,  
and set cherubim there with a flaming sword.  
And ever since, the cherubim have been seen throughout the scriptures  
as the guardians of God’s holiness.

And so when you walk into the nave,  
you would be reminded of the holiness of God –  
and the danger and peril of coming into the holy presence of God.

**c. The Most Holy Place (3:8-14)**

<sup>8</sup> *And he made the Most Holy Place. Its length, corresponding to the breadth of the house, was twenty cubits, and its breadth was twenty cubits. He overlaid it with 600 talents<sup>[e]</sup> of fine gold.*  
<sup>9</sup> *The weight of gold for the nails was fifty shekels.<sup>[f]</sup> And he overlaid the upper chambers with gold.*

Imagine being one of the workmen building the temple.  
Day after day you would be putting up these massive stones –  
carving the precious wood –  
or overlaying all this with gold and putting it into place.

At the moment it is merely a really expensive building project.  
But when you are finished you have heard stories about what happened at the tabernacle!  
The glory of the LORD left Mt Sinai  
and came and filled the tabernacle.

Will that happen to the work of *your* hands?

In verses 8-14, then, we cross the ninety feet of the Nave – the Holy Place –  
and we come to the Most Holy Place,  
which is dominated by the two massive cherubim.

What do you think of when you here of cherubim?  
Do you think of chubby babies?

In Ezekiel we hear of the appearance of the cherubim:  
they have four wings and four faces – of a man, an eagle, a lion, and an ox.

So don't think of this as a human figure!  
The idea is that the cherubim combine the properties  
of the most powerful animals of each kind:

the eagle was the most powerful of birds,  
the lion was the most powerful of the wild beasts,  
the ox was the most powerful of the domestic animals,  
and man was to rule them all.

<sup>10</sup> *In the Most Holy Place he made two cherubim of wood<sup>[g]</sup> and overlaid<sup>[h]</sup> them with gold.*  
<sup>11</sup> *The wings of the cherubim together extended twenty cubits: one wing of the one, of five cubits, touched the wall of the house, and its other wing, of five cubits, touched the wing of the other cherub; <sup>12</sup>and of this cherub, one wing, of five cubits, touched the wall of the house, and the other wing, also of five cubits, was joined to the wing of the first cherub. <sup>13</sup>The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits. The cherubim<sup>[i]</sup> stood on their feet, facing the nave.*

In the tabernacle, the cherubim were on the cover of the mercy seat,  
but in the temple the cherubim “stood on their feet, facing the nave”

They stand ready to protect and defend the holiness of God from anyone who should dare  
to enter the Most Holy Place.

Remember the second commandment?

You shall make for yourself *no graven images*.  
And yet there are graven images in the temple!  
Indeed, in the Most Holy Place, there are two of them!

It is curious that in all the accusations of idolatry through OT history,  
no one ever seems to have worshiped the cherubim!

There is something about the cherubim that says “don't worship me.”  
They are the guardians of God's holiness.

But also, no one would ever see these two massive cherubim!

Because except for the high priest,  
no one ever entered the Most Holy Place.

Instead, you would see the images of the cherubim  
on the curtain – the veil of the temple:

*<sup>14</sup> And he made the veil of blue and purple and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and he worked cherubim on it.*

Standing in the courtyard,  
you could look through the vestibule, into the nave,  
and there on that majestic curtain in the back of the nave,  
you would see the cherubim worked onto the fabric of the veil,  
warning you against coming any closer –  
lest the glory of the LORD destroy you!

#### **d. The Pillars (3:15-17)**

*<sup>15</sup> In front of the house he made two pillars thirty-five cubits high, with a capital of five cubits on the top of each. <sup>16</sup> He made chains like a necklace<sup>[j]</sup> and put them on the tops of the pillars, and he made a hundred pomegranates and put them on the chains. <sup>17</sup> He set up the pillars in front of the temple, one on the south, the other on the north; that on the south he called Jachin, and that on the north Boaz.*

Then, in verses 15-17, we are brought back out of the nave and the vestibule,  
and we are brought to the front of the house  
where there are two free-standing pillars,  
Jachin and Boaz.

Why would you build free-standing fifty-foot pillars?

The word brings back echoes of two related themes:

- 1) the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness -  
as the Holy Spirit led Israel to the Promised Land;
- 2) the pillars of the earth that hold up the sky (Job 26:11)

These pillars would remind you that the LORD your God  
is the one who holds up the dome of the heavens.

[When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple,  
he took the pillars back to Babylon –  
claiming, as it were, that he was the one who held up the heavens!]

## **2. The Furnishings for the Temple(4:1-5:1)**

### **a. The Bronze Altar & the Sea of Cast Metal (4:1-6)**

*<sup>1</sup> He made an altar of bronze, twenty cubits<sup>[k]</sup> long and twenty cubits wide and ten cubits high.*

In chapter 4 we hear about the furnishings for the temple –

starting with the massive bronze altar:  
thirty feet long and thirty feet wide, and fifteen feet high.

In other words, the bronze altar is the same width and length as the Most Holy Place –  
but only half as high!

There is a structural connection between the altar and the Holy of Holies!  
The altar is *not* the place where we have fellowship with God –  
but the altar is the place that enables fellowship with God.  
What happens at the altar is essential for what happens in the sanctuary.

You cannot enter the Holy of Holies without the blood of the altar!

And the structural similarities – the dimensions of the altar and the Most Holy Place –  
show us that connection.

(And next week we'll see how interconnected the altar and the sanctuary are  
in the liturgy of Israel as well!)

<sup>2</sup> *Then he made the sea of cast metal. It was round, ten cubits from brim to brim, and five cubits high, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference.*

Verse 2 talks about the “sea” – a metal basin 45 feet in circumference.

The sea had a practical purpose –  
for the priests to wash as they prepared to enter the holy place;  
verse 6 refers to the ten basins for rinsing the sacrifices –  
and the sea for the priests to wash in.

But it also had a symbolic function –  
as the sea regularly signifies the nations in the scriptures.

<sup>3</sup> *Under it were figures of gourds,<sup>[l]</sup> for ten cubits, compassing the sea all around. The gourds were in two rows, cast with it when it was cast.* <sup>4</sup> *It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. The sea was set on them, and all their rear parts were inward.* <sup>5</sup> *Its thickness was a handbreadth.<sup>[m]</sup> And its brim was made like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily. It held 3,000 baths.<sup>[n]</sup>* <sup>6</sup> *He also made ten basins in which to wash, and set five on the south side, and five on the north side. In these they were to rinse off what was used for the burnt offering, and the sea was for the priests to wash in.*

And the sea stood upon twelve oxen –  
three facing each direction.

With five basins to the north, and five basins to the south,  
you can also see a picture of how the water from the sea of the temple  
is moving outward from the temple.

Ezekiel will draw on this image in Ezekiel 47, when he speaks of the river of living water

flowing from the temple to the nations.  
Jesus also will speak of this when he says that from his heart  
rivers of living water will flow to those who believe in him. (John 7)

Notice in verse 10 that the sea is set on the southeast corner of the house.  
So the altar is squarely in front of the house.  
And there is nothing in between the altar and the vestibule  
except on the *southeast* side there is the sea

**b. The Golden Lampstand and the Tables (4:7-10)**

*<sup>7</sup>And he made ten golden lampstands as prescribed, and set them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north. <sup>8</sup>He also made ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north. And he made a hundred basins of gold. <sup>9</sup>He made the court of the priests and the great court and doors for the court and overlaid their doors with bronze. <sup>10</sup>And he set the sea at the southeast corner of the house.*

In the tabernacle there was one lampstand and one table.  
In the temple there are ten of each – five on each side of the nave.

**c. Hiram and Solomon: the Bronze Pots, Shovels, etc. (4:11-18)**

*<sup>11</sup>Hiram also made the pots, the shovels, and the basins. So Hiram finished the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of God: <sup>12</sup>the two pillars, the bowls, and the two capitals on the top of the pillars; and the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the top of the pillars; <sup>13</sup>and the 400 pomegranates for the two latticeworks, two rows of pomegranates for each latticework, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars. <sup>14</sup>He made the stands also, and the basins on the stands, <sup>15</sup>and the one sea, and the twelve oxen underneath it. <sup>16</sup>The pots, the shovels, the forks, and all the equipment for these Hiram-abi made of burnished bronze for King Solomon for the house of the LORD. <sup>17</sup>In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredah. <sup>18</sup>Solomon made all these things in great quantities, for the weight of the bronze was not sought.*

Verses 11-18 then speak of the interrelation of all the parts of the work of temple-building.  
Hiram (or Hiram-abi – verse 16) was the craftsman who made (or directed) these things.  
But you could also say that King Solomon “made” all these things –  
because he was the one who governed the whole process by his wisdom –  
the wisdom that was given to him so that he might build the temple.

**d. The Gold of the Holy Place (4:19-22)**

*<sup>19</sup>So Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of God: the golden altar, the tables for the bread of the Presence, <sup>20</sup>the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold to burn before the inner sanctuary, as prescribed; <sup>21</sup>the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of purest gold; <sup>22</sup>the snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and fire pans, of pure gold, and the sockets<sup>[p]</sup> of the temple, for the inner doors to the Most Holy Place and for the doors of the nave of the temple were of gold.*



Now, why should you care about all of these vessels of gold?  
The tables, the lampstands, the flowers, the lamps, the tongs, the snuffers,  
basins, dishes for incense and fire pans, and sockets!  
All of these items were important in order for Israel to worship God.

And all of these items in verses 19-22 are made of gold –  
pure gold (v20), the purest gold (v21).

Anything that is going to be in the Holy Place – or the Most Holy Place –  
must be made of the finest materials, with the finest craftsmanship.  
Anything that is going to be used in the worship of God must be *the best*.

In the same way that Israel was told not to bring blemished animals as sacrifices –  
so also, Israel was not to bring its “second-best” when building a temple for God’s name.

Because God has established the church as a temple.  
And Paul uses this language to describe life in the church:

*Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver  
but also of wood and clay,  
some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.  
Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable,  
he will be a vessel for honorable use,  
set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.  
(2 Timothy 2:20-21)*

We are the house of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit.  
Not everyone in the temple of God has the same use.  
You may be a golden lampstand,  
or you may be a bronze basin.  
You might be the tongs for the altar,  
or you might be a dish for incense.

But true worship is only offered rightly to God,  
when all the instruments and vessels are working together in harmony.

As Jesus is building his temple, each tool has its use.  
We are all temple instruments–  
we are all vessels for the Lord’s use.  
Therefore, present your bodies to God as living sacrifices,  
holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (12:2).

**Conclusion: The Work Completed (5:1)**

<sup>1</sup> *Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, and stored the silver, the gold, and all*

*the vessels in the treasuries of the house of God.*

During the middle ages, some churches started competing  
to see who could have the most expensive and ornate decorations.

They used the temple as their justification:  
the temple was elaborate and ornate and full of gold –  
therefore, since the church is more glorious than the temple,  
churches should be more elaborate and ornate!

Not everyone was convinced!  
Bernard of Clairvaux commented on this trend:

“Oh vanity of vanities, yet no more vain than insane!  
The church is resplendent in her walls and wanting in her poor.  
She dresses her stones in gold and lets her sons go naked.  
The eyes of the rich are fed at the expense of the indigent.  
The curious find something to amuse them and the needy find nothing to sustain them.”  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/bernard1.asp>

Bernard appreciated good architecture.  
He was involved in designing many of the large, impressive abbey churches in France.  
But Cistercian architecture emphasized simplicity – even austerity – in its grandeur.

Neither the early church nor the Reformation  
went the route of the elaborate and ornate buildings of the High Middle Ages.  
*But* neither the early church nor the Reformation  
went the modernist route of bare functionality!

The earliest church buildings show a thoughtfulness  
about how the architecture connects with the message.  
Reformation architecture, likewise,  
resulted in buildings that reflect what is happening in worship.

Think about our passage:  
in medieval churches, they sought to reproduce the temple in certain ways:  
the vestibule, the nave, and the sanctuary were all given place.

The people would stand in the nave – but only the priest would enter the “sanctuary.”

Not surprisingly, the Reformers objected to this,  
and so most Reformed church buildings consisted only of a “nave” –  
the rectangular floor plan of many Protestant church buildings,  
with the idea that we all enter the heavenly Holy of Holies *by faith*.

But at least one Dutch Reformed congregation built a “sanctuary” that was a perfect cube

(just like the Holy of Holies),  
and they included a double-decker balcony so that they had three levels of seating  
in an attempt to express how the congregation *was* the sanctuary –  
the holy place where God’s name dwelt!

St. Columba’s Free Church in Edinburgh (built in the 1840s)  
uses a fairly typical 19<sup>th</sup>-century floor plan with balconies.  
The elaborate woodwork used to hold up the ceiling is impressive in itself –  
but they put bands of gold around the upper pillars –

the same bands of gold are also used around the posts of the pulpit,  
  
suggesting that the heavenly glory of Christ  
comes to us through the preaching of the Word!

What you do architecturally says something about what you believe.  
At a time when many churches are going the modernist route of pure functionality,  
we insisted on finding a way to have distinct spaces  
for worship, fellowship, and education.  
Our sanctuary is a square –  
pointing to the fact that you *are* the place where God dwells by his Spirit.  
The front of this room points to the “altar” and the “sea”  
(the Table and the Font)  
but especially to the pulpit – because it is through the *Word*  
that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ comes to you.  
By putting the instruments in the back – “with” the congregation –  
we try to reinforce the idea that all God’s people are the “Levitical choir.”

By having older pews, we tried to give a brand-new building some sense of connection  
to the historic church  
(and the pews came from a Moravian church in Wisconsin –  
the Moravians being the descendants of the old Hussite movement).

But, of course,  
all of this only works if you see what it points to!

The point is that you would see Jesus!