

If you want to remember what Solomon was all about – just think of BW-3  
Building, Worship, Wisdom, and Wealth!

But all of these things come together in the temple.  
Solomon’s building projects are described briefly –  
except for the temple.  
Solomon’s wisdom is designed to build the temple.  
Solomon’s wealth is used to pay for (and maintain) the temple.  
And of course, Solomon’s worship is centered in the temple.

Since we are concluding the life of Solomon tonight,  
I’ve given you an outline of 2 Chronicles 1-9 in the bulletin:

- A. Solomon’s Wisdom and Wealth (1:1-17)
- B. Recognition by the Gentiles (2:1-16) [Hiram declares the LORD’s Love for Israel]
  - C. Temple Building/Gentile labor (2:17-5:1)
  - D. Dedication of the Temple and God’s Response (5:2-7:22)
  - C’. Other Construction/Gentile labor (8:1-16)
- B’. Recognition by the Gentiles (8:17-9:12) [Queen of Sheba declares the LORD’s Love for Israel]
- A’. Solomon’s Wealth and Wisdom (9:13-28)

And what our passage tonight shows us is that as the king goes – so will the people.  
When the king does well, the people are blessed.  
(We’ll see in future weeks that the opposite is also true!)

But for us, this ought to provoke us to gratitude –  
because God has given us such a wonderful King in Jesus!

### 1. Building (8:1-10)

<sup>1</sup> *At the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the house of the LORD and his own house,* <sup>2</sup> *Solomon rebuilt the cities that Hiram had given to him, and settled the people of Israel in them.*

In 1 Kings 9 we hear about the episode reported in verses 1-2.

After Hiram gave Solomon all the gold and timber that he desired,  
Solomon gave Hiram 20 cities in the land of Galilee.

But when Hiram inspected the cities, they did not please him, and he replied,  
“What kind of cities are these that you have given me, my brother?”

The Chronicler appears to be reversing the story.

It was not that Solomon gave worthless cities to Hiram,  
but Hiram who gave cities to Solomon!

(Most likely, we are to see this as Hiram refusing to accept the cities Solomon gave him –  
an early case of “regifting” you might say!

You think these cities make a good gift –  
fine, I’ll give them back to you!)

But the main point of the Chronicler is to address a question that would have arisen from the text in Kings:  
did Solomon really give Israelites over to Hiram – a foreign king?  
And the answer is no:  
these Galilean cities only had Israelite inhabitants  
*after* Hiram gave them back.

And the second point emphasizes Solomon's role  
in *rebuilding* the cities.

God had told Israel that in the Promised Land,  
they would live in houses they did not build,  
they would drink from cisterns they did not dig, etc.

And while that began to happen in Joshua's day,  
it came to glorious climax in Solomon's day,  
as Solomon took it to the next level –  
not merely inhabiting the lands of the Canaanites,  
but *glorifying* them – expanding them – making them bigger and better!

And what God did in Solomon's day  
is a picture of what God is doing in history.

You see, God's purpose in history is not to obliterate creation,  
but to glorify it.

We should never confuse the picture with the reality!  
(Solomon didn't – remember that he understood  
that the temple was only a picture of God's heavenly dwelling place!)

The creation groans – eagerly awaiting the revelation of the sons of God. (Romans 8)  
Not so that it might be destroyed – but so that it might be restored –  
that all of creation might be remade in the New Creation.

You see,  
that is what Solomon is all about!

<sup>3</sup> *And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah and took it.* <sup>4</sup> *He built Tadmor in the wilderness and all the store cities that he built in Hamath.*

Verses 3-4 are far more important than they may sound.  
But you need to know your geography.

Hamath is in modern day Syria, north of Damascus.  
Tadmor (later named Palmyra) is the chief city on the wilderness shortcut

between Syria and Iraq.

David had subjugated Syria,  
but as we saw in 1 Chronicles,

it is not at all clear how effectively he controlled the region.

Solomon does not appear to have had to do much in the way of military action,  
but he “took” Hamath-zobah (the key overland trade center in the north of Syria),  
and he built Tadmor in the wilderness (the shortcut across the desert to Babylon).

And he builds “store cities” in Hamath.

In other words, Solomon may not have had to do much fighting,  
but he effectively takes control of the northern trade routes.

Do you want to know why Solomon has gold?

*This is why Solomon has gold!*

You control the major trade routes in the region – you make a lot of money!

*<sup>5</sup> He also built Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities with walls, gates, and bars, <sup>6</sup> and Baalath, and all the store cities that Solomon had and all the cities for his chariots and the cities for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.*

Verses 5-6 then focus on Solomon’s building projects.

Solomon’s building projects include fortifications to protect his people –  
and storage cities to provide for his people – and for the worship of God  
(since part of Solomon’s revenue was devoted to the maintenance of the temple).

Beth-horon is in the Valley of Aijalon –  
the most important trade route in the interior of Israel,  
and also the easiest way for an army to get to Jerusalem!

*<sup>7</sup> All the people who were left of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of Israel, <sup>8</sup> from their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel had not destroyed—these Solomon drafted as forced labor, and so they are to this day. <sup>9</sup> But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves for his work; they were soldiers, and his officers, the commanders of his chariots, and his horsemen. <sup>10</sup> And these were the chief officers of King Solomon, 250, who exercised authority over the people.*

And verses 7-10 focus on the labor force –

emphasizing that the forced labor pool came from the remnant of the Canaanites,  
not from the Israelites.

The point is clear:

Israel benefited greatly from the reign of Solomon.  
Their king built up the fortification for their defense.  
Their king provided store cities to guard against famine  
(a sort of social welfare program).

Their king conscripted the idolaters among them for forced labor,  
    but gave positions of power and influence to his fellow Israelites.

For centuries, this was viewed as the proper way for a king to function.

    The king protects his people from their enemies.

    The king provides for the poor, and prepares against the day of trouble.

    The king rewards his followers, but keeps potential enemies under his thumb.

We have now replaced the king with a constitutional republic,  
    but the same things happen!

You can change the *form* of government,  
    but *government* remains essentially the same.

    (This is the folly of those who think that democracy  
    is the solution to the problems in the Middle East.

    Just because a person has been elected to rule,  
    does not mean that he will be a better ruler!)

After all, the best of kings is elected by God alone!

Our Shorter Catechism asks “How does Christ execute the office of a king?”

    “Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to himself,  
    in ruling and defending us,  
    and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.” (Q 26)

## **2. Worship (8:11-16)**

<sup>11</sup> *Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, “My wife shall not live in the house of David king of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy.”*

Verse 11 focuses on Pharaoh’s daughter.

    Chronicles does not spend much time talking about Solomon’s foreign wives –  
    and never suggests that this was the reason for Israel’s downfall.

    In Kings, the author suggests that Solomon gave Pharaoh’s daughter her own house  
    so that she could worship her own gods there.

    Here the Chronicler suggests that Solomon gave Pharaoh’s daughter her own house  
    to *protect her* from the holiness of the ark of the LORD.

You can easily see how both could be true –

    (if she’s going to be worshipping her own gods in her house,  
    then Solomon could be genuinely afraid of what God might do to her  
    if she gets too close to the ark of the LORD!)

    but the Chronicler accents the positive!

In fact, the way that Solomon puts it highlights not her “foreignness”

but her *gender* as the reason for keeping her away from the ark.

“No wife of mine shall dwell in the house of David” –  
the idea here is that because women are prone to monthly uncleanness,  
they should not be permitted close to the holy places and things,  
lest their monthly uncleanness come upon them.  
[This attitude will result in the later “court of the women” in the second temple.]

Indeed, verses 12-16 returns to the theme of Solomon’s worship,  
thereby demonstrating what we have seen throughout Chronicles,  
that all of Solomon’s wealth and wisdom  
is for the purpose of worship.

<sup>12</sup> Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built before the vestibule, <sup>13</sup> as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths. <sup>14</sup> According to the ruling of David his father, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites for their offices of praise and ministry before the priests as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers in their divisions at each gate, for so David the man of God had commanded. <sup>15</sup> And they did not turn aside from what the king had commanded the priests and Levites concerning any matter and concerning the treasuries.

<sup>16</sup> Thus was accomplished all the work of Solomon from<sup>[a]</sup> the day the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid until it was finished. So the house of the LORD was completed.

God had said that he had chosen this place as a “house of sacrifice.”

Through the offerings of the temple, Israel will be cleansed and purified –  
and through the Levites, praise would be offered to God day by day.

When God is rightly worshiped,  
peace comes to the people of God.

Worship is at the very heart of Solomon’s rule.

The temple is at the center of Solomon’s life –  
and as the outline in the bulletin shows,  
it is at the heart of the Chronicler’s narrative.

Verse 16 might appear out of place,  
until you see how it functions in the chiasm I’ve given you in the bulletin.

After talking about the Gentile labor force in 2:17,  
chapter 3, verse 1, said that Solomon *began to build* the temple –  
and chapter 5, verse 1, said that Solomon finished the temple;  
now, after talking about the Gentile labor force in chapter 8,  
verse 16 says that Solomon has finished the temple.

So verse 16 signals the conclusion of the section that parallels the earlier one.

And even as chapter 1 had opened with Solomon's wisdom and wealth,  
and chapter 2 had spoken of the recognition of the Gentiles,  
as Hiram proclaimed God's love for Israel,  
so now the Queen will recognize the LORD's love for Israel,  
and chapter 9 will conclude with Solomon's wisdom and wealth.

### 3. Wisdom (8:17-9:12)

<sup>17</sup> Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the shore of the sea, in the land of Edom. <sup>18</sup>  
And Hiram sent to him by the hand of his servants ships and servants familiar with the sea, and  
they went to Ophir together with the servants of Solomon and brought from there 450 talents<sup>[b]</sup>  
of gold and brought it to King Solomon.

Israel was never much of a sea-faring nation –  
so they needed the help of Hiram to put together a fleet of ships.  
But their first voyage was successful –  
and they brought back 17 tons of gold!  
(remember that big number in Chronicles are usually designed to say,  
“there was a whole lot of it!” – rather than give careful measurements).

Kings tells us that many kings heard of Solomon's fame for wisdom and wealth  
and so they came to see him for themselves.

The Chronicler focuses on the story of the Queen of Sheba:

<sup>1</sup> Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test him  
with hard questions, having a very great retinue and camels bearing spices and very much gold  
and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. <sup>2</sup>  
And Solomon answered all her questions. There was nothing hidden from Solomon that he could  
not explain to her. <sup>3</sup> And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, the house  
that he had built, <sup>4</sup> the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his  
servants, and their clothing, his cupbearers, and their clothing, and his burnt offerings that he  
offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more breath in her.

We don't know much about the Queen of Sheba –  
other than that she is supposed to have come from modern Ethiopia  
(although it is more likely that she came from modern Yemen).  
But she is simply stunned at the wealth and wisdom of Solomon.

And she says:

<sup>5</sup> And she said to the king, “The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and  
of your wisdom, <sup>6</sup> but I did not believe the<sup>[c]</sup> reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it.  
And behold, half the greatness of your wisdom was not told me; you surpass the report that I  
heard. <sup>7</sup> Happy are your wives!<sup>[d]</sup> Happy are these your servants, who continually stand before  
you and hear your wisdom!

But verse 8 is the key to the whole of what she says:

*<sup>8</sup> Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne as king for the LORD your God! Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness.”*

In the book of Kings she says that God has placed him on the throne of Israel.  
Here, she says that God has placed Solomon on God’s own throne!

It is a general principle that a good king is a sign of God’s love.  
This is true in a “common grace” sense for everyone.  
Good rulers are a reminder to us that God is gracious and kind,  
and that justice and righteousness are good things.

But that’s not all that the queen of Sheba is saying.  
God’s love for Israel is unique.  
God’s purpose is to bring salvation to the whole of humanity *through Israel*.  
God’s purpose is to restore the whole of creation *through Israel*.  
Therefore, the establishment of Solomon’s wealth and wisdom  
is part of God’s purpose in bringing salvation to the cosmos.

The physical aspect of creation is brought under Solomon’s rule –  
as he receives gold, timber, and the wealth of the nations.

*<sup>9</sup> Then she gave the king 120 talents<sup>[e]</sup> of gold, and a very great quantity of spices, and precious stones. There were no spices such as those that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.*

*<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the servants of Hiram and the servants of Solomon, who brought gold from Ophir, brought algum wood and precious stones. <sup>11</sup> And the king made from the algum wood supports for the house of the LORD and for the king’s house, lyres also and harps for the singers. There never was seen the like of them before in the land of Judah.*

But not only does Solomon receive presents,  
he also gives presents.  
In the ancient world, gift-exchange was used both to demonstrate wealth,  
but also to establish “friendship.”

We often think that friendship is about a close personal relationship.  
But the ancient idea of friendship has more to do with what you do for one another.  
Gift-giving established a relationship of obligation.  
If I give you a gift of great worth,  
that puts me under obligation to do something equal or better for you.  
[That is, assuming we are equals.  
If we are *not* equals, then I may not be able to repay you –  
in which case I will be obligated to you *forever!*]

<sup>12</sup> *And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked besides what she had brought to the king. So she turned and went back to her own land with her servants.*

Verse 12 indicates that Solomon and the queen of Sheba view each other as equals.

(Although since *she* came to *him*, that would indicate that she views him as the greater; a great King never pays a visit to a lesser king, unless to demand tribute or some other service.)

#### **4. Wealth (9:13-21)**

<sup>13</sup> *Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, <sup>14</sup> besides that which the explorers and merchants brought. And all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land brought gold and silver to Solomon.*

Verses 13-21 then describe the great wealth and power of Solomon.

We know from the records of other nations at this time that Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt were all in a period of decline; and so it is not surprising to hear that the kings of Arabia paid tribute to Solomon, since the Arabs were the leading traders in the region, and Solomon now controls all the main trade routes in the Middle East! And when you control all the main trade routes, your revenue skyrockets!

<sup>15</sup> *King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold; 600 shekels<sup>[f]</sup> of beaten gold went into each shield. <sup>16</sup> And he made 300 shields of beaten gold; 300 shekels of gold went into each shield; and the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.*

Why do you make shields of gold?

Golden shields are not much use in battle!

They are only useful for show –

as an ostentatious demonstration of your wealth.

Likewise the throne (read v17-19).

<sup>17</sup> *The king also made a great ivory throne and overlaid it with pure gold. <sup>18</sup> The throne had six steps and a footstool of gold, which were attached to the throne, and on each side of the seat were armrests and two lions standing beside the armrests, <sup>19</sup> while twelve lions stood there, one on each end of a step on the six steps. Nothing like it was ever made for any kingdom. <sup>20</sup> All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. Silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. <sup>21</sup> For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram. Once every three years the ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.<sup>[g]</sup>*

This was the golden age of Israel.

“Silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.” (v20)

The wealth, wisdom, splendor and glory of Solomon is beyond anything ever (read v22-28).



## 5. Summary and Death (9:22-31)

*<sup>22</sup> Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. <sup>23</sup> And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. <sup>24</sup> Every one of them brought his present, articles of silver and of gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year. <sup>25</sup> And Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots, and 12,000 horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup> And he ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates<sup>[h]</sup> to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. <sup>27</sup> And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. <sup>28</sup> And horses were imported for Solomon from Egypt and from all lands.*

The Chronicler already told us some of this back in chapter 1.

Now he repeats it, to remind us of how this was truly the golden age of Israel.

You can see some exaggeration here:

“all the kings of the earth” does not mean every single king on the planet,  
but “a whole lot of kings.”

And when he says that the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone,  
you should not take him too literally.

(Have you ever seen pictures of Jerusalem?

You find stone in every street and walkway!)

But, of course, that’s the point.

You are supposed to imagine a city paved with silver  
(not that it literally *was* paved with silver,  
but a city of great wealth and splendor).

This is the background image for the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation –  
a city paved with gold –

a city that outshines Solomon’s Jerusalem,  
like gold outshines silver!

The story is told of a wealthy man who prayed and prayed  
that God would allow him to bring his riches with him when he died.

Finally, worn out by his persistent begging,

God finally told him that he could bring one suitcase.

So he packed a huge suitcase filled with golden bars,

and when he died he lugged it up to the pearly gates.

St. Peter stopped him and said, “I’m sorry, but you can’t take it with you!”

He replied, “Oh, but I’ve got an arrangement with God!”

Peter went and checked with the Lord, who confirmed this,

so Peter came back and said to the rich man,

“All right, your story checks out –

but I need to inspect the bag...”  
He opened it and Peter looked inside.  
“So of all the things you could bring,” Peter said,  
“why did you choose pavement?”

I don’t know what the New Creation will look like.  
But even as Chronicles describes the golden age of Solomon  
as the greatest and most glorious time imaginable,  
so also the book of Revelation describes the new heavens and new earth  
as being *beyond* the greatest glory imaginable!

But the first golden age ended with the death of the great King.  
The picture faded, and the glory diminished, and his wisdom died.

*<sup>29</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat? <sup>30</sup> Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. <sup>31</sup> And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father, and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.*

Verse 29 refers to a number of texts by Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo.  
It is possible that all of these texts were brought together into the book of Kings –  
or perhaps Kings is only one of these, and the other two are lost.  
But it is clear that the Chronicler assumes that you are familiar with these texts,  
so we can safely assume that he knows “the rest of the story”  
of Solomon’s idolatry – being led astray by his foreign wives.

But he has chosen not to tell us about that!

So how should we apply all this?  
I don’t think we’ll find any better application  
than the one that the Chronicler himself suggests!

After all, what is the Chronicler saying?  
People often try to use biblical characters as examples – either good or bad.  
But how do you imitate Solomon?  
Do you build fabulously ostentatious church buildings?  
Do you accumulate wealth, wives, wisdom?

The Chronicler is writing to a people who worship in a dingy little temple,  
and who are ruled by foreign powers,  
with local governors who are sometimes better and sometimes worse.  
No one in the Chronicler’s day can imitate Solomon’s wealth, wisdom, or power.  
Even Solomon’s worship (as far as its glory and splendor) is beyond their ability.

If you are supposed to view Solomon as the ideal – the one that we strive to be like –  
then you would come to despair.

We will never succeed at imitating Solomon!

But at the same time, the Chronicler gives us *nothing bad* to avoid!

The Chronicler's portrayal of Solomon is simply *too good to be true*  
(especially since we *know better* – since *everyone* has read the book of Kings!).

And so you start to realize that the *reason* why the Chronicler  
gives us an over-the-top portrayal of Solomon  
is because he is not giving us something to strive for –  
he is giving us a vision of the way things should be  
(perhaps even, the way things *should have been!*)

The Chronicler's Solomon takes all the very best parts of Solomon  
and polishes them up to make them really shiny!

(Sort of like a lot of biographies will tell the stories of Christians past,  
but leave out all the bad stuff.

That's not wrong – after all, the Chronicler did it! –  
but if you ever read a biography of someone who sounds too good to be true,  
look around for the “Kings” version, the “warts and all” version,  
because there is probably more to the story!)

So no, don't try to imitate Solomon. [Your wife won't like it – and neither will your God!]

But Israel was called to look for the one who is greater than Solomon!

As Michael Willcock puts it,

“Where God's throne is occupied by the one to whom it rightly belongs,  
there all the needs of his people are met,  
and they find the realm of blessing.

They may feel feeble and insecure, but there they will find his mighty power.  
Their relationships with God may be far from right, but there they will find true worship.  
Their lives may be lives of emptiness and poverty,  
but there they will find the unsearchable riches of Christ.  
Their minds may be dulled and perplexed, perverse and foolish,  
but there they will find the very wisdom of God.” [161]

Where is that place where you will find the power, worship, wealth and wisdom of God?

The Queen of Sheba is the mouthpiece for the Chronicler's message to you:

“Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you  
and set you on his throne as king for the LORD your God!  
Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever,  
he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness.”

“The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with the men of this generation  
and condemn them;

for she came from the ends of the earth”  
to see the power of Solomon,  
to share his worship,  
to marvel at his riches,  
and to hear his wisdom,  
“and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.” [Willcock, 162]