

THE GLORY OF THE HOUSE OF GOD

2 Chronicles 2—5

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. With these chapters, we are brought to the crescendo and climax of the narrative of Chronicles thus far. Throughout the book of 1 Chronicles, the author emphasized and narrated David's consuming vision to build a house for the Lord. This vision was built upon his unique revelation of the need for a place where God could be at rest among his people. Although David was not permitted himself to build the house, we see that commitment to this vision consumed his life and leadership as he undertook painstaking efforts to prepare his son Solomon to build the Temple.

¹Remember, O Lord, in David's favor... ²how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, ³"I will not enter my house or get into my bed, ⁴I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, ⁵until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob. (Ps 132:1-5)

- B. In these four chapters the Chronicler devotes a significant amount of space to narrate the building of the Temple: the lengths that Solomon goes *to build a great house worthy of the Lord's greatness* (2 Chr 2.1-9), the *response of the Gentile nations to provide riches* for God's house (2 Chr 2.10-18), the *dimensions and details of the house* itself (2 Chr 3); the *Temple's furnishings* (2 Chr 4); and the culmination of *bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the house* (2 Chr 5).
- C. We might be tempted to ask, "*why all this attention to the Temple?*" The sheer space of the narrative and the extensive details given to the Temple tell us that this is important. However, contemporary readers (and especially contemporary Christian readers) often either get bogged down in the details of these chapters or write them off as unimportant for the new covenant.
- D. However, to understand the importance of these chapters we need to seek to understand the importance of the Temple throughout the Scripture. What we will come to see is that the Temple is a picture (a 'type') of God's ultimate desire for creation and human history — namely, to build *a dwelling place for himself among his people*.
- E. If we seek to understand this as the goal of all creation (to which temples/tabernacles in Scripture point to), we can then seek to understand how the ministry and work of Jesus fulfilled this picture and how we can seek to apply the realities of this text within our world.

II. THE HOUSE OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. From the opening pages of the Bible, we are given the portrait of God's desire and design for creation. The Scriptures reveal a God who has a purpose, a goal, and end toward which he is working.
- B. The creation story in Genesis 1.1-2.3 is a beautiful narration of God's initial activity to establish and order creation. This account establishes several important realities:
1. *God created all things*: With two words (God created), this narrative brings us face to face with the primary character of the Bible, and that author of all that exists.
 2. *God has a purpose in creation*: The ordering of the creation account is constructed in a very intentional way to crescendo with the creation of mankind and the seventh day rest of God. This construction is intended to highlight the purpose that God has in creating all things.
 3. *God's purpose is ordered and intentional*: The structure of Genesis 1 is designed to give a picture of God's intentional ordering of creation as a habitation for his dwelling.

- C. Within the narrative, it becomes clear that the climax of the whole creation account is God's creation of mankind. What we are told is that mankind is created with two distinct purposes from the beginning:

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion..." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion" (Gen 1.26-28)

1. *Image and Likeness of God:* To be in the image of God means that mankind possesses the unique ability among all created order to relate to him (communion) and reflect him (image).
2. *Dominion:* From the place of communing with God, mankind is given the "dominion mandate". This is the charge to steward creation as representatives of God himself. They are to do this by filling the earth and bringing it into subjection to God's ways, his purposes, and his glory.

- D. Having created for six days (and brought his creation to crescendo with the creation of mankind), the narrative tells us that God finished his labors and took up his rest among his creation. Here we are given the first window in the ultimate purpose for creation: *God has made a house (dwelling place) where he might dwell with his people in a place of rest.*

¹Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ²And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Gen 2.1-3)

- E. Immediately, in Genesis 2, we are given a more focused picture of God's purpose as it was expressed in the ideal manner at the time of creation. We see the man, Adam, created by God to live in glorious communion with him and given the charge to keep and tend the Garden-sanctuary in Eden. It is common for Biblical interpreters to see the Garden in Eden as the first "temple" of the Bible: *the house that God built where he would dwell with his people.*

⁸And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen 2.8-9)

- F. With the narration of the first sin (the Fall) in Genesis 3, we are shown that the ultimate punishment given to mankind for their sin is exile from the house of God. Now, for the first time, mankind is banished from the place where God dwells and he is forbidden from experiencing his everlasting life.

²³therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way of the tree of life. (Gen 3.23-24)

- G. After the Exodus, Moses is given instructions by God to build a tabernacle. This moveable temple is to be built by God's people according to the pattern of God's true house in heaven and is to be his dwelling place among his people. The extensive detail given to God's instruction about the tabernacle (Exod 25-27) and the building of the tabernacle (Exod 35-38) demonstrate the care and the importance God has to build again a house for himself where he might dwell with his people.

⁸And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. ⁹Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and all of its furniture, so you shall make it. (Exod 25.8-9)

- H. We are told that upon the completion of the work of the tabernacle, that the Lord descended in a cloud to fill the tabernacle with his glorious presence — taking up his 'rest' among his people.

³²Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished... ^{40.34}Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. (Exod 39.32; 40.34-35)

- I. With the building of the Temple of Solomon, the work of the tabernacle is expanded and intensified (size, value, etc.). This also includes the addition of Levitical worship that was established by David. Again, the building of the Temple was according to the pattern of God's heavenly house to symbolize a greater reality: the purpose for creation was to be a house where God could dwell with his people forever.

¹¹Then David gave Solomon his son the plan for the vestibule of the temple, and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy seat; ¹²and the plan of all that he had in mind for the courts of the house of the Lord... ¹³All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the Lord, all the work to be done according to the plan. (1 Chr 28.11-19)

- J. We again see the same pattern with the building of the temple: when the work of the temple is completed, the Lord comes to his house to fill it as his dwelling place.

¹³Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of the Lord was finished... ¹⁴the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, ¹⁵so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. (2 Chr 5.1, 13-14)

- K. This portrait of God's purposes in the tabernacle and temple can be summarized in a few ways.

1. The *tabernacle and temple were to serve as 'types' of God's purpose for creation*: a house where he could dwell in the midst of his people.
2. The *tabernacle and temple were designed according to the pattern of the heavenly house of God*. As such, they were an earthly representation of God's ultimate purpose. This was even demonstrated in the ways their design was to symbolize a 'garden-like' reality, harkening back to the reality of Eden. We see this in the abundance of pure gold (Gen 2.11); the trees and images of fruit (Gen 2.9, 16); the symbols of water (Gen 2.10-14); and even the presence of cherubim (Gen 3.24). This gives witness that these representations were to serve as a 'type' of God's ideal (or new) creation.
3. The *tabernacle and temple were to be the center of God's people*. This was the place where he dwelt in their midst, they met with him, learned his ways, ordered their lives around his truth (law), and were thus a light to the nations.

III. THE HOUSE OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. In the New Testament, Christ has reoriented the temple (house of God) around himself and his work. Through him, we can see that each of the previous houses (tabernacle and temple) served as a picture (or 'type') of the eternal and perfect reality that he would inaugurate in the new covenant.
- B. Jesus declares that he is the true temple.

¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."... ²¹he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²²When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken (John 2.19-22)

- C. John demonstrates that Jesus is the true tabernacle.

¹⁴And the word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1.14)

- D. Jesus is the greater Solomon who builds the new house of God in his life, death, resurrection, and birth of the church. He is the one who ultimately finishes the work to prepare the way for the new creation of God and he is the one who fills his house with glory in the sending of his Spirit.

⁴²behold, something greater than Solomon is here (Matt 12.42)

³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19.30)

⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. (Matt 27.50-51)

¹When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.1-4)

- E. Jesus alone opens the new and living way — through his own flesh — into the presence of God, the true, heavenly temple. Now, with access into God's own presence, we can dwell with God in his house.

¹Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he has opened for us, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. (Heb 10.19-23)

- F. The people of God *are now* and are *being built into* the temple of God.

¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Eph 2.19-22)

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2.4-5)

- G. The glorious reality of gathering as the people of God (and the ministry of the church) is that *God is building his people together as his glorious house where he dwells with his people.*

IV. LONGING FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

- A. I long for us to be a people who rightly see the glory of what God has purposed for us in Christ Jesus. This includes seeking to stir up our affections to be a people who zealously pursue the presence of God as the foundational reality of our church.

- B. In Psalm 27, David outlines a vision for being consumed with the desire to be in God's presence. To have such a desire, we must be convinced that dwelling with God in his house is better than any other pleasure.

⁴One thing I have asked of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and inquire in his temple (Ps 27.4)

¹How lovely is your dwelling place... ¹⁰for a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. (Ps 84.1, 10)

- C. God promises for those who overcome that we will be pillars in his house.

¹²The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it (Rev 3.12)

- D. We must ask God to make us aware of the glorious reality of the privilege we have in Christ. The glory that filled the tabernacle and temple such that no man could stand under the weight of God's manifest glory, is "no glory" compared to what has been given in the New Covenant through Christ (2 Cor 3).