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September 7th: 1 Chronicles 22 & Ephesians 5:1-17

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David makes provision for the temple's construction and charges Solomon and the leaders of the people. Walking as light in the Lord.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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Transcript

1 Chronicles 22. Then David said, Here shall be the house of the Lord God, and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel. David commanded to gather together the resident aliens who were in the land of Israel, and he set stone cutters to prepare dressed stones for building the house of God.

David also provided great quantities of iron for nails for the doors of the gates and for clamps, as well as bronze in quantities beyond weighing, and cedar timbers without number, for the Sidonians and Tyrians brought great quantities of cedar to David. For David said, Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands. I will therefore make preparation for it.

So David provided materials in great quantity before his death. Then he called for

Solomon his son, and charged him to build a house for the Lord, the God of Israel. David said to Solomon, My son, I had it in my heart to build a house to the name of the Lord my God, but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, You have shed much blood and have waged great wars.

You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood before me on the earth. Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies, for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days.

He shall build a house for my name. He shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel for ever. Now, my son, the Lord be with you, so that you may succeed in building the house of the Lord your God as he has spoken concerning you.

Only, may the Lord grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel, you may keep the law of the Lord your God. Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the rules that the Lord commanded Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous.

Fear not. Do not be dismayed. With great pains I have provided for the house of the Lord.

One hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver and bronze and iron beyond weighing, for there is so much of it. Timber and stone, too, I have provided. To these you must add.

You have an abundance of workmen, stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and all kinds of craftsmen without number, skilled in working gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Arise and work. The Lord be with you.

David also commanded all the leaders of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, Is not the Lord your God with you? And has he not given you peace on every side? For he has delivered the inhabitants of the land into my hand, and the land is subdued before the Lord and his people. Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. Arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God, so that the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God may be brought into a house built for the name of the Lord.

In 1 Chronicles account of David's census, the story of the staying of the hand of the angel of the Lord at the threshing floor of Ornan or Aruna the Jebusite is followed in 1 Chronicles chapter 22 with the account of David's preparations for the building of the temple. To this point in 1 Chronicles nothing clear has been said about the succession of the throne after David. Now in the central part of this chapter David charges his son Solomon concerning the construction of the temple, an exhortation that can be

subdivided into two sections, each introduced with the expression, My son.

Solomon's succession from David on the throne is focused on the completion of the task of building the temple. Like Moses and the Exodus or Elijah and his mission, David is not able to perform the greatest work to which he has aspired. Consequently, the question of who would succeed him and actually build the temple is a very important one.

Even if he cannot build the temple itself though, David is very concerned to do whatever he can to contribute to the work of its construction, purchasing the land for it, gathering the necessary materials, instructing his son concerning it and preparing the people and skilled workers for it. The chapter starts with David's commitment to construct the temple on the site of the threshing floor where the judgment of the Lord over his people ceased. The temple was likely to be located outside of the Davidic city itself, over against it.

Readers of the Bible can be forgiven for finding it a bit confusing sometimes to consider the various mountains or hills of Jerusalem and how they stand relative to each other at different points of the history of the people. For instance, Mount Zion seems to be a designation that migrated to different hills of Jerusalem on account of their physical, political, social, religious and symbolic prominence relative to other hills at the given time. David had some experience in construction projects and realized the scale of the task of building something as grand as the temple.

To equip Solomon for the task, David gathered together skilled craftsmen and huge amounts of raw materials. Many of the craftsmen were foreign labourers and many of the most important materials came from surrounding nations. The building of the temple won't merely be an important site for Israelites, but it will be a building that is part of the face that Israel presents to the Gentile nations that surround it.

The cosmopolitan aspects of its construction are indicative both of the way that the temple represents an extension of Israel's field of influence beyond its borders and also a drawing of Gentile riches and wisdom in. Israel was seldom the most culturally or technologically advanced nation in its wider region, nor did it possess the degree of mineral wealth enjoyed by many other nations, nor did it have the artisanal skills that other peoples could boast. It was a priestly people and they were later scattered as prophets among the nations.

Back in the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter 2, the garden is described as having trees and fruits to enjoy. However, the mineral riches are located outside of the garden in places like the land of Havillah. The impression the reader gets is that one would have to venture outside of the garden to obtain such resources and then return to dress and glorify the garden with them.

The temple would be such a new Garden of Eden. It will be an Eden that has gathered in

riches from many surrounding lands. Israel's importance as a place of trade and commerce with other powers will be seen in the reign of Solomon especially, with spices, various metals, precious stones, artisans and other resources coming into Israel.

We have some window into this in the Song of Solomon with all the different spices and other things that it describes. The temple, as an Israelite building of cosmopolitan construction, is itself a material representation of what the nation is itself being fashioned into by the Lord. When the tabernacle was constructed, there were fewer resources to work with, but many of the resources came from the Israelites' spoiling of the Egyptians in the deliverance of the Exodus.

Now the materials for the construction, which again largely come from Gentiles, come from different kinds of relationships with them, a relationship that has a lot more to do with the stature of Israel as a kingdom in the region. It is a building of messianic significance then. It is a testament to what the glorious Davidic king who builds it represents to Israel and the nations around it.

It is to be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands. Something of this aspiration is seen in Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple in 1 Kings 8, verses 41-43, which describes some of the religious significance of this fame of the building throughout the lands. Likewise, when a foreigner who is not of your people Israel comes from a far country for your name's sake, for they shall hear of your great name, and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm, when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

Back in 2 Samuel chapter 7, David had declared his desire to build a house for the Lord, but had not been permitted to do so. The Lord, however, had promised David that he would build David's house, and that David's son who came after him would be the one to build the temple. Now David charges Solomon to do this work.

We discover the reason why David had not been permitted to build the temple, as he had originally intended. He had shed so much blood. The blood in view here is not merely the blood of David's battles against surrounding enemies, but also the blood of civil war and the unrighteous shedding of blood under his administration, in cases such as that of Uriah.

The person to build the house needed to be a man of rest and a man of peace. David's son will be like Noah, whose name means rest. The expectation associated with Solomon is similar to that associated with Noah in Genesis chapter 5 verse 29, and called his name Noah, saying, Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work, and from the painful toil of our hands.

Solomon's name means peace. In Exodus, the tabernacle is presented as a sort of Sabbath tent, a realm of rest that corresponds both to the day of rest and to the resting of the ark of Noah. In 1 Chronicles chapter 28 verse 2, David speaks of the temple as a house of rest.

Then King David rose to his feet and said, Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building. The construction of the temple needs to be undertaken by a man of rest and peace, in a day of rest and peace.

The Lord will not sit down on his throne, as it were, until his people have peace on all sides, and a Sabbath rest can be enjoyed in his new Sabbath palace. As long as blood is being shed, and much more so if it is blood unlawfully shed, rest is still awaited and the building of the temple as the resting place for the Lord would be premature. Considering all of this should help us to recognise just how great a landmark the building of the temple would be.

It was the symbol of the completion of the work of Israel's redemption, the end of the creation week of the nation, as it were. In 2 Samuel chapter 12 Solomon is given the name Jedidiah by the Lord. Here, however, the name Solomon is also spoken of by the Lord as a name to which he has given significance.

Solomon is called Solomon because he is the Shalom man. His name is Peace because he will be the great king of peace. Solomon will also be the one in which the Davidic covenant will find its first great fulfilment.

The Lord had promised to David in 2 Samuel chapter 7 verses 12-16. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of man, with the stripes of the sons of men. But my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.

And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. Although its full fulfilment clearly awaits Christ, the most immediate reference here is to Solomon, in whom the promises made to David will start to bear fruit.

Like Moses charging Joshua, David charges Solomon concerning how he must act. The same sort of expressions that Moses used with Joshua, exhorting him to be strong and courageous, are here used by David to Solomon. We can recognise further parallels here.

Moses led the struggle by which Israel was delivered from Egypt and brought them

through the wilderness. However, he could not enter in himself. Rather, Joshua was the one who would give Israel an initial rest in the land.

Likewise, David was the one who undertook the great struggle of establishing the kingdom. Yet Solomon would be the one in whom the kingdom entered into rest. The father sacrificed to make possible the completing work of his son, and the son laboured to realise the sacrifices of his father.

The unity of mission and purpose between father and son should not be missed. The story of the books of Samuel were filled with sons who betrayed their father's legacies, who failed to walk in their father's footsteps, or who turned against their fathers. Now we finally find a faithful son.

Solomon will be in great need of wisdom. The task of morality is greatly complicated by rule, as we saw in the books of 1st and 2nd Samuel. Anyone who will exercise the sort of power that Solomon exercised requires great discretion and understanding in order to uphold the law of the Lord and not be led astray.

Wisdom does not leave behind the law of Moses. Rather, it involves a movement into a deeper relationship with it. The king was supposed to function as a sort of model Israelite, devoting himself to the study of the law, as we see in Deuteronomy 17, verses 18-20.

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children in Israel. Through such lifelong meditation upon the law, the king would learn the deeper principles of wisdom within the law.

The book of Deuteronomy is a wisdom text, an exposition of the law that reveals to its diligent students, to those attentive readers and hearers who venture beneath its surfaces, profound insights into the moral order. The Lord promised that the law would be a source of wisdom for Israel in the eyes of the surrounding nations, and now the king needs to devote himself to realising this promise. In Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 5 to 8 we have this promise.

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them, and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples. Who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people, for what great nation is there that has a God so near to it as the

Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? The intertwining of law and wisdom that we find in Deuteronomy is not abandoned by the wisdom tradition associated with Solomon, rather it is presented as lying at its very foundation.

David also tells Solomon about the preparations that he has made for Solomon's work of building the temple, and what Solomon will need to do to carry the work forward. David is also concerned to establish a people prepared for Solomon and his work. He gives the leaders of the people instructions similar to that which he gave to Solomon.

King and people must be united in this construction work. Such a great construction would also be an architectural manifestation of the positive relationship between king and people. It ought to be a revelation of the glories that good authority makes possible.

David gives Solomon and the leaders of Israel a great commission, similar to other commissions that we find elsewhere in scripture, not least the commission that concludes the books of the Chronicles in 2 Chronicles 36, verse 23. Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him.

Let him go up. A question to consider, how will the temple itself be a house of wisdom? Ephesians chapter 5, verses 1-17 Be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous, that is, an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Therefore do not become partakers with them, for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them, for it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians chapter 5 continues Paul's presentation of the new form of life that should be characteristic of Christians, the sort of behaviours that they must put off, and the sort of behaviours that they must put on. In exhorting the hearers of the epistle to be imitators of God, Paul is reinforcing the statement of chapter 4 verse 32.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. God himself forgave us, and so we must follow in his example. Paul's charge to be imitators of God is also a practical form that his earlier point about putting on the new self, created after the likeness of God, can take.

Those in the image of God are his children, and the appropriate way to behave as such is to walk in the footsteps of our Father, imitating him. A true child's connection to the image of their father is not merely in the unchosen ways that they reflect their father's appearance, or even the ways that they naturally manifest behavioural traits or mannerisms that resemble those of their father, but also in their purposeful commitment to follow the pattern of their father, and become more and more like him. The good father gives his child a model to look up to and to follow, so that the child can take after his father, not merely in those unchosen ways, but also as a willing commitment.

Paul's teaching here has much in common with our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, where Christ connects sonship with following the pattern of our Heavenly Father in Matthew chapter 5 verses 44-48. Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his son rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect. Christ, of course, is the Son, the one who is the image of God. He is the one in whom we see the Father fully and truly revealed.

If we are called to imitate the Father, we will be taking the example of the Son himself, who faithfully does the works of the Father in all respects. Those who see the Son have seen the Father. Those who see us should see something of God in our imitation of Him, in the way that we manifest the image of God, in the way that Christ can be seen in us.

Christ's model of walking in love is, of course, most fully seen in the sacrifice of the cross itself, in which, out of His love for us, He willingly gave Himself up for us. This was a pleasing sacrifice to God, because, among other things, it was a manifestation of mature sonship. If they are to act as true children of God, the people that Paul is writing to must abhor and totally reject behaviours that are at odds with or opposed to his character.

Paul lists a number of the sins from which we must distance ourselves. This distancing is to be seen in the way that such sins must not even be named among you, or, perhaps, must not even be hinted at among you. In the first case, the point would be that we don't merely avoid such sins, but also firmly resist the salacious preoccupation with such sins that one finds in many quarters, the sort of preoccupation that sells gossip magazines, that drives much online traffic, and that makes us hungry for reports of other scandalous sins.

Even if we don't sin in these particular respects ourselves, we have an appetite for and a delight to hear of the sins of others, finding it titillating to reflect upon people's sexual wickedness, for instance. By contrast, the Christian community must be a place where there is no appetite for, or delight in hearing about such things. Not only are they displeasing to God, they have also become displeasing to us.

The other possible translation is that Paul is referring to sins that are rumoured to exist within a community. Christians must not just desire to be righteous, but to be transparently righteous, not giving any fuel to gossip. Paul begins by speaking of sexual immorality and impurity.

These terms cover all sorts of illicit sexual behaviour outside of appropriate sexual relations in the context of marriage. It doesn't matter whether or not it is consensual. If people engage in sexual behaviour outside of marriage, they are guilty of sexual immorality.

This is one point where the teaching of scripture comes into direct collision with the values of modern society. Impurity is another broad term. It refers to anything that is morally unclean, anything that stands opposed to holiness and the moral purity that should characterise us as God's people.

Paul pushes against our society's norms in the way that he often foregrounds sexual immorality in his vice lists. For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 3-7. To sexual immorality and impurity, Paul adds covetousness, the avarice and the desire that drives so much sinful human behaviour.

Greed is diametrically opposed to what should be our willingness to give up things for others, as Christ gave himself up for us. Paul often shares the wisdom literature's close attention to sins of speech. The church should not be a place of obscene talk, foolish talk or coarse jesting.

All of these sorts of speech are shameful and dishonourable. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and to engage in such speech is utterly opposed to everything that we are supposed to be, as holy to the Lord. If we are the people of God, our speech must be congruent with this.

If we habitually use our speech in careless and foolish ways, consistently speaking with levity, not controlling our tongues, employing obscenities and filling our mouths with filthiness, not only will our speech be given very little weight, it will be a source of dishonour and corruption to everyone that we speak of and to. As the people of God, we should be guardians of our tongues. Knowing that people who do not weigh their words, control their speech and keep their lips pure will not be taken seriously.

Our tongues routinely betray the character of our hearts, and impurity of speech is a

characteristic expression of an unguarded heart. The alternative to this is thanksgiving to God, a form of speech that is weighty and glorious. Like the prophet Isaiah, we should be acutely aware that we are people of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

We must seek the cleansing and purifying work of the Lord, so that we can bear his glorious name on lips that are suited for that purpose. People who are sexually immoral, impure or covetous have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. They lack the character of sons, and so they also lack the privileges and the promises enjoyed by sons.

Somewhat surprisingly, Paul identifies covetousness and idolatry here. Covetousness replaces God with the objects of its desire, and with our desire itself, which become our supreme goal and God. These things are not just unfitting and best avoided out of a sort of Christian propriety.

They are fundamentally at odds with God, and God is fundamentally at enmity with them and those who give themselves over to them. Such people are not the sons of God, but the sons of disobedience, and the fierce wrath of God will come upon them. Christians must be holy, maintaining distance from all such sinful behaviours, and avoiding aligning ourselves with people who practice them.

We must not enter into communion with them. Bad company corrupts us. Paul develops his point using the metaphor of the opposition of light and darkness, a common metaphor in scripture and elsewhere.

They were once darkness, and engaged in the unfruitful works of darkness, but now they have become children of the light. However, Paul's point here goes further than he does elsewhere. He does not merely argue that we are now in the light, or even just that we are now sons of the light.

Rather, now we are light in the Lord. Our light-bearing is a participation in the light of Christ himself. We must conduct ourselves accordingly.

Paul speaks here of the fruit of light, whereas later he will speak of the unfruitful works of darkness. Perhaps Paul is thinking of the contrast between the character of light, which conveys itself to other things, with darkness, which lacks the power to act in such a manner. Light produces its fruit in things that are good, right, and true, in contrast to all of the practices and desires that Paul has earlier condemned.

As children of light, we will be eager to shine more brightly, bearing the light of the Lord, as we diligently seek to convey his character to others by discerning what is pleasing to him. We must eschew the works of darkness, which stand opposed to everything that we are supposed to be, not participating in them. Light is at odds with darkness.

Where light comes, the darkness is driven away. There can be no truce between these

two principles that are so fundamentally at odds. We don't just negatively avoid the unfruitful works of darkness.

We positively expose them. We bring them into the light, or bring the light to them. As we live as the light of Christ, our lives should expose the sinful character of the world that surrounds us by contrast.

This will have the effect of exposing the darkness, which is seldom welcomed by the darkness itself. The darkness does not want to be revealed for what it is, or to be expelled by the advent of the light. Certain persons and actions have a natural attraction to the darkness, and the cover and the secrecy that it offers.

To such persons and actions, our presence as light will be deeply threatening and unwelcome. As light-bearers, Christians transform the societies in which they live. Sins that are exposed for what they are will need to assume a different character.

Either their power or appeal will be dispelled or diminished by the light, or they will become more high-handed in character, involving an explicit resistance to, an antagonism with the light. The long-expected light of the Messiah has dawned in Jesus. The day is breaking, and we are to act as people of the day.

Paul's teaching about darkness and light is not merely a teaching about timelessly opposed moral characters, but about the coming of a new age, where light is in the ascendancy and darkness will be driven out. In this time between the times, we must be the light-bearers heralding a new dawn, manifesting the fact that the time has arrived for everyone to wake up. This point is more directly made in places such as 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 4-6.

But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness, so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

Christians are to be awake, alert and mindful, characterized by the sort of sobriety that belongs to the day, in contrast to the actions of the night, as Paul expresses in Romans 13, verses 12-14. The night is far gone, the day is at hand, so then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

Such circumspection in our behavior is characteristic of wisdom, as is close attention to what the will of the Lord is. We are to redeem the time, because the days are evil. In times of wickedness, Christians are called to rescue the time from the rule of darkness and bring it under the rule of the light.

Paul's point here goes so much further than many suppose, who think that it is merely a matter of filling our time with Christian activities, or even not allowing our time as Christians to go to waste, perhaps suggested by the translation making the best use of the time. By bringing the light of the age to come to bear upon our age, bringing the light of the longed-for day of the Lord to bear upon our dark times, wickedness is exposed and it shrinks back into the shadows, while others step forward into the light. Time is not just quantitative, it is also qualitative.

Our duty is to make the times that we live in, whenever they may be, daytimes, by bearing the light of Christ within them. A question to consider, where else in the New Testament do we see the metaphor of light and darkness explored?