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# **DAVID AND SOLOMON**

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## David and Solomon

In this essay I look at David and Solomon, the United Monarchy, the divided Kingdom and the Temple with Gary Byers and Christopher J. Davey. Peter J. Leithart then asks the question, 'Where was Ancient Zion?' The Leithart provides different suggestions as indicated in the Old Testament. Next comes an article by Alan Millard on King Solomon within the framework of 2 Kings 1-11 saying that the narrative includes rare information on material culture of the time. Christopher J. Davey also talks about other Temples and Buildings that were built during the reigns of various kings.

Byers tells us of the challenge to the historicity of the United Monarch that began in the mid 1990's. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Siberman however claimed there was no archaeological evidence to support the Bible narrative of the United Monarchy under David and Solomon. Some (a group of people who call themselves, Biblical Minimalists) believe that this portion of the Bible was written during the Persian period or even the Hellenistic period. So, there are claims upon claims that don't support the Biblical documents that we have. Finkelstein's says there is no archaeological evidence for the United Monarchy and called his theory the 'low chronology' which is in opposition to the 'high chronology.' He says that David and Solomon are not the people who the Bible describes them to be. Finkelstein simply says there's no evidence. David is in fact mentioned on an inscription from Tel Dan, written about 100 years after his death. Excavations from Hazor, Gezer and Megiddo indicate the existence of David and Solomon. The following paragraphs attempt to counter the above claims.

Peter J. Leithart asks the question, 'Where was Ancient Zion?' Most people say that it was on the eastern side of the city. Modern scholars conclude that the Eastern ridge was the original site because of the water supply near to the valley of Kidron. However, according to Josephus, the upper city was called the 'Citadel' by King David. At one point in time there seemed to have been a wall on the ridge but that's not exclusive evidence as to whether or not that area was Zion. The problem is Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt many times plus even the Romans had a go at it when they rebuilt Jerusalem as a non Jewish city. The nature of the city in the 10th century BC is still unknown along with social, political and theological grandeur. Some feel that the temple mount and Zion are the same. Zion is mentioned some 150 times in the Hebrew Bible and Psalm 48:2 speak of Mount Zion in the far north but this seems to be a symbolic jester. Interestingly, whatever Zion referred to, David changed its name to the 'city of David'. David repaired this sector while Joab revived the 'rest of the city'.

So indeed Zion may only be a part of the city rather than the whole city. The Ark was transported by Solomon's from the 'city of David', which is the place of Zion. The Ark was taken out of Zion but not out of the city. We see that Pharaoh's daughter was housed first in the city of David and then moved to a house in the temple palace complex. So the move was from one part of the city to another. Also more evidence, most of the kings were buried in the city of David. Additional evidence points out that Zion was never referred to as Jerusalem. After Solomon, Zion was indeed used exclusively for the temple mount which was Mount Moriah. So, perhaps Zion remained closer to its original meaning in certain Psalms and by certain prophets but then certain texts use Zion to refer to a larger or different area of the city or even to the Israelites themselves. But also Zion represents much more than a place. In Amos 9:11, it mentioned the restoration of Zion which seems to refer to the time of David and the liturgical institution that operated at that time.

Now we turn to the narrative of 2 Kings 1-11. Millard discusses the information on Solomon according to the information provided within the text. The Temple pattern followed a long-established plan of a porch, main hall and sanctuary, with storerooms built against the outside walls with a surrounding courtyard. Other information establishes the size of the building. It was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide and thirty high. It seemed to have been roofed by a single span. The Holy of Holies was situated at the rear of the temple and had the shape of twenty cubits with an area of 40 cubits long in front of it. This description is general accepted by most people but the inside decorations are more problematic. But 2 Kings 14:20 mentions that the inner sanctuary was gilded. Hezekiah most likely stripped the gold from the Temple and doors at the time he had to pay tribute to Assyria. But it is obvious that at one time or more than one time, the walls were coated with gold. We only have to look at the tomb of Tutankhamen and the gold associated with it if there are any doubts of that presence of gold in those days. Esarhaddon, in restoring the shrine of Ashur, coated the walls with gold as if with plaster. Ashurbanipal did the same along with Nebuchadnezzar a century later. There are endless examples of great kings doing this. Solomon and kings of old used golden utensils of all kinds along with cups, bowls and dishes of gold. Golden tableware was the expected thing in the palace of a wealth monarch. In addition to that, often golden shields were hung in temples and palaces in the throne room which was also gold. Solomon was given tons of gold as gifts as far away as Seba while admittedly this were extravagant.

Solomon's court also needed basic food stuffs. It was divided into 12 different districts for the purpose of supplying this provision. This didn't necessarily include gold but instead items such as cattle, sheep, flour and meal on a daily basis for the basic support of the

government. This was very small compared to the like of Sargon of Akkad which amounted to over 5,000 people. At one time, Ashumasirpal II of Assyria held a ten day festival for nearly 70,000 people. The food supply for these include 100 fat oxen, 1,000 calves and sheep, 14,000 sheep, 200 more oxen, 1,000 more sheep and 1,000 spring lambs. There were also 10,000 loaves of bread with 10,000 jugs of beer and 10,000 skins of wine.

As you've seen, the Bible doesn't go into much visual detail of Solomon's buildings; however, other ancient temples provide us with some evidence on how their buildings were erected. The above presentation on Solomon and the court's needs along with the gold furnishing, one can only imagine how other temple and religious places were decorated. Other temple building consisted of three rooms, especially those at Megiddo and Hama which were looted and destroyed by Sargon II in 720 BC. The Megiddo structure was a basement connected to the palace. It appeared to have pieces of ivory and jewellery that belonged to a treasury. These two building can't be exactly compared to the Israeli temple as they were so different in purpose. The dimensions and proportions of the Hama building were very different to that of the Temple. The configuration of doorways of the Hama and Megiddo building were alike provided an entrance way on the side. Another type of temples classed as Broadroom Temples due to having large main rooms from Hama, Megiddo, Kition and Arad. The Kition temple/building was dedicated to Astarte and was similar to the temple of Aphrodite at Paphos. This was a 9th century BC Phoenician temple but did not resemble Solomon Temple. An interesting aspect of the temple of Astarte was its 'House of the Forest of Lebanon'. The roof was supported upon columns of four rows. The Arad temple had a likeness to that of the tabernacle except there were columns that appeared at the entrance with benches that set around the main room. Other buildings designated as Levantine broad room temples had cellas interior and were symmetrical in plan. They also contained large stairways. The building at Shechem seemed to have been a palace chapel which had two column bases symmetrically arranged in the main room. In the buildings of Hazor and Ras Shamra there were two columns bases at the entrance plus centrally located courtyard altars. The temples at Hazor and Alalkh had wooden beams in their brick walls which is said to be similar to the construction of the inner court and porch of Solomon's temple. The early phases of the Hazor temple revealed on a platform in front of it but in later phases an enclosed porch was included.

Another type of temple was name the Egyptian Influenced Broad room Temples. These were distinguished by certain Egyptian artefacts and architectural elements found in the ruins. The cella was a separate entity and was approached by a flight of stairs. The door ways were offset so that the cella could not be seen from outside the main room. The temples

from the Middle and New Kingdom excavated in Egypt at Ezbet Rushdi, Medinet Madi and Mit Rahineth all had cellas separated from the main hall. These buildings usually represented elements of a much larger complex. A contemporary temple at Lachish was similar to the Beth Shan temple to some degree. Two column bases revealed that the main hall was roofed. There was a large stone threshold found indicated the entrance into the main room. The temple antechamber was on the west side of the building unlike the one at Beth Shan. The religious and architectural principles of the Levantine Broad room temples are the opposite of Solomon's temple. The Obelisk Temple at Byblos had some of the characteristics of the Beth Shan while the Tell el Farah building resembled earlier Egyptian influenced temples. The temple at Lachish even though similar to Beth Shan Temple, the Beth Shan Temple represented a class of its own.

Longroom temples have an axial length is similar to Solomon's temple. One characteristic is the isolation of the god's image from the world. The number of rooms varies with none having stairways. But due to the thickness of the walls some may have been rather tall. Other temples, like Tell Mardikh, Mari and Tell Ta'yinat were built on platforms and usually located in prominent locations. The Long room temples at Mari, Tell Mardikh, Hazor and Tell Ta'yinat were connected to palaces which indicated a relationship to the power of the king. All Long room temples faced east. The Mamri temple was dedicated to the god Dagan and was built by a governor of the Ur III period. Northern Syrian long room temples were basic with no more rooms than necessary. There were 37 examples with 34 of them facing eastwards. The Levantine Broad room temples were generally found in the coastal areas and Palestine.

It is acknowledged that the archaeological and historical context of Jerusalem today doesn't leave much in terms of extra biblical from the days of Solomon nor for most sites in the Middle East. But it must be said that they have been endlessly picked over and looted and continuously built upon many times over again. Solomon's temple was destroyed and a new one built with Herod almost completely rebuilding the temple. The tombs of the kings of Egypt were looted again and again and only by accident they missed King Tutankhamen. But unlike the kings of Egypt, the kings of Israel haven't easily been found nor excavated if found. The least valuable thing to the looters were the clay tablets which were all left behind and unfortunately for archaeologist, the main writing source for Israel at the time was perishable papyrus. This is also a reason why there isn't much extra Biblical information readily available. Other reasons for a lack of documentation:

- a. The kingdoms of Assyrian and Babylon were in a state of decline during the tenth century BC.
- b. The Arameans were on the rise in Syria at the time.
- c. Tyre and other Phoenician cities would also have used papyrus scrolls.
- d. Reference from Egypt was also very sparse.

The Books of Kings, however, give us a rare account of the history of Israel and Judah from David's death until the fall of each Kingdom. Written in the third person it shows successes and failures of the people and the nation. It also shows their relationship to God and their rebellion to God. No other nation or people of that time left such a comprehensive narrative. Because of the scribe's devotion to the written word of God, they made sure that these records were maintained throughout history. Where most other nations rose, conquered and fell the Israelites continued must longer than any other nation within that timeframe and even after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. These texts can be traced back to the Dead Sea Scrolls of the time of Christ.

So we have the narrative of David and Solomon. We can reference any Bible on this and especially the NIV Archaeological Bible. We learn that as of yet there's very little extra Biblical evidence as to their existence except for the Bible. There were only a few temples that had any similarities to the Solomon's temple, but like very other capital and large cities, there were various buildings and palaces built by the ruling monarch. The palace at Jerusalem was no different than other royal building in some ways. They needed organization, food supplies and taxes just like other nations.

I guess the most staggering thing to imagine is the amount of gold used in Solomon's Temple. But an more more staggering point to consider is the amount of gold there would be in each and everyone of the temples and palaces there were in places like Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Messopotainia, and even further east at anyone time. Thank about the gold that would be represented in these places.

Interestingly, in spite of the evidence, Israel Finkelstein and Neil Siberman claim that there is no archaeological evidence to support the Bible narrative of the United Monarchy under David and Solomon. This is strange! There is evidence in the Bible and there is some extra Biblical evidence as well. But what about what the Bible says? I think the tablets of Ebla, Nineveh, Ur and a host of other cities also contain religious material that refer to this time.

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