

Why was David's plan to build the Temple prohibited by God?

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The passages dealing with the prohibition are 1 Chronicles chapters 17, 22 and 28. These passages indicate that revelation concerning this prohibition was given by the prophet Nathan after David's own palace in Jerusalem had been completed (17:1) and prior to the birth of Solomon (22:9). First Chronicles 17:1 appears to be virtually identical to the declaration recorded in 2 Samuel 7. Both 1 Chronicles 17 and 2 Samuel 7 give the same reasons for not allowing David to build the Temple. Neither one has any reference to the reasons that David was a man of war or bloodshed. Although both of these passages refers to a promised son of David, neither one says anything about what his name should be.

In 1 Chronicles 22:7-9, however, David reports that the reason for the prohibition was that he had "shed much blood" (a detail also highlighted in 28:3). He also told Solomon that God had told him that his son's name would be Solomon (v. 9). It is noteworthy that 2 Samuel 12:24-25 indicates that Solomon was born and named following the incident with Bathsheba—indeed, Bathsheba is Solomon's mother. Shortly after the birth of Solomon, the prophet Nathan is sent to David to tell him that Solomon is loved by God and is to be given the additional name, Jedidiah (v. 25).

With these things in mind, the following chronology is borne out by the chronological record in both 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles:

1. The capture of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:1-10; 1 Chr 11:4-9)
2. The building of the royal palace (2 Sam 5:11-12; 1 Chr 14:1-2)

3. The moving of the Ark (2 Sam 6; 1 Chr 15–16)
4. The giving of the Davidic Covenant and *revelation* that David would not build the Temple—this is not worded as a prohibition, but as a simple prophetic statement¹ (2 Sam 7; 1 Chr 17)
5. The adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12; 1 Chr 20:1-3)
6. The *prohibition* to build the Temple and the prophecy of the birth and name of Solomon (2 Sam 12:24-25; 1 Chr 22)

At the giving of the Davidic Covenant God provided *revelation* that David would not build the Temple. God gave only the theological and historical reasons without revealing any additional reasons that He knew would occur. “In fact, the Lord questioned the desirability of anyone building a permanent structure in which he might dwell—at least done so unbidden and at that point in time.”² Had God revealed all the reasons at that point, David would have known to avoid adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of Uriah.

Why wasn't the adultery mentioned? Why was only the bloodguilt mentioned? Instead of coming immediately to the Lord to confess his sin and plead for mercy, David exhibited his unrepentant and rebellious heart by immediately resorting to bloodshed in an attempt to cover his sin. The bloodshed was identified by the prophet Nathan because it was the evidence of David's bold and brash disobedience. It would have been

¹ J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, New American Commentary, 9 ([Nashville, Tenn.]: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 146. *Contra* J. Barton Payne, “1, 2 Chronicles,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. By Frank E. Gaebelin, 4:395 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Regency Reference Library/Zondervan Publishing House, 1988).

² Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, New American Commentary, 7 ([Nashville, Tenn.]: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 338.

indicate of the Chronicler, who had already avoided a number of touchy issues,³ to have written of the adultery—a reason for a complete omission of the details of 2 Samuel 12:1-23 from 1 Chronicles (cf. 20:1-3). Even the matter of the bloodshed is handled delicately, associating it with David's wars (which were conducted by divine direction) so that no condemnation of David would be recorded.⁴ Even at that, it could be argued that the prohibition was based upon "excessive violence."⁵

However, it is unnecessary to even go to such lengths. Nathan associated the slaying of Uriah ("You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword ... killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon," 2 Sam 12:9) with the sword that would "never depart from your house, because you have despised Me⁶ and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife" (v. 10). Here is the blood on David's hands—blood that is associated with his adultery and associated with despising God. This "sword" included, at minimum, "the deaths of Amnon (2 Sam 13:28–29), Absalom (2 Sam 18:14), and Adonijah (1 Kings 2:25), as well as Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam 15:1–18:33) and the rape of Tamar (2 Sam 13:14)."⁷

Many commentators point to the Chronicler's apparent portrayal of David and Solomon as the second Moses and Joshua.⁸ It must be remembered (and certainly the thought must have occurred to those reading the Chronicler) that Moses was denied entrance into the Promised Land because of his own disobedience and rebellion (Num

³ Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 35; Payne, 4:319-20.

⁴ Cf. Thompson, 165.

⁵ Payne, 4:11, who gives 2 Sam 8:2 as one example of such excess on David's part.

⁶ "David had made a mockery of the Ten Commandments, the central tenets of the Lord's covenantal relationship with Israel, by committing the dual sins of murder and adultery" (Bergen, 371).

⁷ Jay E. Smith, "Can Fallen Leaders Be Restored to Leadership?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151/604 (Oct 1994): 459.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:435; Selman, 30-31; Thompson, 165. See Raymond B. Dillard, "The Chronicler's Solomon," *Westminster Theological Journal* 43/2 (Spring 1981): 293-95.

27:12-14). As Moses had been denied entry because of sin, so also David was denied the privilege of building the Temple because of sin.⁹

So far, I have only cited arguments stemming from the chronological and historical records of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. The available evidence to argue the case that David's adultery was involved extends beyond the historical records. Consider the following pieces of circumstantial evidence that corroborate the association of adultery and bloodshed already observed in 2 Samuel 12:9-10 —

- Ezekiel associated adultery with bloody hands (23:37, 45), an indication of the close association of the two, just as in David's case.
- According to the Mosaic Law, an adulterer and adulteress were to be put to death (Lev 20:10). Adultery was a capital crime.
- Adultery and murder are closely related in the Ten Commandments by their placement one after the other (Exod 20:13-14; Mark 10:19; Rom 13:9; James 2:11).
- Solomon, the son of David, had observed the effects of adultery and described it clearly in Proverbs 6:32-33. The effects include self-destruction (speaking of personal demise, not suicide), wounds, dishonor, and disgrace—that “will not be blotted out.”
- Solomon also revealed that the adulteress (and, obviously, the adulterer) has forgotten God's covenant (Prov 2:17). Those who commit adultery do not “regain the paths of life” (v. 19). The honor that once belonged to the

⁹ *Contra* Selman, 215.

adulterer ends up being given to someone else (5:9). Solomon speaks from experience—the experience of his father, David.

- One of the reasons that God was going to bring a nation against Israel to destroy the Temple was the adulterous lifestyle of His people (Jer 5:1-17, esp. v. 7).
- Jeremiah also attributed falsehood to adulterous prophets and the resulting failure to contain crime and violence (23:14; cf. 29:23).

The Temple builder would certainly be required to meet the moral qualifications of a Levitical priest. With his adultery, David could not meet such qualifications (cf. Lev 21:7, 9; Ezek 44:22).¹⁰

In conclusion, the answer to the question with which this study is titled is that David was prohibited from building the Temple because of his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and the bloodshed that resulted from it.

¹⁰ Smith, 456-57.