

At the very center of Israel’s worship at the dedication of the temple are two things: the Word of God and prayer.

Last time we looked at the pattern of worship that Solomon followed in the dedication of the temple. Solomon follows the same pattern that Moses had used in Exodus 24 – as Moses had followed the pattern that he saw on the mountain.

Worship begins with Israel assembling and offering sacrifices before the LORD. As we saw last time, there is a close connection between the book of the covenant and the blood of the covenant. The book of the covenant (the Word of God) is what gives meaning and significance to the blood of the covenant (the sacrifice) but the blood of the covenant (the sacrifice) is what gives power and efficacy to the book of the covenant (the Word of God).

If Israel offers sacrifices *apart* from what God says to do in his Word, their sacrifices will be idolatrous (think of the golden calf in the wilderness); and if Israel only hears the Word, but offers no sacrifices, then the Law will only condemn them (think of the first giving of the Law in Ex 20, where the people cringe with fear at hearing the Word of God.)

As Hebrews concludes, “without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.”

And just as the glory of God had left the mountain and filled the tabernacle in Moses’ day, so also the glory of God fills the temple in Solomon’s day.

Because the whole *point* of this connection between the book of the covenant and the blood of the covenant is that God might dwell with his people!

1. The Word of God: The LORD Has Done What He Promised to David (6:1-11)

a. The LORD’s Exalted House and the Blessing of Israel (6:1-4)

¹ Then Solomon said, “The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. ²But I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.”

Solomon opens his sermon with a reference to Exodus 20:21.

“The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.”

The idea of “thick darkness” may sound a little strange, How can darkness be “thick”? Ordinary darkness is just “dark.” Thick darkness is a darkness that can be felt – a darkness that touches the soul as well as the body.

The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness.
Thick darkness veils the glory of God –
protecting humanity from the radiance of his holiness
that would destroy anyone who is impure.

And now Solomon's temple will accomplish that same purpose.
Thick stone walls encase the glorious gold-plated sanctuary.

³*Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood.* ⁴*And he said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying,*

It is quite likely that Solomon's sermon was considerably longer than this summary,
but it is clear that the sermon focuses upon what God has said
and what He has done in redeeming his people.

Solomon focuses on what God has done in history.

God has been faithful to his promises, and has accomplished all that he had said.

He has given his people a place where they may worship him;
and he has given them a king who will lead them in his ways.

This is the language of Land and Seed.

The promise of the Land has been narrowed down to Jerusalem and the temple
The promise of the Seed has been narrowed down to the Son of David

You see this in two different ways:

In verses 5-6 we hear about what God did in the last generation:
how God has chosen Jerusalem and David.

In verses 7-11 we hear about the next step in this generation:
how God has chosen Solomon and the temple.

b. The People and the Land: Jerusalem and David (6:5-6)

⁵*'Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there, and I chose no man as prince over my people Israel; ⁶ but I have chosen Jerusalem that my name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.'*

Solomon says that this is a key moment in redemptive history.

God had placed Adam in the Garden of Eden –
the Son of God in the Temple of God.

When Adam failed, God banished him from the Garden.

All of human history since that day has been a quest to get back to the Garden.

God promised Abraham three things:

the land, the seed, and the blessing to the nations –
that through Abraham all nations would be blessed.

The first step of the fulfillment of that promise came in the days of Moses,
when God called Israel, his firstborn son, out of Egypt,
and brought him into the promised Land (through Joshua),
and God was present with Israel by his Holy Spirit in the tabernacle.

But Israel (like Adam) failed to walk in holiness before God.
And so the ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines –
and the priests of Shiloh (Eli, Hophni and Phineas) all died on a single day.

Solomon does not go into all the historical background here.
But you can see a sort of “narrowing” focus in the pattern:
in the days of Moses and Joshua,
it was the people of Israel as the son of God
dwelling the Promised Land;
now in the days of David and Solomon,
it is the King as the son of God
who dwells in the City of God – Jerusalem.

And, likewise,
God’s dwelling place goes from the movable tent – the tabernacle,
to the fixed house – the temple.

c. The House and the Son: Solomon and the Temple (6:7-11)

⁷ Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁸ But the LORD said to David my father, 'Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart. ⁹ Nevertheless, it is not you who shall build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.' ¹⁰ Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹¹ And there I have set the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with the people of Israel."

But we should not overstate the diversity of this covenant setting.
After all, the ark of the covenant provides clear continuity:
“there I have set the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD
that he made with the people of Israel.”

Of course, we must remember that the Chronicler writes this
after the Exile – after the Restoration from Exile.

Israel has been living in the land for two hundred years – without the Son of David –
with a restored temple – but without the glory of the LORD filling the sanctuary.

The Chronicler wants you to remember God’s promises –
because *you* are living in a time when God *has fulfilled* some of his promises,
but has *not yet fulfilled* all of his promises.

Because in Christ, God has narrowed all things down to one man and one place:
Jesus, the son of David, the seed of the Woman, the Son of God,
who has entered the heavenly holy of holies –
the temple made without hands.

And because he is the fulfillment of all of God's promises,
therefore, in Jesus, the fulfillment of God's promises
explode out to *all* peoples and *all* places.

God has given YOU the heavenly Jerusalem as your home,
a city that shall not be moved.
And David's glorious son--Jesus Christ--is the great king
who will go before you to destroy your enemies and lead you home.

And now, the Spirit of God dwells in his holy house –
the renewed and gloriously expanded temple: the church!

Then Solomon prays and asks God to continue to do what he has promised.

2. Solomon's Prayer: Now Continue to Do What You Have Promised (6:12-7:3)

a. The Place and Posture of Prayer (6:12-13)

¹²Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. ¹³Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits^[b] long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the court, and he stood on it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven,

Notice the *place* of prayer.

“before the altar” – the prayers of the saints are *grounded* (literally) in the sacrifice;
“in the presence of all the assembly” – this is not some private prayer,
but it is the prayer of the people of God!

Verse 13 then tells us about the size of the platform.

Why is the size of this bronze platform relevant?

Because five cubits wide, five cubits long, and three cubits high
is precisely the measurements of the *altar* in Moses' tabernacle!

Moses' *altar* – the bronze altar for burnt offerings –
is the same size as Solomon's platform for prayer.

Solomon's altar is 20 x 20 x 10 (about the size of this room!).

We saw a couple weeks ago that Solomon's altar was the same size
as the Most Holy Place (except only half as high).

What happens at the altar is intimately connected with what happens in the sanctuary.

Now we see that Solomon has a bronze platform
made precisely the same size as the bronze altar of the old tabernacle –
connecting the prayers of the saints with the altar.

One comment about posture:

Verse 12 says that he stands with his hands outspread,
and verse 13 says that he then knelt with his hands outspread.
Solomon humbled himself before all Israel.
The people, it would appear, are still standing.
But now they are standing while their king kneels before them,
and prays for them.

And what a prayer it is!

b. You Have Shown Steadfast Love to David (6:14-15)

¹⁴and said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ¹⁵who have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day.

Notice that Solomon's prayer begins with who God is.

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

Prayer rightly begins with acknowledging the one to whom we pray.
We come to the living God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
because he alone shows steadfast love to his children.

Verse 16, then, is the transition from thanking God for doing what he has promised,
to praying that God would continue to do what he has promised.

He sees that while the kingdom has come – he sits on his father's throne –
he still must pray for the kingdom to come,

c. Now Do What You Have Promised (6:16-17)

¹⁶Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk in my law as you have walked before me.'

¹⁷Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David.

d. God's Dwelling Place and the Prayers of the Temple (6:18-40)

¹⁸"But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built! ¹⁹Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you, ²⁰that your eyes may be open day and night toward this house, the place where you have promised to set your name, that you may listen to the prayer that your

servant offers toward this place. ²¹And listen to the pleas of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen from heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

Have you ever noticed that Solomon's prayer is focused on his own mediation?

His first petition is *not* that God will hear "his servants"

but "his servant" – Solomon, or better, the Son of David. (verses 19-21)

O God, hear the Son of David when he prays toward this place.

Praying toward the temple is important.

Think of it this way:

God dwells in heaven,

but he has promised to hear prayers that are made "toward this place."

Whose prayers?

The prayers of the Son of David.

The prayers of the anointed King.

And yes, as verse 21 says, "and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place."

But as God has made clear in the book of Samuel,

his purposes for Israel are focused upon David.

Israel had failed to live as the kingdom of God.

And so God called David to succeed where Israel failed.

If the Davidic kings are faithful, then God's blessing will come upon Israel.

But you know the story!

How did they do?

Not so good...

A thousand years later,

when John the Baptist declares, "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"

he is announcing that everything promised to Israel in the OT is about to happen.

The universal reign of Yahweh is at hand.

And the coming of the kingdom is seen in its full light as "the coming of God himself as king."

And this is what happens when Jesus announces that the kingdom of God is in your midst

The King himself has come.

And now God has elevated Jesus to his right hand.

We're not talking about an earthly shadow anymore.

The Son of David is now sitting at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly temple.

This means above all else, that God will hear Jesus when Jesus prays on our behalf.

This is no excuse for our lousy practice of prayer!

But it is a great comfort that we have an Advocate with the Father,

even Jesus Christ the righteous.

Solomon's prayer provides a kingdom perspective on life.

Think of all the situations of life.

It may be that one man sins against his neighbor (v22-23)
or that Israel is defeated by their enemies (v24-25)

It may be a drought, famine, or pestilence (v26-31),
but whatever is the case,
the answer will be found at God's throne in heaven.

It is when God hears from heaven that he brings resolution to all earth's woes.

Do you believe that?

I know that we say we believe that,
but what does your prayer life say?

Too often we take our situation as the center of what is happening in the universe,
and we expect God to fit into "our" universe.

Whenever someone starts griping about God,
you can be certain that their basic problem
is that they have put themselves at the center of the universe.

(Notice that I said "griping about God!")

We are to speak honestly to God –

we may even bring our complaints to him!

But you may not grumble and murmur against him.

The difference is one of your basic orientation:

are you thinking of yourself as the center of the universe?

or are you acknowledging *him* as the center of the universe!)

Solomon sees all the situations of life in light of heaven:

"if your people are defeated"; "when there is no rain"; if your people sin...

He takes everyday situations and sees them in the light of God's Word.

Your life is not the center of the universe.

Modernism says that man is at the center,

and all things need to be applied to him.

The Word of God says that Christ is at the center,

and all things need to be applied to him.

Do you understand what that does?

When you are struggling with something in life,

don't ask, "how does Scripture apply to my situation?"

That's the wrong question--that suggests that you are at the center.

Rather, ask this:

"how does my situation fit into Scripture?"

"how does what I face relate to what God has said and he has done?"

Your life needs to be reinterpreted in the light of Christ.
Your life only makes sense, if it is seen within the context of heaven.
So Solomon makes heaven the center of his prayer.

Let's think just briefly about the situations of verses 22-40:

i. If a Man Sins (6:22-23)

²²*"If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house, ²³then hear from heaven and act and judge your servants, repaying the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.*

Verses 22-23 have to do with interpersonal conflict.

The place to resolve disputes between Christians is the temple.

There were courts in Israel for adjudicating disputes,
but if there was insufficient evidence to convict one party,
then the two parties would come to the temple
and swear an oath of innocence.

The idea is that *God* would vindicate the righteous and punish the wicked.

Yes, certainly the elders are here to help adjudicate disputes in the church.

But ultimately, if we cannot resolve your dispute,
then we ask God to make it right – either in this life or in the end,
at the final judgment.

ii. If Israel Is Defeated (6:24-25)

²⁴*"If your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and they turn again and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house, ²⁵then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them again to the land that you gave to them and to their fathers.*

Verses 24-25 then turn to the big picture.

It's not just individual sins –
but when 'your people Israel' are defeated because of their sins –
and then they repent and acknowledge the name of the LORD,
"then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel."

There are corporate sins – there are ways in which we sin as a body –
structural sin in the life of the church – and of the community.

Think about how both Old and New Testaments talk about "righteousness"
as the way in which the community is ordered.

When the church is disordered, then we need to pray
and ask God to hear, to forgive, and to heal us.

iii. When There Is No Rain (6:26-27)

²⁶ "When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict^[c] them, ²⁷ then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way^[d] in which they should walk, and grant rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

Verses 26-27 then deal with drought.

God had given Israel the land "as an inheritance."

God had said in Deuteronomy that he would give rain as a blessing –
and drought as a curse.

So when drought comes upon Israel, that is possibly because of Israel's sin.

(I say "possibly" because there might be other reasons for drought
in Israel's history).

In the story of Elijah we hear of a three year drought that came
as a part of God's curse against Israel.

And when Elijah prayed,
God sent rain.

iv. If There Is Famine or Pestilence – or Any Affliction (6:28-31)

²⁸ "If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemies besiege them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, ²⁹ whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing his own affliction and his own sorrow and stretching out his hands toward this house, ³⁰ then hear from heaven your dwelling place and forgive and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways, for you, you only, know the hearts of the children of mankind, ³¹ that they may fear you and walk in your ways all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers.

Indeed, Solomon then extends this in verses 28-31 to famine, pestilence,
blight, mildew, locust, or *any* sickness, plague, or affliction.

All the afflictions of the children of mankind are fair game before the throne of heaven.

Note in verse 29 that "whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel" –
while Solomon *starts* with the Davidic king –
he emphasizes that *all God's people* are welcome and encouraged
to pray to the temple –
to stretch out his hands toward this house.

And since Jesus *is* the new temple,

therefore you are to stretch out your hands to our Lord Jesus Christ –
the one who is the Son of David, our prophet priest and king –
the place where earth and heaven meet.

v. When a Foreigner Prays (6:32-33)

³² "Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for the

sake of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm, when he comes and prays toward this house, ³³hear from 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.

Then, in verses 32-33, Solomon prays
that God would hear the foreigner who comes and prays toward this house.

After all, the point of God's blessing of Abraham was that through his seed
all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Solomon understood that the point of the temple was not just for Israel.

He prays that through this temple,
all the peoples of the earth would come to know the name of the LORD and fear him.

We continue to pray this.

And as we *are* a holy temple – a holy dwelling place for the Spirit –
we are to be a place where the nations might come and worship the Lord.

vi. If Your People Go to Battle (6:34-35)

³⁴"If your people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to you toward this city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ³⁵then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause.

And then, having mentioned the nations,
he then prays in verses 34-35 for God's protection when Israel goes to battle.

Notice that Solomon does not pray for every battle –
but for when "you shall send them."

If God has not sent them into battle,
then they should not expect him to maintain their cause!

vii. If They Sin Against You and Are Carried Away Captive (6:36-39)

³⁶"If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to a land far or near, ³⁷yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,' ³⁸if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their captivity to which they were carried captive, and pray toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ³⁹then hear from heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their pleas, and maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

Verses 36-39 then deal with the ultimate sin –

when Israel sins and are carried away captive.
This is not just one defeat (as earlier).
This is the ultimate defeat – because now there is no one left to pray in the temple!

But, Solomon asks, if they repent with all their heart and with all their mind,
“and pray toward their land, which you gave to their fathers,
the city that you have chosen,
and the house that I have built for your name...”

Wait!
What if there is no house!
After all, when the exile happened,
the temple was destroyed!

This is perhaps one of the clearest statements that the physical existence of the temple points beyond itself to the heavenly dwelling place of God.

e. Now Arise, O LORD God, and Go to Your Resting Place (6:40-42)

⁴⁰*Now, O my God, let your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayer of this place.*

⁴¹*“And now arise, O LORD God, and go to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.*

*Let your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation,
and let your saints rejoice in your goodness.*

⁴²*O LORD God, do not turn away the face of your anointed one!
Remember your steadfast love for David your servant.”*

Solomon then concludes his prayer by echoing Psalm 132.
Psalm 132 is all about David’s desire to build the temple –
and God’s promise to set David’s son on the throne.

Verses 8-10 say,
“Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.
Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,
and let your saints shout for joy.
For the sake of your servant David,
do not turn away the face of your anointed one.”

Whether Psalm 132 borrowed from Solomon’s prayer,
or whether Solomon was quoting
from a song written for the dedication of the temple,
the key is to see the connection.

Solomon asks God to be faithful to his promises –
to do what the LORD had said he would do for David.

f. Fire from Heaven: the Glory of the LORD Fills the House (7:1-2)

¹ *As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.* ²*And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house.*

When Solomon finishes his prayer,
fire comes down from heaven and consumes the burnt offering and the sacrifices,
and the glory of the Lord fills the temple.

This happens every Sunday!

Pretty cool, eh?

I bet you never thought of it that way before!

But when you offer up your prayers before the throne of God,

God hears them, and answers them by his Holy Spirit.

After all,

this glory cloud that fills the temple, and this fire that burns up the offerings,
is nothing other than the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, after all, is the member of the Holy Trinity
who applies the work of redemption to his people.

He is the one who comes and dwells in the temple.

He cannot yet be poured out upon the people,
because Christ has not yet come.

But on the Day of Pentecost,

fire was poured out upon the Church.

On the Day of Pentecost,

the Church was baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire.

And every Lord's Day, as you gather together,

and as your prayers ascend to heaven,
as sweet incense comes before the throne;

God hears them and answers by his Holy Spirit.

After all, the Spirit dwells with glory in the temple,
and YOU ARE the temple of the Holy Spirit.

And then, as soon as Solomon finished his prayer,

fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices,
and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

g. Response of the People (7:3)

³*When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."*

And when the people saw it, they replied

by giving thanks to the LORD, saying,

“For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

We may not always have the glory of the LORD visibly poured out before us –

but we have God's promise that he will give his Spirit to those who ask –

and so when we pray, we may have confidence that God does what he promises!