

2 Chronicles 7 sets up the rest of the book of Chronicles.

You can hear the words of the LORD to Solomon
 echo through the rest of the Chronicler’s pages.
 If Solomon walks before God as David did,
 then God will establish the royal line of Solomon.
 But if Solomon’s sons rebel,
 then God will bring disaster on them!

But all of this needs to be seen in the light of the dedication of the temple –
 in the light of the feast – the covenant meal –
 which preceded it.

1. The Covenant Meal (7:4-10)

a. Offering Sacrifices before the LORD (7:4-7)

⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the LORD. ⁵ King Solomon offered as a sacrifice 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. ⁶ The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the LORD that King David had made for giving thanks to the LORD— for his steadfast love endures forever—whenever David offered praises by their ministry;^[e] opposite them the priests sounded trumpets, and all Israel stood.

⁷ And Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD, for there he offered the burnt offering and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar Solomon had made could not hold the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat.

Tonight we turn to the final part of Solomon’s worship service.

In chapter 5 we saw the opening of worship –
 coming into the presence of God through the sacrifice;
 in chapter 6 we saw the center of worship –
 hearing the Word of God and responding with prayers and praises;
 now in chapter 7 we see the conclusion of worship –
 partaking of the covenant meal.

In chapter 5 we heard that Solomon was sacrificing so many sheep and oxen
 that they could not be counted or numbered.

Now we hear the number:

22 thousand oxen and 120 thousand sheep.

If you think about the size of Solomon’s altar –
 about the size of this room –
 then you can appreciate how long it would take to offer
 the fat of 142 thousand animals on it.

And think of how long it would take to slaughter and drain so many animals –
and how long it would take to cook the meat –
and how many people would have been busy *all day* doing all this!

Have you ever been to a slaughterhouse?

Think of the sights and sounds and smells of that day!

All day long the sounds of
hundreds of oxen bellowing as they are brought to the slaughter –
thousands of sheep bleating as they watch their fellows die...

The blood of a 142 thousand sheep and oxen flowing like a river out of the temple!
(that's around 175 thousand gallons of blood!)
(that's enough to fill *three* Olympic sized swimming pools!)

Then you have the smell of burning flesh and fat –
with the acrid smoke rising from the altar – as well as the center of the court.

There are good smells as well – as the meat is cooking in the corners of the courtyard,
and *maybe* you could catch a whiff of the incense coming out of the temple itself.

But the sights and sounds and smells of that day
would overwhelmingly have been the sights and sounds and smells of death.

At least 142 thousands animals died that day (not including all the burnt offerings!).

You can easily imagine a young Israelite boy that day asking his father,
“Why do the animals have to die? What did they do?”

And for generations fathers would tell their sons:

God created Adam as the head of creation –
and so because of Adam's sin,
all of creation has been subjected to futility.

God cursed the ground because of us.

Yes, we are stewards of this creation,
but more often than not, our stewardship has resulted in destruction.

When God clothed Adam and Eve after their first sin,
he clothed them in the skins of the first sacrifice.

The bleats and bellows that you hear, my son,
are the groanings of the creation, longing for redemption –
longing for the revelation of the sons of God.

But it was on this very spot, my son,
where we saw a strange sight.

It was here on this mountain
that the God of our fathers called Abraham to offer his son as a burnt offering.

“I know the story, father!

That was when Isaac asked his father, “where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

And Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering.”

And when Abraham tried to offer Isaac on the altar,

the angel of the LORD stopped him, and provided a ram for the burnt offering.”

Yes, my son, I am glad you know that story well –

because here, on this mountain, the LORD has promised to provide the offering –
the lamb that takes away our sin.

“Then why do we keep bringing all these animals for burnt offerings and sacrifices?”

Because until that day, Yahweh has commanded us to do this

in remembrance of his covenant with our fathers,

and the redemption that he wrought in the Exodus,

and in anticipation of the day when he will make all things right.

It is clear that something more is needed.

I have often wondered what God was saying to Abraham on this mountain.

There is something about the son of God that we do not know.

Yahweh said that Israel is his son – his firstborn.

If God called Abraham to offer his firstborn son as a burnt offering,

what does that mean for Israel?

But how would it benefit the nations?

How would it benefit the creation?

Israel needs all this blood to cleanse us from *our* sins.

How could the death of Israel atone for humanity – and restore creation –
unless, somehow, Yahweh himself could take our flesh...

b. “The Feast” [of Tabernacles] and the Joy of Israel (7:8-10)

⁸*At that time Solomon held the feast for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt. ⁹And on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, for they had kept the dedication of the altar seven days and the feast seven days. ¹⁰On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their homes, joyful and glad of heart for the prosperity that the LORD had granted to David and to Solomon and to Israel his people.*

In verses 8-10 we hear that the feast was the Feast of Tabernacles –
the feast of the seventh month.

In the OT there were three main feasts:

the Feast of Unleavened Bread (or Passover), which lasts for seven days,

the Feast of Pentecost, which completes Passover on the fiftieth day –

the day after the 7th Sabbath after Passover
(in other words Pentecost is always on a Sunday).
and the Feast of Tabernacles in the 7th month,
which is also a seven day feast,
with sacred assemblies on the first day and on the eighth day of the feast.

The weekly pattern of the Old Testament established the importance of the seventh day –
the Sabbath (Saturday) –
but the *feasts* of Israel – the occasions where all Israel gathered for worship –
highlighted the *first* day, the *eighth day* – or the *fiftieth* day –
all pointing to the fact that the seventh day (Sabbath) is not enough.

We need a day beyond the seventh day.

The Seventh Day is good – it was blessed by God and sanctified,
because on it he rested from all his work –
on the Sabbath day, the LORD entered his rest.

But ever since the fall, the Sabbath day (Saturday) has been a reminder
of the unending cycle of insufficiency, death, and falling short of God’s glory.
Because God has sworn in his wrath,
“they never shall enter my rest.”

All the created things in the universe cannot bring humanity into God’s rest!
Not all the blood of bulls and goats –
not all the seventh days in the world!

There must be an eighth day.
There must be a day beyond all the created days of this age.

And so Israel was called to worship on the eighth day – the fiftieth day –
the first day of the new creation!

While it’s true that the priests in the temple would partake of the covenant meal everyday,
the worshipers – the ordinary Israelites – would only partake of the covenant meal
on the festal days.

And this is why the sacrifices in Solomon’s day were truly a joyful thing!

Burnt offerings (where the whole animal was burned)
demonstrated the penalty that sin deserves.
But peace offerings (sacrifices) include the aspect of rejoicing.
Because in the peace offering
the death of the animal results in life and joy for the worshiper.
The fat is offered to God,
and the worshipers partake of the flesh of the animal,
thereby being strengthened through the death of a substitute.

The peace offering – the sacrifice – expresses the peace that exists between earth and heaven on the basis of the sacrifice.

In Acts 20:7, we hear of the church of Troas:

“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them...”

Notice how this is put.

The meeting of the church is called “coming together to break bread.”

How many of us would describe our worship in these terms?

The sermon is important—but the meeting itself is described in terms of breaking bread.

Christian worship is described in the New Testament in terms of the people of God now gathering in the new creation – on the first day of the week – the Lord’s Day.

In the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God has entered into the heavenly Holy of Holies, and in him, we have access to God as a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

The creation, however, still awaits the revelation of the sons of God, because while the heavens have received the resurrected Son, earth still awaits him.

But this is where the Lord’s Supper becomes a sacrament that speaks to the whole of creation.

In the Lord’s Supper our Savior took the basic elements of human sustenance – bread and wine – and he blessed them.

In blessing bread and wine and using them as signs and seals of his body and blood, Jesus has begun to claim the creation as his own.

I like how Alexander Schmemmann puts it,

“The Eucharist has so often been explained with reference to the gifts alone: what “happens” to bread and wine, and why, and when it happens!

But we must understand that what “happens” to bread and wine happens because something has, first of all, happened to us, to the Church.

It is because we have “constituted” the Church, and this means we have followed Christ in his ascension;

because He has accepted us at His table in His Kingdom; because, in terms of theology, we have entered the Eschaton, and are now standing beyond time and space;

it is because all this has first happened to us that something will happen to bread and wine.” (37)

Jesus has fulfilled all that Solomon pointed towards.

Now, *this* – the whole liturgy –
including how Israel came into the presence of God
through the offering of burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings,
including the proclamation of God’s Word and the prayers of the people,
including the feast – the covenant meal –
is the context for Yahweh’s reply to Solomon.

2. The LORD’s Reply: the Two Ways (7:11-22)

a. The Way of Life: Humble Yourself and Repent (v11-18)

¹¹ *Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king’s house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished.*

Verse 11 shows us how interconnected the LORD’s house and the king’s house are.
Chronicles doesn’t tell us much about the king’s house.

The book of Kings tells us that it was patterned after the temple,
so that you could see how the Son of David was indeed the son of God.
All we are told here is that Solomon successfully completed his plans.

Even as God is the one who does what he promises,
so Solomon, the son of God, fulfills all his plans as well!

But verse 12 emphasizes the importance of the temple as “a house of sacrifice.”

¹²*Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice.*

A house of sacrifice is not merely a house for burnt offering (a house for dealing with sin),
but a house *of sacrifice* (peace offerings) –
that express fellowship and communion between earth and heaven.

Even as Acts 20 describes Christian worship as “breaking bread together”
so also the LORD himself described the temple
as a “house of sacrifice” –
the place where he would have fellowship with his people.

Now I want you to listen carefully to what God says to Solomon in verses 13-16,
as he describes the way of life.

Listen for how important the temple is in the way of life:

¹³ *When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. ¹⁶ For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.*

Notice how essential the temple is to the LORD's answer to Solomon.

"My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place."

(Now, it is true that Solomon had asked God to hear the prayers made *toward* the temple, not just *in* the temple – so we may assume that God includes those prayers in his answer as well).

But God's point is that *he* has chosen and consecrated this house.

"My eyes and my heart will be there for all time."

I don't think that I need to spend a whole lot of time on the "forever" point.

After all, Jesus did not say that place is now irrelevant.

What he said is that *he* is the temple!

Destroy this temple and I will raise it in three days.

God's words to Solomon remain in force:

God's eyes are still open and his ears are still attentive to the prayer made in his temple, because his eyes and heart are set forever on his Son!

When you think of it this way,

then you can see how the Temple and the King come together in verses 17-18,

¹⁷And as for you, if you will walk before me as David your father walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my rules, ¹⁸then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to rule Israel.'

The "you" here in verses 17-18 is singular.

If *Solomon* is faithful, then God will establish his royal throne – then *Solomon* will be the one who inherits the promise to David.

God's promise to David regarding the Son on God's throne – and God's promise to Solomon regarding the Temple – both come together in Jesus.

This is crucial for understanding how we should apply this today.

You may have heard some people use God's promise to Solomon to say that if America will repent, then God will heal this land and make it great.

But what is the *land* to which the promise applies?

If Jesus is the Son who sits on God's throne, and if Jesus is the Temple to which God's eyes and ears are attentive, then the "Land" that God will heal and make great

can be nothing else but the whole earth – the New Creation.

Think back to Solomon's prayer:

the land that you gave to them and to their fathers –
we have no promise that America belongs to us and our children!

What is the land that we inherit?

Paul shows us in Rom 4:11 that the promise of the Land
has been extended to the whole earth

Likewise, in Ephesians 6,

Paul says that the promise attached to the fifth commandment
(honor your father and your mother,
that your days may be long in the land
which the Lord your God gives you)
now applies generally to all Christians,
but without a specific piece of real estate.

So when Solomon speaks of Israel,
we need to think of the Church.

And when Solomon speaks of the land,
we need to think of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

After all,

our citizenship is not of this world, but is of the age to come.
our hope is not that America would become great,
our hope is that God will bring all godless nations to ruin,
and establish the kingdom of His Son.

So what should *we* do when there is a drought?

No nation today has a special covenantal relationship with God.

But drought *is* still a curse from God.

There may be all sorts of natural reasons why a drought comes,
but ultimately, there would be no droughts if it was not for man's sin!

Even as the rain is evidence of God's "common grace,"
so also drought is evidence of God's "common wrath."

The prophets spoke of how these external curses pointed towards internal problems –
and so Amos will speak of the "famine of hearing the word of the Lord."

And so when there is a drought,
the church should pray that God would have mercy,
and bring rivers of living water to the parched ground of the nations.

There is nothing wrong with praying that God will send rain from heaven!

That's fine, too!

But we should pray that God's *manner* of sending rain

will result in the conversion of the nations to himself!

“But” –
there is a “but” to God’s response to Solomon.

There are, after all, *two* ways.
The Way of Life and the way of death.

Notice how God’s covenant with David is both unconditional and conditional.
God will be faithful to David –
he will do what he has promised for David –
but that does not mean that any particular son of David will receive the throne!

Because in verse 19, the you turns to the *plural*.
If you plural turn aside – if Solomon’s heirs turn aside...

A Davidic king who does not walk like David
will not receive blessing from the LORD.

And this is our final point tonight:

b. The Way of Disaster: “They Abandoned the LORD” (v19-22)

¹⁹ "But if you^[b] turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them,²⁰ then I will pluck you^[c] up from my land that I have given you, and this house that I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples.²¹ And at this house, which was exalted, everyone passing by will be astonished and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?'²² Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore he has brought all this disaster on them.'"

God warns that exile will be the result if Solomon or his sons rebel.
I have called this “the way of disaster,”
but it is worth noting that the Hebrew word translated “disaster”
is simply the word elsewhere translated “evil.”

Because they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers,
he has brought “all this evil on them.”

Some people struggle with this.
Does God bring evil to people?
In a word, “yes”!

Because of sin, all humanity deserves death.
And God uses “disasters” (evils – bad things) to remind us of what sin deserves.

In the beginning, Adam's first sin was to listen to the voice of another god,
and turn away from the LORD.

In the days of Moses – and again in the days of the Judges –
Israel has already abandoned Yahweh to follow other gods.

Now the house of David is called to succeed where Israel failed.

The rest of the book of Chronicles will chronicle the successes and failures of Solomon's heirs.
God will be faithful to the house of David –
God will be faithful to the heirs of Solomon –
to bring it to the present,
God will be faithful to Jesus!

Because in Jesus, God himself has come in the flesh.
The eternal Son of God took our form – came in the likeness of sinful flesh,
and as a sin offering –
so that he might succeed where Adam had failed,
where Israel had failed,
where the sons of David had failed.

But the fact that “Jesus paid it all” does not mean that you can do whatever you feel like doing!

If you abandon the LORD,
if you turn away from the Lord Jesus Christ,
and if you reject his sacrifice and offering of himself once for all upon the cross,
then God will bring disaster on you!

But if you pray toward the temple –
if you come to Jesus, the one who sits at God's right hand,
then God will have mercy on you!

If you confess your sins,
He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins
and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness!

This is what our worship is all about:
this is the gospel that we receive in the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ
the gospel that we receive in the preaching of the Word
the gospel that we receive in partaking of the Lord's Supper.

In Jesus the Son of God, the Son of David
has also become the temple of Solomon –
the place where earth and heaven meet.

And so as we have been united to him,
we are being built together into a holy temple for the Lord.