

# When God Shows Up

*3-Year Bible Reading Plan*

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles back in the Old Testament to the book of 1 Kings 8. For those of you that may be new or guests with us, we are systematically as a body of believers walking through the Scriptures about a chapter a day in particular right now it's about two chapters a day as we work through 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles, and for those of you that thought Leviticus was going to be bad, welcome to 1 Kings.

No, on a serious note, as we begin to read this section of the Scripture, there's a lot of names we can't pronounce, a lot of places we've never heard of, but as we walk through what seems like the mundane, what we see today is the profound. Is that not a testimony to life? Most of life is a process of walking through the mundane and then all of a sudden something incredible happens. Such is the case here in 1 Kings 8 and before we go to this passage, allow me to share the obvious. I know that from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, that you see God moving and flowing through every situation, every story, and every passage, but we must agree that there are some places that he just seems to manifest himself more than others. Allow me to give you an example. In the book of Esther, did you know in that incredible story that we love to celebrate about God's faithfulness and his provision and his providence, did you know the name "God" is never even used in the passage? It's the story of him working behind the scenes.

Today as we come to 1 Kings 8 we're gonna see what does it look like when God shows upon the platform, what does it look like in our personal lives, what does it look like in our corporate lives when God shows up. Now hear me clearly: he's always there, he's always present, but there are times where God just really manifests and shows up, and I hope that today you would say, "I wish that would happen in my life." I hope today in your individual life, your family's life and even in our church life, you would say, "I wish that God would just show up in an incredible way." You say, "Well, why doesn't it happen more regularly?" We're about to see in 1 Kings 8 the reason I believe it doesn't happen more regularly is because it rarely if ever happens the way that we like it to happen, it happens the way that he prescribes it to happen, and oftentimes it is our own frailties that prevent it from happening.

1 Kings 8, beginning in verse 1 it says,

1 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. 2 And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim [or October], which is the seventh month. 3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4 And they brought up the ark of the LORD, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up. 5 And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. 6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. 7 For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 8 And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day. 9 There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

Please pay attention to the next two verses.

10 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11 So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.

Let me put that in today's terms: they showed up to church and the glory and the presence of the Lord was so thick that they had to stay in the parking lot. That's enough to make a Baptist mad, isn't it? Because what we see in this passage is that more often than not when God shows up, he does so not on our terms but his.

So what does it look like, what does it look like when God shows up? Now this can be corporate as a church body, this can be individual in your prayer closet, what does it look like when God shows up? Notice the first thing that happens here in verse 10 and 11, that the presence of God, that the Spirit of God moves. You know, when we talk about the Spirit of God, that makes all Baptists get a little nervous, Pentecostals love it but we get scared. You say, "Why do we get nervous about the Spirit of God?" Because Jesus in John 3 when he was talking to Nicodemus said that we must be born again, that we must be born of the Spirit, and the Spirit is like the wind, it moves where it desires to move, you can't tell where it's coming from and you can't tell where it's going. The problem with wind is we feel its effects but we cannot predict nor can we observe its movement and

that's the struggle that we have, because when God shows up and he manifests in our lives, rarely if ever is it on our calendar and/or our spreadsheet.

Now my wife will testify to you that one of my great, shall I say, I don't want to use the word "fears" but one of my very much dislikes in this world is wind. I don't like wind. She laughs at me. She makes fun of me because anytime one of these storms rolls through, I'm up all night long. You say, "Well, why is that?" I don't want to blame it on something but when I was five years old, I lived through a horrific tornado experience in the community where I'm from. It's one of those places where rooftops of schools come flying off and you duck and cover and what you were being covered by is no longer there, and I don't know if that's kind of the seed of all that but it's just always made me real nervous around wind. You know, when it comes the manifestation of God in our lives, it makes us nervous because we're no longer in control, we're no longer able to dictate this day and this time and in this manner.

You know, I mentioned that tornado event and our community about a year ago suffered great property and loss of life. I don't want to belabor and speak to all of the emotions of what we've experienced over the last year but we saw last year what we see at many of those events where high winds come through. You know, it's funny about a tornado, you can't really predict where it's going, can you? You know, these storm chasers, they think they're pretty good, right? Except if you watch their videos, they're chasing it one way and then it decides to go a different way, and so when you look at the Spirit of God moving in our lives, that's how he works. We think he's headed in one direction and all of a sudden he moves another one.

The other thing you'll notice is the effect or the impact that it has on that which it touches. You know, one of the strange things about tornadoes is what it chooses to destroy and what it chooses to preserve. Interesting that in a neighborhood there seems to be no rationale for that which is damaged and that which is not. I go back to that storm of five and six years of age of life. I'll never forget there was a classmate of mine whose home was completely destroyed. When I say completely destroyed, it hadn't been completely removed off the foundation but it was down to just a few sticks and bricks, if you know what I mean. I'll never forget walking through and the bathroom was nowhere to be seen, there was raw concrete on the ground for everything being ripped up, and yet there was a beam that ran across what we would call the living room ceiling that had a light fixture, it wasn't crystal, it was made of glass, it had all kinds of intricate pieces and yet not one of them had been removed from the fixture. The entire house was obliterated but every piece of glass was still as it should be.

Is that not how the Lord moves in our lives? We expect one thing and we end up with another, and that's this incredible mystery and this manifestation of God. When they showed up that day to church, they didn't expect it to look the way it did, and so it's the presence of God. We talk about, "What does it look like when God shows up?" It's his Spirit moving as he desires and not how we prescribed.

Another interesting thing about how he moves is you notice here in verse 11 the priests could not stand to minister. When God moves in our lives, it's never about any person other than God himself. Oftentimes we associate great revivals and movements of God with certain preachers and pastors and leaders and such, but if you do a study of how the Lord has moved even mightily on this continent over the last couple hundred years whether it be the awakenings or the revivals, there are key figures that are noted as preachers and singers and such but as a whole as you begin to drill down and see what God was doing and how he was manifesting as a whole, there's really nobody that you can identify. You realize in this situation that all the priests had to go out in the parking lot, there was nobody they could look at and say, "This is the one who is at the center of this." Why? Because it was the Lord himself.

The thing I think that is most touching is there in verse 11, they had to dismiss from the building. You know, there's something interesting about when God shows up, not only is it his presence and his Spirit, not only is it in spite of who we are as individual persons, but he has a way of setting our priorities straight, does he not? Can you think about how much time and money had been spent on this building? I mean, this was the temple. This was the building that David had longed to build for years. I mean think about it, the ark of the covenant had been nomadic in its nature, it had been in the tabernacle for hundreds of years as it traveled to and fro, it had been taken captive by the Philistines, it had been out in the inclement weathers, it had been in storage for many a years, and yet all of a sudden it was finally gonna have a permanent dwelling place. Not only was there great anticipation but it mentions in Scripture that Solomon got the wood from Lebanon. Great expense, great travel, and then when they began to assemble it as God instructed, it was overlaid with gold. In fact, the Lord says that it was so intricate that even what we would call the door hinges were coated in gold, even that which you would not even see with what we call the naked eye was done to such excellence and such pristine. This was the most incredible long-range building project you've ever seen in your life and yet what happens? When they go to dedicate it, they can't even be on the inside.

I'm gonna ask a very rhetorical but difficult question both for our individual lives but for our corporate faith life: if God showed up and he manifested in this manner, would it bother you if you didn't get your parking place you always did? It bothers some of you now. If God showed up, would it be a struggle not to sit in the same place you always sit? If God showed up, would it be a struggle to you that maybe his presence alone, not to mention the people that could be involved, would take that which has been labored for and given to and so well taken care of, would it bother you if you showed up to "church" and our security and parking team and ushers had to tell you we were meeting in the parking lot because the glory of the Lord was so thick in this place that we couldn't even see our way to our favorite pew? I'm gonna ask a difficult question and I'm not trying to be ugly, I'm just trying to be honest: how many of you would get back in your car and just go home? After all, it's cold and it's raining outside. "I want to be in the warmth and in the place I'm most familiar with."

You see, folks, when God shows up, rarely if ever does it look the way we'd like it to look. When God shows up in our home, when God shows up in our church, when God

shows up in a community, when he moves as he so desires to move, rarely if ever do we look back and go, "That's just how I would have drawn it out." You see, when God shows up, our priorities change. We're not as interested in the convenience of location. We're not as interested in the décor that may be around us. We're not as interested in the material things that we are surrounded with. They were so excited that God showed up, they didn't care that some of them had spent their entire life with the acquisition of and the assembly of this building and they couldn't even enjoy it. Find me anywhere in this chapter of the Bible where anybody complains about anything. Now that's revival. Nobody complained, nobody griped, nobody was disgruntled. Why? Because God showed up. That's what it looks like and unfortunately that's why rarely if ever not only as a corporate body but as an individual do we truly experience the true manifestation of God's presence in our lives because we are so bothered with the way we like it to look and feel and sound.

What's interesting is as we make our way past verse 11, is what happens afterwards. What are the results? What does it look like in your life, what does it look like in my life, what does it look like in a church's life when God shows up like this? It's interesting that when you get to verse 14, that Solomon gathers the people together and he begins to bless them, he begins to, to be honest, he begins to preach, he begins to proclaim, he begins to praise. In other words, the teaching and the preaching of the word of God, the singing of the hymns and the songs and the spiritual songs begins to take place, let me tell you what happens: they have church, folks. That's what happens beginning in verse 14, they have church.

Fast forward to verse 22. Solomon begins to pray and it's a corporate prayer. Now what's interesting is the longest corporate prayer that we have recorded in the Bible is found in the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah 9 the Israelites have come out of the Babylonian captivity, they've rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem, they've rebuilt the temple, Ezra's about to discover the scrolls that were hidden underneath, and there in Nehemiah 9 something takes place that is profound. Ezra gets up and he reads the Scripture while they're standing for three hours and nobody complains. You say, "How does that happen?" God showed up. You see, when God shows up, we don't look at the watch. When God shows up, we don't worry about our tired legs. When God shows up, for three hours and after they read the Scriptures, he begins to pray and it's a corporate prayer and the entirety of the chapter of Nehemiah 9 is this elongated incredible prayer that the people of God prayed together. You get the idea that it lasts almost the entirety of the day.

Here in 1 Kings 8, when Solomon begins to pray, he prays for a long time. If you'll fast forward to verse 62 toward the end, when he gets done praying, they begin to sacrifice. You say, "Why is that important?" Because they'd already sacrificed a whole bunch of stuff and all of a sudden they began to do more. What's happening there? You see, they preached, they praised, they've prayed and they start to pray, they start to realize that it's more important to offer up sacrifice to the Lord than it is to even put it on their own dinner table.

Now I want to walk through those three results real quick with you because I want you to notice something. They preached, they praised, they prayed and they pruned, they got rid of the worldly stuff in their life. It sounds a whole lot like a worship service, does it not? What's interesting is in 1 Kings 8 and in the book of Acts 2 and in the book of Nehemiah 9, we see the same results. God shows up, did he not, in Acts 2? What did it say about that famous Holy Spirit event? They heard the sound of, what? A mighty rushing wind. God showed up completely different than they expected. Remember what Jesus told them? "Wait here until the Holy Spirit descends upon you." The Lord did not say it would sound like wind. He did not say that there would be tongues of fire on their heads. He did not say that people would accuse them of being drunk in the morning. He didn't say what it'd look like, he said, "Wait here." I promise you if the Lord had told them exactly what it would have looked like, half of them would have bailed out and said, "I'm not into that. I'm Baptist. That scares me." No, he said, "Just wait," and what happens? The tongue event takes place, Pentecost happens. What did they do? They preached, they praise, they pray, and do you know what at the end of the book of Acts 2? They pruned. Acts 42, they began to sell things and give to those.

You say, "Why are you focusing so much on this?" Because this sounds like a worship service. We gather and we sing and we preach and we praise, and hopefully when we depart there's something that the Lord has pruned from our lives. I think the problem is that most of us get it all backwards. You can never preach in the presence of God. I know the Bible says he inhabits the praise of his people but you can't sing enough to get God to show up. You can't give away enough for God to show up. I think the problem is we think if we do enough, he has to show up and therein lies the problem because it's according to our agenda. "God, if we do it this way, if we sing this style, if we preach this message, if we do it in this manner, at this time and in this location, God, you've gotta show up." You know what God says? "My thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways are not your ways." So what we discover is that oftentimes our, shall I say, even zealotness for God could be the thing that hinders us because we put him in such a, shall I say, a Microsoft Excel box it's where at this time and at this place and in this manner he must arise.

So how does it happen? How do we experience 1 Kings 8? In our prayer closet and even here in this location, how do we experience that? Well, go back to the very beginning of this chapter and I want you to see some distinctives here that appear to be mundane, they appear to be just everyday life, but it is their mundaneness that brings his manifestation. Look in verse 1, then Solomon assembled. Verse 2, then all the men of Israel assembled. Verse 3, and all the elders of Israel came. Verse 5, and King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel. You notice the common word there? "All." Now I know that 1 Kings was originally written in the language of Hebrew and I'm here to share with you that in Hebrew the word "all" means "all." That's what it means. You see, the first step in the how-to was their willing participation. They showed up. They were willing. They showed up when it wasn't convenient. They showed up when they were tired. I promise you when every single person is there, they had stuff on their plate. They had issues in their life. They had problems. They had struggles. They had disappointments. But what happened? It says they all showed up.

You know, one of the things that the book of Daniel 12 says about the future one day antichrist but kind of the spirit of how the enemy works is he wants to wear out the saints. You know, I think one of the greatest tactics of the enemy is just to get you to quit. "God, I've been faithful to you for 30 years and I haven't seen you show up yet. Why should I continue? I get up and I read my Bible and, man, there's nothing profound that happens. I get up and I pray and I don't see heaven and earth move." And you begin to believe that it doesn't make a difference. What's important is these people had been laboring in the mundane for years before this day. I would be willing to say that some of these folks showed up and said, "This ain't gonna be any different than when we brought the wood from Lebanon. This ain't gonna be any different than when we did this or any different than when we did that." They were willing to participate, they were willing to show up and say, "Okay, God, what've you got for me today?" Now that happens particularly as a corporate body on this day but it should happen every day of our lives. Every day of our lives we should wake up and say, "God, I've showed up."

Some years ago I was pastoring a church in another state and there was a woman who sat center section very back, and when I say she was deaf as a door nail, she was. I mean, she couldn't hear thunder if God did it right next to her. She actually had to read my lips to hear the message. I remember one day she was back there with just a smile on her face and I said, "Ma'am," and I was speaking directly to her so she could read my lips, I said, "You couldn't hear anything today, could you?" No. "Could you hear any of the singing?" No. "Could you hear anything I said?" No. I said, "Why are you here?" To which she replied, "I just want the Lord to know which side I'm on." Sometimes we just gotta let the Lord know we're on his side.

They showed up even though they'd shown up every day for a long time and nothing spectacular had happened. Then you get down to verse 5. They were willing to pay a price. It says there that before the ark they were sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. I don't know how many that is but that's a whole lot more than we can all count. They were willing to pay the price before God showed up. Now when we talk about paying the price in our culture, we naturally gravitate to financial disclosure and expense and giving and such, but you know I've learned that the price is greater than even writing a check, it's called the price of our time and the price of our sleep. How many times do we say, "God, I don't have time for this"? How many times do we say, "I don't want to lose 15 or 20 minutes of sleep. God, how many times I've got something else on my agenda but you."

You know, we live in a culture today and I want you to understand and I'll be quick with this. I'm not being critical of those that, for lack of better terms, have made some of these decisions but I want you just to hear the fall-out for a moment. You know, I grew in a day and, again, hear me, I'm not being overly critical, I'm just being an observer, I grew up in a day where nothing in the community or culture ever took place on a Wednesday night. Just didn't happen because Wednesday night you either went to church or you sat at home. That's what you did. And yet I've lost count of how many events in my children's life have been rescheduled for a Wednesday night because they couldn't do it on a

Monday because we had a ball game or Tuesday we had a ball game, Thursday we had a ball game, Friday we have a ball game, but let's put it on Wednesday. Isn't that interesting?

You know, I don't want to share more than I probably should but you know I had a son show up Wednesday night to our student ministry gathering straight from ball practice. Never took a shower. He stank to high heaven. But how many of us say, "You know what? I can't show up smelling like that." How many say, "I haven't slept. I can't"? You see, sometimes the price to pay isn't the money, sometimes it's our own what we feel about ourselves. I'm gonna go looking disheveled. I'm gonna look tired. I'm gonna look this. I'm gonna look that.

They were willing to pay a price. Last but not least I want you to fast forward to verse 8 and 9. It says they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle. That may seem just like a minor detail to the passage but do you realize those staves were the means by which the ark had moved? Now I don't want to over-personify this so just work with me. Don't overthink this. The ark of the covenant represented the presence of the Lord and so for hundreds of years – listen – even though it was the Lord's direction, the Israelites had moved him. When they took the staves out, they were saying, "God, we're no longer moving you again. We're no longer dictating, we're no longer traveling, we're no longer gonna maneuver. We're gonna allow you to be in your place and we're going to move around you. We're not gonna move you where we want you to be." How many times did the Israelites get in trouble because they put the ark somewhere where it shouldn't have been or they didn't put it where it should have been because they were maneuvering things? But when they took those staves out, what they were saying is, "God, we're gonna do it on your time frame, we're gonna do it in your manner. We're no longer gonna place you where we think it is most convenient. It's up to you."

Now that is a dangerous experience to have. I think Isaiah, the great prophet, exemplified it best when he said, "Here I am, Lord," without asking what it would cost, without asking what it would look like, without asking what the residual effects would be. You say, "Man, I sure wish God would just manifest mightily in my life." Then keep showing up day by day. Pay the price when you don't want to or it's not convenient or it's difficult and instead of telling God where he needs to be in your life, why don't you maneuver around where God wants you for his sake? That, my friends, is why we rarely see what they did in 1 Kings 8 because it means the emptying of ourselves.