

BOOK OF 1 KINGS
THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE
1 KINGS 8:12-66

Introduction

This magnificent Temple has been built under Solomon's leadership. The elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes (the chief fathers of the children of Israel) were in a procession to bring up the Ark of the Covenant to the Temple. All the men of Israel were assembled by Solomon at the Temple. All of the Temple furniture and accessories were put into their places by the priests! Sacrifices that were not able to be numbered were offered to the LORD! And when the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant came out of the Holy of Holies, the glory of the LORD showed up in the cloud that filled the Temple! It filled the Temple so much that the priests were not able to minister because of the cloud!

Tonight we begin to see ***THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE***.

I. THE FIRST WORDS OF SOLOMON AFTER THE CLOUD HAD FILLED THE TEMPLE ARE ABOUT GOD! (Vs 12)
***"The LORD said that He would dwell in the thick darkness."** (Vs 12)*

That may seem to us to be a strange statement to us because it seems contrary to what we know of God from other Scripture!

1 John 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Isaiah 60:19 – The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

Revelation 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

God is Light...But what is also true is that *"The Lord has said he would dwell in thick darkness"* (1 Kings 8:12).

So, how is it true that God is light AND that God dwells in thick darkness?

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First its important to understand **what God says would happen to a person that viewed the full glory of God directly.**

Remember what the LORD said to Moses in *Exodus 33:20?*
And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

Sinful man is incapable of taking in all of the glory that God is and living through the experience!

Let's think of it in terms of a breathtaking experience. Have you ever had your breath taken away by something truly spectacular? Now if we could multiply that by millions and I think we would get the point.

So, specifically when God is within the reaches of human contact, He dwells in thick darkness so that His glory doesn't completely consume those He loves.

Let's consider some other Scripture:

Remember when the Israelites sent Moses to speak with God on the mountain because they were afraid of Him! (*Exodus 20:18-21*)

Cf. Psalm 18:6-14; Psalm 97:1-6

So, why does it matter that God dwells in thick darkness?

A. It Matters Because It Shows Us The Nature Of God!

From this we learn that He desired to be near His people, so much so that He was willing to mask the fullness of His glory with thick darkness in order to interact directly with His people.

That seems like a great length to go to when God could have simply just sent a messenger.

God loved His people enough to come personally, first in the thick darkness and later in His Son—The Lord Jesus Christ! He is a personal God, not a distant one!

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B. It Matters Because We Often Walk In Darkness!

Who hasn't felt the darkness of depression or uncertainty or of fear or sadness? In the dark moments of life God is far nearer than we can comprehend. (e.g. *Job's trials*)

In those times when He feels distant, when it feels like we are lost in the darkness, God is in fact with us in the darkness though we cannot see Him!

When we are in thick darkness if we will quiet our soul and put our focus on the LORD, more often than not we will begin to notice that we indeed are not alone!

God walks with us through the darkness waiting for that moment when we will speak to Him...when we will reach out for Him...when we will ask for His help.

(e.g. **Elijah in 1Kings 19:11-12**)

II. SOLOMON'S NEXT WORDS ARE DIRECTED TO THE LORD! (Vs 13)

1 Kings 8:13 I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.

Solomon rightly sensed that the presence of the cloud in the Temple meant that God dwelt in the Temple in a special way. As long as this did not slip into some kind of superstitious misunderstanding and a worship of the Temple itself, it was good to recognize the Temple as a special place to come and meet with God.

III. SOLOMON'S SPEECH TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL! (Vs 14-21)

Solomon recognized that the Temple was the fulfillment of God's plan, more than David's or Solomon's. David and Solomon were just human instruments in the hand of the LORD, but the work was God's!

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IV. SOLOMON'S PRAYER OF DEDICATION!

A. Solomon's Posture Of Prayer! (Vs 22)

Solomon did not dedicate the Temple from within the Temple. It would have been inappropriate for him to do so, because he was a king and not a priest.

The Holy Place and Most Holy Place were only for chosen descendants of the High Priest.

Praying with one's hands spread toward heaven was one of the most common postures of prayer in the Old Testament.

Today most folks close their eyes, bow their head, and maybe fold their hands as they pray; but the Old Testament tradition was to spread out the hands toward heaven in a gesture of surrender, openness, and ready reception.

B. Solomon Begins By Recognizing The Nature And Character Of God! (Vs 23)

As a side note, as we go through this prayer we will see that it is full of quotations from the Books of Moses, some of which are almost word for word.

Here in this verse, Solomon recognized that God was completely unique. The gods of the other nations (which were not gods at all) could not compare to the LORD in any way!

C. Solomon Continues By Recognizing God As The Maker And Keeper Of Promises! (Vs 24-26)

Solomon first acknowledged God for the promise He made to David his father concerning the Temple and God's fulfillment of that promise shown by the now completed Temple! (Vs 24)

Solomon then called upon God to keep other promises that He made to David in the Davidic Covenant! He was claiming those promises! (Vs 25-26)

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This is one of the great secrets to power in prayer — to take God’s promises to heart in faith, and then to boldly and reverently claim those promises by calling upon God to fulfill those promises!

God loves us to acknowledge Him in His Word! This kind of prayer lays hold of God’s promises. Just because God promises does not mean that we possess. Through believing prayer like this, God promises and we appropriate. If we don’t appropriate in faith, God’s promises are often left unclaimed.

D. Solomon Asks God To Dwell In The Temple And Honor Those Who Would Seek Him There! (Vs 27-30)

Verse 27

From his statement in *1 Kings 8:12-13*, one might have thought that he drifted towards a superstitious idea that God actually lived in the Temple to the exclusion of other places.

It was important for Solomon and God’s people to recognize that though God had a special presence in the Temple, He is far too great a God than to be restricted to the Temple!

Verse 28-29

Solomon asked God to incline His ear towards the king and the people when they prayed toward the Temple. For this reason, many observant Jews today still pray facing the direction of the site of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Verse 30

Solomon knew that the most important thing Israel needed was forgiveness. This was one of the greatest answers to prayer Israel could expect from God!

E. Solomon Asked God To Hear And Judge Righteously When His People Would Take An Oath Before The Altar! (Vs 31-32)

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The Temple grounds were used as a place to verify and authorize oaths. When a dispute came down to one’s word against another’s word, Solomon asked that the Temple would be a place to properly swear by.

Solomon asked the God who can see what man can’t – who knows the hidden heart of man – to enforce from heaven the oaths made at the Temple.

F. Solomon Asked God To Hear When His People Were Defeated Before Their Enemies Because Of Their Sin! (Vs 33-34)

Many times in their history, Israel had suffered defeat because of their sin! (*e.g. The Book Of Judges*)

Solomon asked God to hear the prayers of a defeated Israel if they humble themselves and were repentant. We know that God answered this prayer of Solomon, and He did forgive and restore His defeated people when they came in humble repentance to Him!

G. Solomon Asked God To Hear In Times Of Plague And Famine! (Vs 35-40)

Drought was a constant threat for the agriculturally-based economy of Israel. If there was no rain, there was no food.

Solomon doesn’t take it for granted that God would forgive and hear His repentant people. God’s good response to our repentance comes from His grace, not from His justice.

Solomon recognized that some plagues are easily seen, but other plagues are not so easily seen because they come from our own heart.

Solomon asks God to answer such a plague-stricken man when he humbly pleads at the Temple.

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A man did not have to be sinless or righteous to have his prayer answered at the Temple. He could be a guilty man, stricken by the plague of his own heart, and still find a gracious God when He came in humble repentance seeking the LORD!

**H. Solomon Asked God To Hear When A Foreigner Prays!
(Vs 41-43)**

The Temple was in Israel, but it was always intended to be a House of Prayer for all nations!

Isaiah 56:6-8

God wanted the court of the Gentiles to be a place where the nations could come and pray. The violation of this principle made Jesus angry.

When He came to the Temple and found that the outer courts – the only place where the Gentile nations could come and pray – were more like a swap meet than a House of Prayer, He drove out the moneychangers and the merchants! (***Matthew 21:13***)

Solomon asked God to hear the prayer of the foreigner because he knew that when God mercifully answered the prayers of foreigners, it drew those from other nations to the God of all nations. (*e.g. The Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26ff*)

**I. Solomon Asked God To Hear When Israel Went Out To Battle And Prayed Toward Jerusalem And The Temple!
(Vs 44-45)**

Solomon prayed with the idea that God should answer the prayers for victory made in foreign lands towards the Temple, but only when Israel battled as God sent them.

This was not a blanket request for blessing on every military adventure.

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J. Solomon Asked God To Hear When Israel Prayed From Captivity! (Vs 46- 53)

That phrase “*for there is no man that sinneth not*” is an Old Testament statement of the principle clearly stated in *Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Solomon knew that when Israel sinned against the LORD that one of the ways God would chastise His people would be by allowing them to be carried away into captivity!

Solomon asked God to hear a repentant Israel’s prayers from captivity in a foreign land. This recognized that the God of the Temple could answer prayers made away from the Temple.

(*e.g. Daniel 9:3-19; Nehemiah 1:4-11*)

SOLOMON’S PRAYER OF DEDICATION!

**V. SOLOMON’S BLESSING OF THE PEOPLE! (Vs 54-61)
Vs 54**

1 Kings 8:22 tells us that Solomon began this prayer standing, but some time before he finished, he fell to his knees in reverence to God.

We find many in the Scripture that prayed on their knees:

Ezra prayed on his knees (Ezra 9:5),

The Psalmist called us to kneel (Psalm 95:6),

Daniel prayed on his knees (Daniel 6:10),

Various people came to Jesus kneeling (Matthew 17:14, Matthew 20:20, Mark 1:40),

Stephen prayed on his knees (Acts 7:60),

Peter prayed on his knees (Acts 9:40),

Paul prayed on his knees (Acts 20:36, Ephesians 3:14), and

Other early Christians prayed on their knees (Acts 21:5).

Most importantly, Jesus prayed on His knees (Luke 22:41).

The Bible has enough prayer that is “not on the knees” to show us that it is not something that is required! But it also has enough prayer “on the knees” to show us that it is a good thing to do!

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Vs 55-56

Solomon begins his blessing by praising God! Since Solomon prayed often appealing to God's promises, it makes sense that he praised God for the past fulfillment of His promises. God's past fulfillment of His promises gave Solomon confidence in prayer.

Vs 57-59

God promised to be with Israel, but Solomon knew it was important to both ask God to fulfill His promises and to ask for God to help Israel do their part to please the LORD! He comes pleading the promises of God on His people and asking the LORD's help to keep them in His ways!

Vs 60

Solomon again shows what God wanted in Israel. Blessing to Israel wasn't meant to end with Israel; God wanted to bless the world through Israel.

Vs 61

Solomon calls on the people to do their part! The blessing of the LORD comes from obedience to God! The chastisement of the LORD comes from disobedience! With the LORD's help, Israel could walk in the ways of the LORD, but if their heart was not so inclined, they couldn't!

VI. THE FEAST OF DEDICATION FOR THE TEMPLE! (Vs 62-66)

Vs 62-63

Solomon offered to the LORD, twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep!

That's a staggering amount of sacrifice! Each animal was ritually sacrificed and a portion was dedicated to the LORD, and the remainder was given to the priests and the people. It was enough to feed this vast multitude for two weeks.

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Vs 64

It was such a great amount of sacrifice that they specially consecrated the area in front of the Temple to receive sacrifices, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive all of the burnt offerings.

Vs 65

From the time of year and the length of this feast, we understand that this was the time of the *Feast of Tabernacles*, and it extended beyond its normal seven days on this special occasion.

The *Feast of Tabernacles* was in itself a grand occasion for rejoicing and feasting. But the dedication of the Temple made this occasion all the more joyful and memorable!

Vs 66

This account of the dedication of the Temple ends where the story of the Temple began – with the LORD and David, not Solomon.

The writer remembers that it was David's heart and vision that started the work of the Temple! (2 Samuel 7:1-3 and following)

Conclusion

We have seen a great God that moved the heart of David to build this Temple!
We have seen a great God that moved in the life of Solomon to finish the task!
We have seen a great start of this Temple—The dedication, the sacrifices, the calls to both God to remember His people and the call of His people to remember their God!

Next we will see God's covenant with Solomon to walk uprightly before the LORD!