



Solomon Dedicates the Temple

I Kings 8:1—9:9; II Chronicles 5:2—7:22

I Kings 8:1-21 in Brief

Solomon completed the temple of the Lord on what had been the threshing floor of Araunah atop Mount Moriah (see II Chron. 3:1) in the eighth month of the 11th year of his reign. Not until 11 months later, in the seventh month of the 12th year, did he transfer the ark of the covenant to the temple from its temporary quarters in the City of David. As the priests carried the ark to the temple, Solomon and the elders of Israel sacrificed countless sheep and cattle along the way in thanksgiving.

Solomon probably waited nearly a year to transfer the ark so he could do it at the time of the day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. The blood of the sin offering on the day of Atonement was sprinkled on the atonement cover of the ark. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated God's blessing on Israel by taking them from a wandering existence to a permanent place to inhabit.

The priests placed the ark in the holy place under the wings of the cherubim. They also had brought the tabernacle and its furnishings

from Gibeon (see II Chron. 1:3-5) and stored them in the temple store-rooms. When the priests left the holy place, the cloud of God's glory filled the temple. Solomon turned to the vast crowd of celebrants in the temple courtyard and blessed them by recalling the Lord's faithfulness to Israel, to King David, and to himself as the son of David.

a Solomon Asks for God's Mercy (I Kings 8:22-30)

"Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive."
—I Kings 8:30

When Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord to pray and dedicate the temple, he did not stand there in the capacity of a priest. He had erected a bronze platform nearly five feet high by the altar in order to focus attention on the

place of sacrifice (see II Chron. 6:13). After he had everyone's attention, the Chronicler said, the king knelt before lifting his hands to heaven (I Kings 8:22).

First, Solomon acknowledged that the Lord had always been faithful in keeping His promises to Israel and to David. On the basis of past faithfulness, the king appealed to God once more to keep His word to David about establishing his son on the throne as long as that son followed the Lord (vss. 23-26). The way Solomon wanted God to secure his throne was by making the temple the focus of prayer to Him.

At the same time Solomon acknowledged that the temple was not literally God's abode on earth. Not even the heavens could claim to contain God in any sort of physical sense. But metaphorically the heavens are God's dwelling place in the sense that they represent infinity, transcendence, and spirituality.

From heaven God would look to the temple in Jerusalem as His chosen center for the offerings and prayers of His servants. In keeping with the function of a temple as a place for sinful humans to approach the holy, infinite God, Solomon asked for God's first response to penitent people to be forgiveness (vss. 27-30).

The first step to unhindered worship is heartfelt, genuine confession and the receiving of God's mercy and forgiveness.

Ask Yourself . . . *Is there any unconfessed sin that has been hindering my worship lately?*

b **Solomon Asks God to Listen to the Repentant (I Kings 8:31-40)**

“When they turn back to you and give praise to your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel.” —I Kings 8:33b, 34a

After Solomon asked God to forgive those who approached Him, the king went on to give seven examples of prayer by those who needed God's forgiveness. The first four instances involve people separated from God and His temple, most notably by sin (vss. 31-40); the last three involve people who are also separated by geographic distance (see vss. 41-51).

Each of the seven examples in Solomon's prayer contains a variation on the idea that when people speak to God at the temple, He would listen from heaven. In four of the examples God was urged to listen and forgive (vss. 34, 36, 39, 49). In this first case, Solomon asked God to hear and reveal who was guilty and who was innocent.

The law of Moses identified certain instances when a person thought to have wronged his or her neighbor was required to take an oath if that person was innocent. An oath might assert someone was not responsible for property loss

(see Exod. 22:10-12) or had not committed adultery (see Num. 5:16-22). It might establish some other legal or personal obligation. Solomon prayed that whenever the temple was the site of such an oath, the Lord would guarantee justice (I Kings 8:31, 32).

Solomon's second example of praying toward the temple involved small groups of Israelites captured in battles lost because of the sin of the people (vss. 33, 34). The Lord had made it clear that He would not give Israel victory in battle if they continued in their disobedience. Solomon urged the Lord to hear from heaven, forgive the Israelites, and deliver them from captivity when they repented and directed their prayers of confession toward the temple in Jerusalem. The Mosaic covenant stipulated this sort of defeat by enemies as a consequence of disobedience (see Deut. 28:25).

Solomon's third example was directed toward the temple when drought came (I Kings 8:35, 36). Drought was another of the threatened consequences for covenant breaking (see Deut. 28:22-24). A prayer of repentance toward the temple involved (1) confessing the Lord's name and (2) turning away from whatever sin had led to chastisement in the form of famine. The response Solomon asked of the Lord was that He would (1) teach Israel how to live obediently and (2) send rain on the land of promise.

The fourth prayer example involved other consequences of covenant breaking: famine, plague,

blight, mildew, or the destruction of crops by swarms of locusts or grasshoppers (I Kings 8:37; see Deut. 28:22). Solomon asserted the need for each one who prayed in repentance to understand fully the seriousness of his or her sin (I Kings

DISCIPLINING FORCES OF **NATURE**

Two of the natural judgments Solomon mentioned in his prayer of temple dedication were blight and mildew (I Kings 8:37). A blight was the blasting of hot eastern winds that could blow across Israel for days at a time. These forceful winds would dry up crops and destroy ripening vegetation.

Another judgment of God meant to encourage repentance was mildew, a fungus that caused a whitish growth on plants that made them inedible. The Hebrew word for mildew means "paleness." In addition to the fungus, "mildew" might also describe the yellowing of leaves after a prolonged drought.

8:38). Praying toward the temple with outspread hands pictured the spiritual intensity behind the confession Solomon envisioned.

Ask Yourself . . . *How do I usually feel about approaching God after I've sinned?*

Solomon urged the Lord to respond to each repentant Israelite in the way that best answered that person's needs and advanced his or her spiritual growth (I Kings 8:39, 40). The king did not view praying toward the temple as a mere ritual. He knew there must be a dynamic interaction between the Lord and those who asked for forgiveness. The Lord expects that same passion and sincerity from us when we offer our prayers.

C Solomon Asks God to Listen to Those Far Away (I Kings 8:41-53)

"Hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name."
—I Kings 8:43

The final three examples of prayer toward the temple that Solomon talked to God about involved for-

eigners, soldiers on foreign battlefields, and deported Israelites held in foreign lands. The king prayed that the Lord would hear from heaven prayers directed toward the temple from all over the world. Solomon grasped the universal sovereignty of God and the worldwide significance of the temple that belonged to Him.

Solomon never doubted that people would come from foreign lands to pray at the temple of the one, true living God (vss. 41, 42). God has always wanted His people to have missionary hearts. God had always wanted Israel to be a drawing light to the nations. The king implored God to respond to the prayers of foreigners who came to the temple in order to exalt the name of the Lord among "all the peoples of the earth" (vs. 43).

Solomon's concern about God heeding the prayers of soldiers on campaigns in foreign lands was a practical one. David had hated being away from the tabernacle and the ark when fleeing from King Saul (see Ps. 63) and when away from the tabernacle for a long time (see Ps. 61). Solomon assumed that if the armies of Israel were at war at the Lord's direction, then He would hear them from heaven and uphold their cause (I Kings 8:44, 45). Forgiveness was not the central issue in this case or in the case of foreigners seeking the Lord's favor.

The final example of a prayer directed toward the temple that Solomon envisioned involved a formal deportation of the populace far away from the temple because of

prolonged national disobedience—the ultimate covenant violation and its predicted consequence (vs. 46; see Deut. 28:64-68). The prayer acknowledges the universal reality of sin, God’s anger provoked by sin, and the possibility of captivity in a nearby or far-off land.

Genuine repentance necessitates “a change of heart” (I Kings 8:47). Repentant prayer made in captivity necessitated group confession from changed hearts directed toward the promised land, the holy city, and the temple representing the Lord’s name. Solomon asked that God would forgive His people and vindicate them by moving the conqueror to show them mercy. This would be a reasonable way for the Lord to treat the people He had chosen as His possession and had delivered from cruel oppression in Egypt (vss. 48-51).

Ask Yourself . . . *When was the last time God demonstrated mercy with me after I sinned?*

Finally, Solomon asked that God would keep His eyes and ears open to answer his prayer and the prayers of Israel directed to Him by means of the temple. Once again Solomon emphasized the Lord’s selection of Israel, but heightened it by referring to all the other nations of the earth that were not chosen (vss. 52, 53). For the fourth time in his dedicatory words, Solomon alluded to the exodus from Egypt as the defining moment in Israel’s relationship with God (vss. 16, 21, 51, 53).

d **Solomon Blesses the People (I Kings 8:54-61)**

“May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to him and keep the commands, decrees, and law he gave our ancestors.”

—I Kings 8:58

Solomon rose from his kneeling position on the bronze platform (I Kings 8:54, 55; see II Chron. 6:13). For the second time the king blessed the people. The first time he had reminded them of the Lord’s faithfulness to David; this time he appealed to the Lord to keep His people faithful (I Kings 8:58, 61).

Solomon praised the Lord for finally giving His people promised rest (vs. 56). Joshua had led the people into Canaan and the struggle for rest had begun (see Deut. 12:9, 10). The judges had known almost no rest. King Saul had not achieved it. By the final days of David’s reign, the promised territory was under Israelite control, and rest was at hand. In Solomon’s reign of peace, the completed temple marked the high point of national peace and rest in the history of Israel. Of course, the writer of Hebrews built on this idea of true spiritual rest, pictured here by the glorious reign of Solomon (see Heb. 4:9).

Solomon petitioned the Lord for four things: for Him to constantly be with Israel, to never forsake them, to make their hearts obedient, and

to remember his dedicatory prayers forever (I Kings 8:57-59). The first result Solomon desired was that Israel would enjoy God's favor. The second result he desired was that all the Gentiles would acknowledge the Lord as the only true and living God (vs. 60).

A CONDITIONAL PROMISE

In his blessing upon the Israelites at the time of the temple dedication, Solomon implored the people to be fully committed to God and to live by the decrees of His covenant with them. A covenant in the ancient world outlined the relationship between an absolute sovereign and a subjected people. The sovereign promised protection and the vassals promised absolute obedience.

The Mosaic covenant bound Israel to Yahweh as servants to an all-powerful Master. He promised them blessings (Deut. 28:1-14), and they accepted even greater curses as the consequence for rebelling against His authority (vss. 15-68).

Finally, the king reminded the people that these things could only come to pass if their hearts were fully committed to serving and obeying God (vs. 61). Solomon probably recognized that they were excited about following the Lord right because of all the emotion of the moment. He held up that level of passion as the standard for obedience that Israel needed to maintain indefinitely.

A devoted follower of Christ can remain fully committed to the Lord regardless of how he or she feels.

Ask Yourself . . . *How do negative emotions affect my ability to worship?*

e Solomon Celebrates with God's People (I Kings 8:62-66)

Solomon observed the festival at that time, and all Israel with him—a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. They celebrated it before the Lord our God for seven days and seven days more, fourteen days in all.

—I Kings 8:65

The Chronicler related that when Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices on the altar (see II Chron. 7:1). The glory cloud of the Lord once more filled the temple and hovered above it so that all the people in the temple courtyard saw

The Month of Tishri (September—October)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Solomon dedicates the temple	9	10 Day of Atonement	11	12	13	14
 The First Week of Celebration						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
 Feast of Tabernacles						
22 Solomon's Assembly	23 The people dismissed	24	25	26	27	28
					29	30

the glorious display of His majesty and bowed in worship (see vs. 3). This display of glory initiated a series of fellowship offerings to dedicate the temple (I Kings 8:62, 63).

The offerings were so numerous—20,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep—that the massive bronze altar could not accommodate them. Solomon had the priests consecrate the courtyard between the temple and the altar so the sacrifices could be offered on the pavement as well as on the altar (vss. 63, 64). These

140,000 animals were sacrificed over the 14 days of the celebration, not piled up all at once. “The fat of the fellowship offerings” refers to the choice parts of the animals that were burnt. Most of the meat from these animals was eaten by the worshipers in feasts of grateful celebration (see Lev. 3:2-5; 7:11-15).

A tremendous throng of worshipers had gathered in Jerusalem to dedicate the temple, observe the day of Atonement, and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. They had come

from as far north as Lebo Hamath, some 50 miles north of Damascus, and as far south as the Wadi of Egypt, the ravine that marked the boundary between Israel and Egypt (I Kings 8:65).

For seven days they offered the sacrifices that dedicated the temple. Then for the next seven days they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles that fell on the fifteenth through the 21st day of the seventh month (see Num. 29:12). That would mean that the first seven days included the observance of the day of Atonement on the tenth day of the month (vs. 7). On the 22nd of the month, Solomon held a solemn assembly, and on the 23rd he dismissed the people to go to their homes throughout the land (see II Chron. 7:9, 10). Along with confession and reverence, celebration is also an important part of worship.

The masses of pilgrims had already blessed the Lord repeatedly during their weeks of worship. Before departing Jerusalem, they blessed Solomon, who had executed David's plans for the temple (I Kings 8:66). The people departed with happy hearts because of all that the Lord had done to establish the dynasty of David and to enhance the peace and prosperity of their nation, Israel.

Ask Yourself . . . *How can I encourage the spiritual leaders God has placed over me?*

**I Kings 9:1-9;
II Chronicles 5:2—7:22
in Brief**

The Chronicler recorded the role of the musicians David had organized in celebrating the arrival of the ark at the temple. He recorded that Solomon included part of Psalm 132:8-10 at the end of his prayer of dedication. He noted that the singers and the people praised the Lord in the same way as the Lord's glory filled the temple on two occasions.

Thirteen years after Solomon completed the temple, he finished his palace complex. That marked the apex of his greatness, and at that moment the Lord appeared to him for the second time and promised to make the temple the focus of His presence and attention on the earth. At the same time, the Lord rehearsed all of the conditions Solomon needed to observe to experience the personal blessings of the covenant He had made with David. He would always have a descendant on David's throne as long as the successive generations of kings remained true to the Lord and His covenant with Israel. Otherwise, they and the temple would be rejected.

The Chronicler included another portion of the Lord's charge to Solomon that promised the nation forgiveness when it prayed toward the temple after sinning and incurring God's judgment.