

POWER HOUR

9/08/2024

Lesson Text:

1 Kings 8:22-24, 37-39, 46, 48-50a

Background Scripture:

1 Kings 8:22-53

Devotional Reading:

Psalms 34:11-22

“SOLOMON DEDICATES THE TEMPLE”

NLT TRANSLATION

Learning Facts: To summarize Solomon's prayer of dedication for the Temple.

Biblical Principle: [To understand why Solomon also voiced the nation's prayer for forgiveness.](#)

Daily Application: To always remember to pray to the One who keeps His promises.

1 Kings 8:22-24, 37-39, 46, 48-50a NLT

22 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the entire community of Israel. He lifted his hands toward heaven, **23** and he prayed, “O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven above or on the earth below. You keep your covenant and show unfailing love to all who walk before you in wholehearted devotion.

24 You have kept your promise to your servant David, my father. You made that promise with your own mouth, and with your own hands you have fulfilled it today.

37 “If there is a famine in the land or a plague or crop disease or attacks of locusts or caterpillars, or if your people's enemies are in the land besieging their towns—whatever disaster or disease there is— **38** and if your people Israel pray about their troubles, raising their hands toward this Temple, **39** then hear from heaven where you live, and forgive. Give your people what their actions deserve, for you alone know each human heart.

46 “If they sin against you—and who has never sinned?—you might become angry with them and let their enemies conquer them and take them captive to their land far away or near.

48 If they turn to you with their whole heart and soul in the land of their enemies and pray toward the land you gave to their ancestors—toward this city you have chosen,

and toward this Temple I have built to honor your name— **49** then hear their prayers and their petition from heaven where you live, and uphold their cause. **50** Forgive your people who have sinned against you.

LESSON CONTEXT

The ceremony in 1 Kings 8 consecrated the newly built temple in Jerusalem. Temple construction had begun in 966 B.C. and required seven years for completion (1 Kings 6:1, 38). That completion in 959 B.C. marked an important transition in Israelite history, as the location of encounter with the holy God became immovable, with the temple replacing the portable tabernacle. The first half of Solomon's 40-year reign was focused on building the temple and palace (1 Kings 9:10). The current lesson from (1 Kings 8) considers a portion of the dedication prayer at the ceremony for the finished temple, over which King Solomon presided.

Several preparatory elements led up to this prayer: the temple had been completely furnished (1 Kings 7:13–51), the ark of the covenant had been brought into the temple (1 Kings 8:1–9), and the king had “blessed all the congregation of Israel” (1 Kings 8:14). The prayer of dedication that followed (1 Kings 8:23–53) is the second longest prayer in the Bible—in the neighborhood of 1,000 words! The parallel in (2 Chronicles 6:14–42) is of similar length. Only the prayer in (Nehemiah 9:5–38) is longer.

But the prayer's outsized length doesn't mean that King Solomon merely rambled on and on (see Matthew 6:7). Quite the opposite: the prayer is organized. We see that organization in 9 of the prayer's 31 verses selected for the lesson text.

POINTS TO PONDER

We should voice prayers not just for our benefit but also for others (vs. 22).

Don't forget to pray to the Lord who always keeps His promises (vs. 23-24).

Where do you turn first for help during a crisis? Do you turn to God? (vs. 37-39).

God remains just and punishes sin, but He also shows mercy (v. 46).

God is interested in the prayers of those seeking change and redemption (vs. 48-50a)

CONCLUSION

People as Sinners

One of the most puzzling features of prayer in the Bible occurs in this prayer at the dedication of the temple. Here, Solomon voiced the nation's prayer for forgiveness as

part of its ongoing life together. In this case, Solomon prayed for forgiveness of sins that had not yet been committed!

In that regard, the prayer serves as a reflection on the entire history of Israel, from the time of the exodus of 1447 B.C. (481 years in the past as Solomon uttered this prayer) to Nebuchadnezzar's forced removal of the citizens of Judah in 586 B.C. (380 years after the prayer). For us to understand the prayer, we must place it within this larger context, the story of Israel in the promised land, covering the entire books of Joshua through 2 Kings. Both that history and Solomon's prayer reflect a realistic assessment of the human condition and the tendency of human beings to fail. The Bible does not try to pretend that a perfect, sinless time existed at some point after the Garden of Eden. Idolatry and oppression occurred regularly; they still do. Solomon's prayer foreshadowed the outcome found in 2 Kings 25. Even so, Israel's story, as recorded in the books of Joshua through 2 Kings, is not an obituary but a warning and an invitation to a better life.

God as Defender

Solomon's prayer rests on the assumption that God seeks to heal and forgive, even when (or especially when) sins threaten to overcome the sinners. God defends penitent (remorseful) people from those who would oppress them—and even from themselves.

The worship by Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church celebrates the expansive nature of God's mercy. We are thereby reminded to be thankful for it.

Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8 is, therefore, realistic but also hopeful. The dedication of the holiest spot on earth (at the time) was connected to the reality of unholiness.

Solomon cast the nation of Israel as a whole on the mercy of God. In so doing, Solomon sought God's commitment to continue working with the people continuously as part of their centuries-long process of learning and obeying.

Today, the church would do well to recover the biblical practice of confession of sins, both of individuals and of the church as a whole. Part of that recovery would involve acknowledgment that the temptations to harm others or dishonor God do not go away.

We will need forgiveness in the future, and we need humility in the present. Solomon's prayer shows us a way forward.

QUESTION(S)

- How does recalling the fulfilled promises from God encourage your faithfulness in waiting for the fulfillment of the rest?
- What danger does assuming another person's hardship is God's judgment pose to presenting the gospel?
- How do you offer the gift of forgiveness to others?

PRAYER

God of mercy, Lord of love, hear the cries of all who need You. Even when our sins have trapped us in suffering, show us mercy. Do not let us be overwhelmed by our bad decisions or those of others. As Jesus called even those who betrayed Him to feed His sheep, call us into Your eternal kingdom. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Sin is real, but so is God's mercy.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is "*Hezekiah's Prayer*" which explains the historical circumstance behind Hezekiah's prayer and God's response! Study 2 Kings 19:1-34.