

Solomon's Temple **1 Kings 6:1-9:9**

Prepare for an all-you-can-eat meal. I do not mean a cheap buffet, but a five star Brazilian steakhouse! In these chapters, the uniqueness of God, the faithfulness of God, and holiness of God, the grace of God, the mission of God, the warnings of God, a marvelous prayer, and much more soul-strengthening truths about God's greatness are set before us.

Solomon had many construction projects (cf., 1 Kings 9:10-ff; 2 Chron 8). In this section we read of his own palace, and the most important project: the temple. Solomon's temple stood for four centuries, and it was the only building they rebuilt after Exile. After we read of the construction of the temple, we read of his prayer of dedication.

From the previous chapter, we know that Solomon, the incredibly wise yet sometimes foolish king, is reigning over Israel in a time of great prosperity. It was a season of peace, great wealth, remarkable literature, and worldwide fame. In chapters 5-8, we read of another reason for Solomon's fame as we consider the temple project. God promised that Solomon would build the temple to the glory of God (8:5-21; 2 Sam 7:12-16). Here we see that promise being fulfilled.

Some of the technical language that we meet here leaves us with some questions. I am not going to try to answer them all. We should probably assume that the original readers had background knowledge and could fill in some of the blanks. We should also note that some details are better covered in 2 Chronicles. You should read it along with Kings. And some details are left out because of the nature of the book itself. Kings is not a construction manual. The writer "has omitted details which would be essential for a reconstruction (i.e., the thickness of the walls, the layout of the façade, the way in which it was roofed)" (de Vaux, 39-41). The information here is not meant for you to go build one, but to behold God!

Our hearts should be moved to worship with the Psalmist who said things like this: "Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary" (Ps 96:6). David dreamed of seeing the splendor. He said, "One thing I have asked of the Lord ... 'to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple'" (Ps 27:4). Indeed, many Psalms come to mind like this one, "Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness" (Ps 29:2). As we reflect upon the beauty of God's holiness, may we also reflect upon these words: "be holy for God is holy" (1 Pet 1:15). The temple should cause us to elevate our concept of God, and in seeing him, cause us to worship and serve him with more passion.

5 Applications

I want to make five applications from these chapters. The first four come from the construction of the temple (chapters 6-7), and the last one comes from chapter 8 (and has several parts).

#1: Treasure the Promises of God (6:1, 37-38)

We noticed chapter five already that the king used his wisdom to get all the necessary materials for the temple. Thousands of workers were needed. Now, in the 480th year after the people came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, they begin building. This date is not just about chronology; it is about theology as well. The writer shows us the continuation of the story of the redemption. We are reading about a new era in redemptive history. The exodus was that great event in the history of Israel, in which God brought out his people out of bondage and gave them freedom (after 430 years of bondage, Ex 12:40). God promised to deliver them from Egypt (cf., Ex 6:6), and God later promised that Israel was settled in the land and build a house for God (Ex 15:17; Deut 12:10-11, 16:2; 2 Sam 7:12-13). Throughout these chapters, a repeated refrain is that God keeps his promises.

We might think that God takes a long time, but remember, God does not play by a shot clock! He keeps his promises, but it is on his own timetable. Our job is to trust him, to wait on him. God also that Messiah would come, and in the fullness of time, he did (Gal 4:4). In Christ, as we read of the great redemption provided by Jesus. In him, we find ultimate freedom and rest. We now await the fulfillment of the last act in the redemptive drama. And that day will come. Luther said, "There are two days on my calendar, today and 'that day.'" We can be certain that "that day" will come.

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would "know the hope to which he called you" (Eph 1:18). Biblical hope is not a wish. It is a settled reality. You can take God at his word. You can trust that God cares for his people. You can trust that all things are working for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28); and that his glory will one day be revealed and this present suffering (Rom 8:18), this light momentary affliction, will give way to eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17). Treasure his promises.

At the end of the chapter, the writer says that temple is completed in seven years (38), or more precisely seven years and six months (Provan, 67).

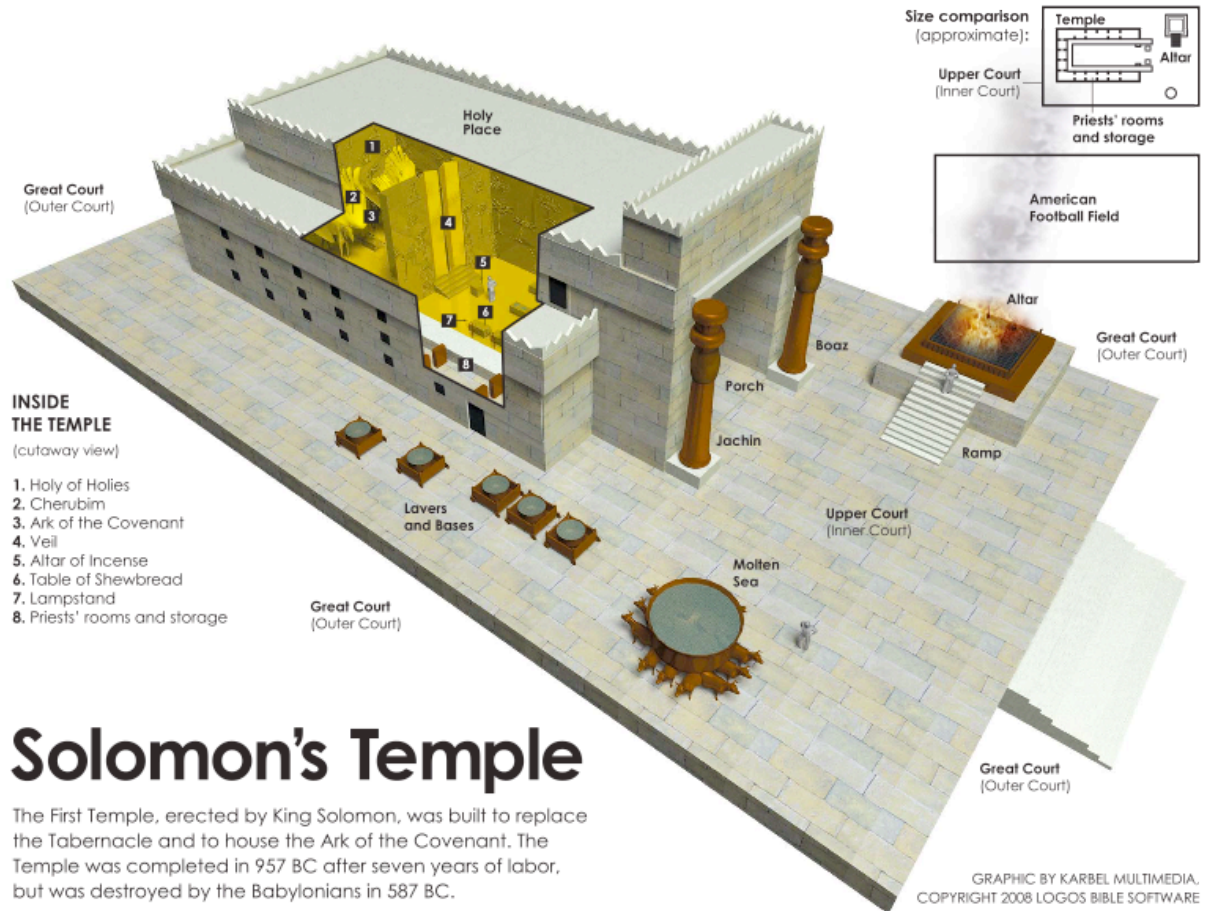
#2: Marvel at the Holiness of God (6:2-10; 14-36)

The Size of the Temple (6:2). In the wilderness wandering, God's people built a tabernacle, which was a portable structure used for worship. But the temple was permanent residence. The temple was similar to the tabernacle in structure, but it was bigger and more glorious in every way. You see the word "cubit" throughout. A cubit was about 18 inches. Thus, the temple was about 90 feet long (from home plate to first base), 30 feet wide (a first down in football), and 45 feet high (a four story building). It had the same proportions of the tabernacle only quadruple the size. Ryken notes, "Roughly speaking, it was about the size of a church sanctuary that would seat 250 people, but proportionately it was narrow and tall – the height of a four-story building" (138).

Therefore, the temple was *not* on the scale of the Seven Wonders of the World. It was not huge. Of course, it was placed up high on the mountain for people to see, and it was designed

with amazing skill and expensive items, but what made it most impressive was its purpose. It was the place where God's name dwelled (1 Kings 8:19).

Since a picture is worth a thousand words, an image is provided below. We will describe some of these elements.



The Structure of the Temple (6:3-10, 14-36). We could highlight the temple construction in three parts. First, the writer explains the *exterior* of the building (3-10, 14). We read of the vestibule, the various rooms, windows, the walls, and staircases. Verse 9a concludes the exterior section with the note “So he built the house and finished it.” Then another note follows about the roof, the room dimensions and the exterior paneling (9b-10). Verse 14 marks a transition into the next section. Second, the writer explains the *interior* of the building (15-28). Third, the furnishings of the temple and the court are noted (29-36).

An interesting aspect of the construction project is in verse 7. It says, “When the house was built, it was with stone prepared at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the house while it was being built.” In chapter 5, Solomon deployed thousands of men to the hills to get the stone for the temple. They brought these items back to the

city. These skilled workmen cut the material perfectly and then without a sound put each stone where it belonged. Remarkable skill! (I think I may play institute this rule at my house!).

The off-site cutting and dressing of stones could stem from an earlier prohibition about the use of iron tools in constructing sacred buildings or altars (Deut 27:5; Josh 8:31). But I think it has more to do with the idea of reverence. The prophet said, “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him” (Hab 2:20). These men were doing holy work in quiet reverence.

Regarding the interior, the writer describes the elaborate adornments and boards. Then he describes the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place (16-ff). A three-part plan existed: (1) the court, (2) the holy place, and (3) the “Most Holy Place.” The Most Holy Place was at the rear of the house, occupying some thirty feet, a third of the temple. Most of the Israelites would never see these things, since it was an area reserved for the priests. The Most Holy Place housed the Ark of the Covenant, where atonement was made, and which served as “God’s footstool!” Hebrews also mentions that it was also an earthly copy of God’s heavenly throne room (Heb 9:23-24).

Among the elements described, we see Solomon’s temple was covered in “pure gold.” (cf., 6:20-22, 28, 30). This was extraordinary! It denotes the glory of God.

Was this gold used the right way? The writer makes no judgments. No negative word exists, so we should probably just see this as an act done to honor the glory of Yahweh.

Also notice the cherubim (23-30). Two cherubim, each about fifteen feet graced the Most Holy Place (23-28). The wings of these magnificent creatures covered the room! They were like guardians of ark, reminding us of Eden. They also magnified God’ majesty. The Psalmist says God “sits enthroned upon the cherubim” (99:1; 80:1; Isa 6:1-3)

Notice also in the other sixty feet, the engraved “figures of cherubim and palm trees, and open flowers” covered the walls and the inner doors (29). Why? To signify God’s holiness? Yes. But there is more. The temple was a “garden of Eden” like the Tabernacle, in which God dwelled with his people. In the garden, every tree was “pleasant to the sight and “good for food.” But after our first parents sinned, they were banished from their home, and he placed a cherubim somewhere east of Eden to “guard the way of the tree of life” (Gen 3:24). Notice the doors are mentioned in verse 33-36. They also had carvings of cherubim and botanical designs – echoes of Eden. The entrance allowed the priests into the presence of God, but also kept others out of God’s presence. As for the Most Holy Place, only the high priests could enter once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The temple pointed back to Genesis and the Tabernacle and it also pointed ahead to the person and work of Christ. Jesus was “God with us” (Luke 1:23); who became flesh and “dwelt among us” (John 1:14). He became the new temple, allowing us, who were cut off from God, to have access back to God through his once and for all sacrifice (cf., Heb 10:19-22; Eph 2:18).

These parts of the temple also point ahead to the New Heavens and the New Earth in which Paradise will be regained, in which God will forever dwell with us people (cf., Rev 21:3).

Ryken notes that the work these men were doing in the temple of God may also remind us of the work that God is doing in our lives. We are “living stones” that God is building into a “spiritual house” (1 Pet 2:5). God is not finished with us – his temple! How is God shaping us? God is chipping away what does not belong, and fitting us together. He uses pain, suffering, trials, and temptation. He uses your Bible reading and prayer to shape us as well. God is shaping us personally and communally. Paul says of God’s church that we are a “holy temple in the Lord,” and we are “built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph 2:21-22). God is sanctifying his church, his new temple (cf., 2 Cor 6:16; Col 3:16-17). There were great temples in places like Athens, and a great temple in Jerusalem, but now a greater temple is being built, namely God’s people.

#3: Submit to the Word of God (6:11-13; 7:1-12)

Solomon’s Heart. Tucked in the middle of these details is God speaks to Solomon. This is a holy interruption (Ryken, 141). God often interrupts us. He uses various circumstances to get our attention and fix our eyes on his word.

This interruption highlights what Solomon was to remember in the midst of his work; that is, apart from the word, this was just another building project. If Israel does not follow God’s word, then they will not enjoy all the benefits that the temple signifies. God says that Solomon will experience God’s blessing if he obeys the commands. These blessings include an everlasting dynasty, the presence of God and God’s continued faithfulness.

Thus, you see that despite the importance of the temple, what God desires from his people was not a building but obedience. God was after Solomon’s *heart*. God does not tell him to stop building, he simply reminds him of what is most important; namely, obedience to God’s word. External work is secondary to one’s interior life. The Israelites often failed to remember this fact (e.g., Jer 7:1-34). God was after their obedience, yet they often trusted in “the temple of the Lord” to keep them from judgment (Jer. 7:4).

What God says here is basically what David previously said to Solomon (1 Kings 2:4). Solomon knew this. But walking in the commands is another matter. I was counseling someone close to me this week and they were telling me of their husband that knows the Bible, and even text messages verses but the life he is living consistently contradicts what he knows and says. His sin is leading the children to become jaded toward him because of such hypocrisy. There is knowledge but no implementation of that truth. God wants us to be “doers of the word not hearers only” (James 1).

Is there any hope? Yes. But as we have said, Solomon could not keep the “if statements” of the covenant. But a real promise keeper came – Jesus Christ. Ryken says, “[Jesus] kept all the ‘if’ commands of the law that open up all the ‘then’ promises of the gospel for everyone who

believes in him” (145). God’s promises that he will dwell in our hearts through faith (Eph 3:15); that he will never leave us or forsake us (Heb 13:5), even to the end of the age (Matt 28:20). Because of Jesus, all of these promises are yours! Because of Jesus, we can be forgiven for our law-breaking, and because of Jesus we have power to obey him faithfully.

Solomon’s House (7:1-13). Solomon’s Palace takes about twice as long to finish (thirteen years). It consisted of five parts, the “Palace of the Forest of Lebanon” (2-5), the “Hall of Pillars” (6), the “Hall of Justice” (7), and a house for himself, and one for Pharaoh’s daughter (8). Verses 9-12 describe the expensive materials used.

The writer does not tell us how we should take this section. Do we take it positively? Was this an example of God’s blessing, and a sign of God’s splendor like the temple? Or was this an example of Solomon’s self-indulgence, and divided heart? Were Solomon’s priorities out of line? Positively, it seems like a good thing to live near the temple. He was close to God’s presence, and he used it to do justice (cf., Ps 72). Negatively, one could call this extravagant. The language of 6:38 and 7:1 highlights an emphatic contrast, perhaps suggesting that his priorities were out of order (Provan, 69). We probably are on safe ground by at least saying he was a man with mixed motives at best.

However you come down on the issue, we must remember that we must submit to God’s word concerning wealth, home, and worship buildings. In the New Testament, we read that there is an indulgence that is sinful (cf., Luke 12:17-21), and an extravagance that at times was acceptable in the Bible (cf., Mark 14:3-9) (Davis, 64). As believers, we need to seek God’s word for counsel regarding wealth, and seek to use it wisely. I do not think it is wrong to spend money on a house or a place for worship, but we need to remember a few things. Regarding the temple, we should never compare a church building to Solomon’s temple. We are in a new era. We do not need to spend millions upon millions on a place for corporate worship because we have our temple already in Jesus. Even if the need for a large place exists, it seems best to build simple structures, rather than opulent structures. We do not have a call to compete with the new Dallas Cowboy stadium. What we need is to put the glory of God on display with our lives.

Regarding our homes, one should think about building their home or buying a home or renting a place with ministry in mind. Certainly, one can enjoy the fruit of the work and be thankful for a nice place to raise a family, but think about how to host people when you think about your home. And even if Solomon is not demonstrating misplaced priorities in this text, it is quite possible that you and I could do this. Our stuff is not more important than the kingdom. One should take care of their house but should not idolize it. Be very careful that the culture does not influence you in these matters. Once again, the call is to order our lives after God’s word.

Remember also in Matthew 6, Jesus is teaching on the need to not worry about your basic needs, but to trust him. He says, “Consider the lilies of the field...” and “even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (6:28, 29). Then he says, “If God clothes these grass of the field, which is today alive and tomorrow is thrown in the oven, will he not much more clothe you, o you of little faith?” (30). You can trust God. You do not need to have a massive home,

great wealth, and you need not worry about your basic needs, instead you should simply “Seek first the kingdom of God” (Matt 6:33), and rest in the fact that God will take care of you.

#4: Use Your Skills to the Glory of God (7:13-51)

In these verses, we read of the fixtures of the temple. A skilled craftsman, Hiram of Tyre, from the tribe of Naphtali (not the Hiram from ch. 5), fashions the gold and bronze items. Hiram’s work is reminiscent of Bezalel and Oholiab who were skilled and gifted to construct the Tabernacle. From this, we see how God gifts people in the arts and for craftsmanship.

Hiram makes four basic items and their accessories in 7:15-47. First, he makes a pair of massive pillars (15, 21-22). One pillar was called “Jachin” (“He will establish”) and the other “Boaz” (“in Him is strength”). I think these names signified a message, much like a basketball point guard might call a play saying, “five” (Davis, 73). These single words conveyed a lot of communication. These pillars conveyed the firmness of God’s promise to *establish* David’s throne (c.f., 2 Sam 7:12-16), and God’s mighty *strength* to accomplish it. In the royal Psalm 21 of David, it begins and ends with this word “Boaz” (strength in English): “Oh Lord, in the strength, the king rejoices.... Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength (Ps 21:1, 13). As Ryken points out, it is possible, maybe even probable that this pillar was to remind people of this Psalm.

Therefore, standing in front of the temple proper were these two pillars “He will establish” and “In him is strength.” The promise of God and the power of God exalted.

What a great reminder to us today that our strength is in the Lord (cf., Eph 6:10, 2 Tim 2:1), and God’s kingdom through Christ, the greater Solomon is established forever (Luke 1:32-33). The temple would fall, but as Luther said, “God’s kingdom is forever.” (“A Mighty Fortress is Our God”). We do not need these pillars today, but what we do need is this message written on our hearts, as we seek to do God’s will in this life.

One top of each pillar is an ornate capital (16-21). The capitals were decorated with rows of fruit and chains of flowers – more echoes of the Garden. The pomegranates remind us of the priests who had pomegranates on the fringes of their garments also. We also read of lily work, symbols of life and love. These also remind us of Eden.

Second, Hiram made a large holding tank called a “molten sea” or “sea of cast metal” (7:23–26) which stood upon twelve oxen. It was designed to hold lots of water (about twelve thousand gallons). He decorated it with gourds and made a lip in the shape of a lily. The stand consisted of twelve metal oxen (perhaps a sign of the twelve tribes of Israel). It was for washing and maybe to convey the idea of God ruling over the chaotic waters and all creation.

Third, Hiram made ten movable stands to hold smaller basins of water for other temple rituals (7:27-39). Each basin contained about 200 gallons of water. The stands had four wheels and were decorated with cherubim, lions and palm trees (7:27-37).

“What is up with all this water?” you might ask. These basins demonstrate God’s concern for cleansing. The priests had to keep themselves ceremonially pure to do their work (cf., 2 Chron 4:6). They washed themselves and the animals.

Of course, God is still concerned with cleansing. But there are some differences. One difference is that all believers are God’s priests now (1 Pet 2:5). We no longer need to offer sacrifices. What we offer instead is our praise, our prayers, and our proclamation of the good news to the world (Heb. 13:15). The other difference is we have a better cleansing. Through Jesus, we can be cleansed. There is a cleansing when we come to Christ (e.g., Titus 3:5), and then a renewing cleansing that we need daily (e.g., 1 John 1:7; 2 Cor 7:1). Positionally, we are holy as God’s people because of Jesus; but practically, we need to daily experience fresh cleansing.

Fourth and finally, he made smaller basins and “shovels and bowls” (40-47). Such elements were used for temple ceremonies. In 48-51, we read that Solomon completes the furnishings by having the utensils made. We read of “the golden altar” that was likely used for the burning of incense (cf., Ex 30:1-4), symbolizing the prayers of the people; “the golden table for the bread of Presence,” which represented God’s presence and provision; “ten lampstands” (cf., Ex 25:31-40), which gave light to the place, signified glory, and conveyed the idea of life through both the tree of life and light (House, 135); and cups, snuffers, basins, dishes, fire pans, and more which are covered in pure gold. “Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the Lord was finished” (51a). Then the writer notes that Solomon brings the items David dedicated to the temple (cf., 2 Sam 8:11; 1 Chron 22:14).

Ralph Davis points out that 2 Chronicles (3-4) spends much less time on these details than the writer of Kings. You might wonder, “Why all this information? Who cares about pomegranates, and basins, and fire pans, and pillars?” While many have little patience for this section, notice that the author seems to relish in it. He loves describing the liturgical elements (Davis, 75-76). Why? Perhaps because he thinks one should use their scientific mind and artistic skills to the glory of God. Hiram’s artistic skill, like the men who made the worship elements for the tabernacle, made beautiful things for God’s temple.

What about you? Are you using your God-given gifts to create things for the glory of your Creator? That is what you were made to do. Whether you are an artist, musician, a writer, a cook, a plumber, a teacher, an athlete, a techy, a doctor, or something else, use your gifts for God’s glory and the good of others.

The Presbyterian missionary Elizabeth Freeman and her husband John were pioneer missionaries to India. Only after seven years, they were seized by a Muslim uprising, and shot in cold blood. Earlier Elizabeth wrote these words to one of her nieces: “I hope you will be a missionary wherever your lot is cast, and as long as God spares your life; for it makes but little difference after all where we spend these few fleeting years, if they are only spent for the glory of God. Be assured there is nothing else worth living for” (Told in Ryken, 198). Indeed. Be

assured! Nothing is worth living for but the glory of God. And on top of this grand purpose, we are given the presence of God to carry out the mission of God.

#5: Pour Out Your Heart to God (8:1-66)

In chapter 8, after the ark is brought into the temple, Solomon offers up an incredible prayer to God. The structure of chapter 8 seems to have a great emphasis on verses 22-53. Following Porten and Davis, consider this scheme:

Celebration and Sacrifice (1-13)
 Blessing (14-21)
 Prayer of Dedication (22-53)
 Blessing (54-61)
Celebration and Sacrifice (62-66)

Following this chiasmic structure, one can see that what comes in the middle of the sandwich is of great importance (Davis, 80; see also Leithart for a possible structure of 1:1-12:24. The structure noted there places the section we are considering, 1 Kings 6:1-9:9, at the center of the narrative of Solomon). We can divide this prayer, then, in three parts: (1) its celebration and sacrifice (1-13; 62-66); (2) its blessing (12-21; 54-61); and (3) its prayer of dedication – a seven-fold petition. The first part highlights the mystery and clarity of God. The second part exults in the faithfulness of God, and the second blessing includes a benedictory prayer. The third part highlights the forgiveness of God. With these attributes of God in mind, let us consider the need to pray to this God.

A. Celebration and Sacrifice (1-13, 62-66)

This chapter begins with Solomon bringing the ark into the temple, this great symbol of God's presence (1-3). It was in the old city of David, but not at the top of the temple mount. So it gets brought up during the Feasts of Tabernacles (the seventh week). This feast commemorated God's faithfulness to his people in the wilderness wandering. Now, the wandering was over. They were settled. They celebrated this fact.

Everyone involved in the process offers sacrifices in view of personal sin and national sin, and in praise to the God who forgives and provides (4-6). This indicated the great holiness of God. We need blood to enter his presence.

In 6-9, the ark reaches its destination: the Most Holy Place. We are given a description of these massive poles (7-8), and of the contents of the ark: nothing "except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb (9a). God's Word and God's presence are linked together.

Then we see the incredible results. A cloud fills the house, and the priests "could not stand to minister because of the cloud" (11). Why? For this reason, the cloud represented the

glory of God. The writer says, “the glory of God filled the house of the Lord” (8:11). This same wonder happened in the tabernacle in Exodus 40:34-35. The disciples experienced an awesome glory cloud at the Transfiguration of Jesus, also (Mark 9:2-3). One day we will see glory for ourselves, as Jesus prayed in John 17:24.

As we see throughout chapter 8, God’s attributes are mysteriously and majestically joined together (Davis, 79-93). Here, we see mystery and clarity joined together. God is on the one hand hidden, and on the other hand revealed. The cloud reveals his glory and conceals his glory (cf., Ps 18:11; 97:2). His clarity is revealed by what is in the ark: his word. His word is clear. He has clearly taught us his ways. “The cloud points to his obscurity, the ark to his clarity; the former suggests we cannot know him exhaustively, though the latter testifies that we can know him adequately. He satisfies your need for clarity but not your passion for curiosity” (Davis, 82).

What that means is you can know God today. He has made himself known in his word, and in his Son. But when you come to know Jesus, you realize that God is inexhaustible. The Psalmist said, “His greatness is unsearchable” (Ps 145). You were made to know this God, and to know him more and more.

Of course, these sacrifices point to the way in which we come to know this God. Ultimately, the animal sacrifices could not do it. We needed a perfect sacrifice, and that is what we have in Jesus. Because of his sacrifice, we can celebrate. And because of his sacrifice, the only thing left to offer is our lives (Rom 12:1-2).

In verse 12-13, Solomon responds in awe as well. Solomon underscores the mystery of God’s transcendence and immanence. God dwells in thick darkness (transcendence, hiddenness), but is also immanent (dwelling among his people in the “exalted house). May we too stand in awe of his glory.

At the end of the chapter, more sacrifices are made (62-64), and then held a great feast for seven days. The people were full of joy and gladness (65-66). In this, we see another “joining together,” this time of fear and festivity. God is to be feared; sacrifice is required. God is also to be enjoyed; celebration should exist among God’s delivered people.

B. Blessing (14-21; 54-61)

Solomon turns his attention to speak to the people. He is speaking about God, and doing it in a worshipful manner. He is exulting in God’s faithfulness. He ties together God’s covenant to David and the exodus, both of which highlight God’s faithfulness (15-16). Next, he reflects on God’s words to David, that David’s son would build a house (17-19). This also highlights the faithfulness of God. Finally, Solomon exults in God’s choice of him to build the temple (20-21).

What about you? Do you exult in, rejoice in, and delight in God’s faithfulness? If not, then I would recommend you do what Solomon is doing here, consider the word of God. Consider how God has kept his promises.

Look at the second blessing in verses 54-61. Solomon again stretches out his hands toward heaven (54; cf. 22). Only this time, he is not standing (22), but keeling. Perhaps he began standing but poured out his heart with such passion that he ended up on the ground.

He again he says, "Blessed be the Lord" (56; cf., 15). And he again praises God for his faithfulness. He says that God has kept his promises, and that "not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant" (56; cf., 6:1; 8:16). What a statement! Not one word of God has ever failed and not one word of God ever will fail! You can trust in his word forever!

Then the blessing turns into a benedictory prayer, which is in three parts. First, he encourages the people to recognize their need for God's presence. He says, "May the Lord be with us" (57). Solomon recognizes that just as God was with Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah and others, they needed his presence.

Second, he prays that God "incline our hearts to him" (58). Solomon pleads with God that the people may love God's word and do his will. We should pray this! "Incline our hearts to him." What does this mean? Theologian G.T. Shed said, "Love is inclination." That is, whatever we are inclined to do, is what we love the most. This is a prayer for God to work in our wills so that we do not love anything more than him. The Psalmist prayed, "Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain" (Ps 119:36).

This may be a good place to think about true conversion. Conversion is the change of affections. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). Our wills are inclined to something new. Some people when they hear the gospel think, "Oh, I've tried that, and it didn't work." No, you did a religious ritual, but your affections were not changed. Others, say they are believers, but live a double-life because they have never been changed either. Christianity is about being changed in the inside. "Love is inclination." A Christian is one who loves Christ, and to love him, our hearts must be inclined to him. Now, as a Christian, every day we are praying that God would incline our hearts to him that we may do his will.

Third, he pleads with God to uphold Israel's cause (59-61). And notice the reason: "that all the peoples of the earth may now that the Lord is God; there is no other" (60). Solomon desires for the nations to know the true and living God. God is not a tribal deity, but the only God who deserves the worship of the nations (cf., 8:41-43).

Solomon concludes with a charge to Israel to be faithful (cf., Josh 24:14). Every generation has this charge, to be faithful to the God who is always faithful to his people.

C. Seven-Fold Petition (22-53)

The prayer Solomon offers is very important to understanding Kings. It is basically a summary of every prayer that would be prayed in the temple in the future (Spurgeon, "Solomon's

Plea”), organized with seven petitions, perhaps to signify perfection. These petitions begin in verse 31.

Leading up to these petitions, we should notice a few matters. Solomon praises God for his uniqueness. God is the only God. God is the faithful, redeeming, covenant keeping God (23-24-26).

Verses 27-30 serve as a transition into the seven petitions. Solomon reminds us that God is not confined to a building (cf., Acts 17:24-25). Indeed, the highest of heavens cannot contain him (27). Yet, God has chosen to make his “name” dwell in the temple (18, 19, 20). God is both high and lofty, but he hears the prayers of the meek and lowly (cf., Isa 66:1-2).

The listening nature of God is noted in the next verse, and then appears throughout the following petitions. Notice the phrase “hear from heaven,” which appears throughout (cf., 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49). Solomon understands that the temple was to be a place to give your petitions to God, and he would hear there, but he was not confined there. God’s “hearing” is done in heaven.

Now, we have no temple, we have something better, namely, Jesus. Through him we can pray anytime, anywhere, as Jesus told the woman at the well (John 4:21-24). And we know God hears the prayers of his people. “Call to me and I will answer you” (Jer 33:3; Ps 91:15; Jer 19:12). What is more, we have a better mediator than Solomon! Jesus Christ our King is our eternal intercessor (cf., Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25); and the Holy Spirit dwells within us allowing us to commune with God (cf., Eph 2:18). Pour out your heart to this transcendent and immanent God.

Since God hears the prayers of his people, what should they pray? The following seven petitions highlight the *severity and the mercy of God* (31-53). Five of these petitions have to do with sin situations, the first four and the last one (31, 33-34, 35-36, 38-39; 46-ff). Consequently, a prayer for forgiveness is offered throughout (30, 34, 36, 39, 50). Thus we see one of the main purposes of the temple: forgiveness. The other two petitions will be noted below. Let’s think about these seven petitions. (I’m indebted to Ryken for the following headings, 224-236).

Petition #1: A Prayer for Justice (31-32). The first petition concerns a legal case where insufficient evidence makes the case difficult to render a verdict. God is called upon to condemn the guilty and clear the innocent. Even though Solomon was wise, he could not rightly judge all things (cf., Ex 22:9). Solomon acknowledges God’s righteousness and justice. God is the one who “judges impartially” (1 Pet 1:17). We should also pray for justice to be done, and for God to grant us wisdom when we are called upon to execute justice.

Petition #2: A Prayer for Rescue (33-34). The second petition concerned a defeat in battle because of Israel’s sin, and their need for rescue and return. Israel often lost battles because of their sin previously (cf., Josh 7:1-5; 1 Sam 4:1-11). Solomon understood the human nature of Israel and thus prayed for God to forgive them and bring them back to the land.

Petition #3: A Prayer for Provision (35-36). Sometimes the sin of God's people would bring about problems with the land (cf., Deut 11:13-17). This actually happens later in 1 Kings in the days of King Ahab. The people turn away and there is no rain for three years (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17). But after Elijah overcomes the prophets of Baal, and prays for rain, God provided for his people (1 Kings 18:41-45; James 5:17-18).

Petition #4: A Prayer for Deliverance (37-40). This prayer sounds a lot like the third. Solomon lists a host of disasters that might befall the people because of their sin (37). Later, we will read of Hezekiah stretching out his hands in prayer for deliverance, when the nation of Assyria, led by Sennacherib, besieged Jerusalem (2 Kings 18-19). But Hezekiah prays for deliverance from this threat (2 Kings 19:14-19) and God hears his plea and answers him (19:20; 32-36).

We should not always make a one to one correlation between disasters and God's judgment. Our nation is not in a covenant the way the nation of Israel is. However, we do need to remember that God calls us to obedience, and when we fail, we there are consequences. And when we fail, we need to repent.

We need to also remember the simple truth that God hears us when we pray. Elijah and Hezekiah serve as illustrations of this truth. James encouraged his people to pray reminding them that "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours" and he prayed fervently and God acted (cf., James 5:17-18).

Petition #5: A Prayer for Outsiders (41-43). Solomon expresses a desire for the nations to know and worship the God of Israel. He mentions the "mighty hand" and "outstretched arm" of God, signifying God's salvation (Deut 4:34; 5:15). Here, we are reminded that God chose Israel that they may be a blessing to the nations (cf., Gen 12:1-3). The temple was designed to be a "house of prayer for all peoples" (Isa 2:3; 56:7; Mark 11:17). In the gospels, we read about how the temple turned into more of a place for nationalistic pride, warfare, and economic gain. It was never intended for that purpose.

Many examples of outsiders being drawn to Israel's God appear in the Old Testament, such as Ruth. Others appear right here in the book of Kings, like Queen of Sheba, and the widow of Zarephath. We also read of Naaman, who comes to Israel to be healed of leprosy, after an Israelite slave girl testifies of God's power. He left saying, "Behold I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15). We read of the widow of Zerepath in a few chapters also.

In the New Testament, some of those individuals are called "God-fearers." They are Gentiles who find something about Israel's God attractive. So we read about the Centurion and Cornelius' faith.

A lot of people do not understand that God desires the salvation of all nations. Some wrongly categorize Christianity as a "Western Religion." In some bookstores, it is placed under

that heading. But the fact is many Eastern countries are seeing more explosive growth than the West. The gospel is for the nations. The promise to Abraham was about the nations. Here, at the steps of the temple, we find a prayer for the nations. In Revelation, we see the culmination of this passion. So, if people ask you, "Where did you get your passion for the nations?" You should simply say, "I read the Bible." For if you taken the nations out of the Bible, you only have the table of contents and the maps left!

Are you praying for outsiders to come to know Jesus? Are you joining God in this mission to see outsiders come to faith in Jesus? A difference to note is that in the Old Testament the nations mainly came *into* Jerusalem, but in the New Testament, the Christians were together in Jerusalem at Pentecost, but then, the mission went out *from* Jerusalem. We are to go into the world to show and tell the gospel.

Petition #6: A Prayer for Victory (44-45). Like the previous petition, this petition is about war. But this one is not about Israel's defeat because of sin, but about victory in God's cause. In 2 Chronicles 20, the Moabites and Ammonites come against King Jehoshaphat and Judah. But Jehoshaphat gathers everyone and they seek the Lord's intervention. He alludes to 1 Kings 8, and they pray, "For we are powerless" and we "do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you" (2 Chron 20:12). Miraculously, God intervenes and delivered his people. Of course, we are in a different kind of battle now, but we need to pray for God's help to gain victory against our enemies (cf., Eph 6:10-20).

Petition #7: A Prayer for Restoration (46-53). Here we find the fifth request for forgiveness. This one was a "worse case scenario" (Davis, Ryken). Solomon mentions the scenario of the people of God going into exile because of their sin. This is exactly where the book of Kings is headed. A second Exodus will be needed because of their sin. Solomon's prayer is based in reality. He says in 46, "there is no one who does not sin." Yet, He understands that restoration and grace is possible if they plead for it (48-49). We find prayers like this during Israel's exile. Daniel was exiled in Babylon and prayed for the restoration of Israel (Daniel 6:10; cf., 9:3-19). Daniel's prayer was an answer to Solomon's prayer! God did forgive the people and bring them back to the land.

We too need to be reminded that our greatest problem is a sin problem. But we have great hope in Christ. He is the sin-bearing Savior, sin forgiving Savior. Due to the nature of sin, we need to constantly be repenting of sin, and seeking cleansing from our merciful God. Our culture does not want to believe anything is a "sin" and in so doing are blinded to their need for the one "who came to save his people from their sins."

Looking back over this section on the temple construction and temple dedication, we are reminded of some important truths:

- *Treasure the promises of God.* He redeems. He saves.
- *Marvel at the holiness of God.* Worship in the splendor of his holiness.
- *Submit to the word of God.* God is after the heart, not just what you build.

- *Use your skills to the glory of God.* All of your talents should be used for the good of the kingdom.
- *Pour out your heart to God.* Praise God. Bless God. Celebrate the goodness of God. And pray for justice, rescue, provision, deliverance, for outsiders, victory, and restoration.

Warning (9:1-9)

But we are not done! The temple narrative is not finished! After this, the writer says that the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time. He first appeared at Gibeon. This is where God blessed Solomon with wisdom. Such wisdom was used for the building of the temple. God assures Solomon that his name will dwell there and that he will hear prayer (3).

However, this appearance comes with a warning (5-9). There is a condition for continued blessing: obedience (4), and the obedience of future Israelites (6). The particular issue mentioned is idolatry (6, 9). God says if they worship false gods, then Israel will become a byword and a proverb, and the temple will become a pile of ruins (7b-8). Provan notes, "The 'if' of verse 6 cannot in reality be anything other than a 'when' (8:46)" (Provan, 83). The people will chase other gods, and Israel will be carried away. "The temple is no sooner built than we hear of its inevitable end" (Ibid).

Thus, we are left with a focus on Solomon's heart. That is a good place for us to end. The warning to the Hebrews comes to mind, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God" (Heb 3:12).

Everyone will worship something or someone. Who do you worship? Let us remember that someone greater than Solomon is here. Jesus has come to show us glory of God. He never sinned or fell short of the glory of God. He has lived a perfectly righteous life, and died a substitutionary death. He has conquered the grave, and now, we need to submit our lives to this King. Do not give your heart to another lover. But instead, see in Christ all that you need. In him, is freedom, rest, joy, power for holiness, and access to God in prayer. Let his peace rule in your heart (Col 3:15). Look to the Savior-King-Temple who outshines all the beauties of this world. Behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6) with the eyes of faith, and be changed by the Spirit of God.