



The Dedication of the Temple 1 Kings 8:10-61

Last time we saw how Solomon built a temple that was constructed from the best of everything that could be obtained. He could afford it because God had enriched the nation because of Solomon's choice to rely on God and ask for wisdom.

We saw in one sense that the temple was as much a monument to Solomon as it was supposed to be a temple for the worship of God. Right here in the first verse we read we see that God restores the balance: *1 Kings 8 10 As the priests were leaving the Temple, it was suddenly filled with a cloud 11 shining with the dazzling light of the Lord's presence, and they could not go back in to perform their duties.*

Let's pray that in whatever we do, that the Lord always gets the glory and ask that it will always shine through.

The we come to Solomon's prayer of dedication of the temple. It's actually three prayers and what I find most interesting about them is the balance of what is said. This was the early part of the reign of Solomon – his wise period.

Solomon was realistic of the fact that a structure raised to the glory of God was going to be standing amongst a people who would almost continually discredit the true and living God whose presence was in that building.

All three prayers are an interesting commentary on the nature of sin and a recognition of how damaging sin not dealt with is to God's people corporately as much as it is personally.

The first prayer recognises a faithful God and how Solomon got to build the temple not David. The nation had been blessed through David's kingship, but because of David's sin he was prevented from building the temple.

That was the whole thing – David was one of the best kings Israel had, but because of sin he actually had never really dealt with – and we explored some of those at the beginning Bathsheba, Absalom, Joab and the like – he could not take the nation onwards to the next step and be the architect of a permanent temple.

It was left to Solomon to complete that – before he could make a hash of anything else!

In one sense David's shortcomings didn't seem that great, but it had been left to Solomon to rectify them. As a church we are going into a period of seeing how we can move forward. It needs to be an honest time of reflection of recognising what has held us back – and a coming before God in repentance where we identify shortcomings by ourselves as a fellowship as we seek to move things the right way.

The second prayer is even more revealing as to how important the temple was going to be in their national life and what it would stand for. It was a place where the presence of God was going to reside. Actually in both prayers Solomon recognised that God could not be contained in a building.

"But can you, O God, really live on earth? Not even all of heaven is large enough to hold you, so how can this Temple that I have built be large enough? 28 LORD my God, I am your servant. Listen to my prayer, and grant the requests I make to you today. 29 Watch over this Temple day and night, this place where you have chosen to be worshipped. Hear me when I face this Temple and pray.

It was a fundamental thing. We have a God who is present everywhere and can be worshipped everywhere, but this building had a particular function – it was a focus of where the nation was corporately.

But most of all it recognised that where God was present, the Temple would stand more as a place where the people could recognise their inadequacy and dependence on Him. It was going to be a place of repentance. The majority of the prayer is about it.

So when they recognised national disaster was a result of sin – defeat, drought, famine – this was the place where these things could be dealt with before God. It was a place where they could confess their sins and claim the promises of God.

38 If any of your people Israel, out of heartfelt sorrow, stretch out their hands in prayer toward this Temple, 39 hear their prayer. Listen to them in your home in heaven, forgive them, and help them. You alone know the thoughts of the human heart. Deal with each person as he deserves, 40 so that your people may obey you all the time they live in the land which you gave to our ancestors.

46 "When your people sin against you--and there is no one who does not sin--and in your anger you let their enemies defeat them and take them as prisoners to some other land, even if that land is far away, 47 listen to your people's prayers. If there in that land they repent and pray to you, confessing how sinful and wicked they have been, hear their prayers, O LORD. 48 If in that land they truly and sincerely repent and pray to you as they face toward this land which you gave to our ancestors, this city which you have chosen, and this Temple which I have built for you, 49 then listen to their prayers. In your home in heaven hear them and be merciful to them. 50 Forgive all their sins and their rebellion against you, and make their enemies treat them with kindness

God is vast, but He chooses to localise Himself in places and people, so that they are able to focus on who He is and find forgiveness and strength.

The temple is gone and it never needs to return – it has been superseded by millions of small ones – people have become temples of the Holy Spirit.

Now that's an interesting challenge – it is in the presence of one another that we should come and recognise our sin and call out in repentance. If we are temples the glory of God should shine out of each of us. Our being temples should mean that we challenge one another.

Similarly as we meet as a church corporately, we have a Saviour who has given us a place to come to - around bread and wine, to again remember that our existence as His people is by our total dependence on Him and recognition that we find forgiveness and life in His broken body and shed blood.

Just a couple of last points. The temple was not just to be a focus for Israel. It was to be a place of attraction to the foreigner. *"When a foreigner who lives in a distant land hears of your fame and of the great things you have done for your people and comes to worship you and to pray at this Temple, 42 43 listen to his prayer. In heaven, where you live, hear him and do what he asks you to do, so that all the peoples of the world may know you and obey you, as your people Israel do. Then they will know that this Temple I have built is the place where you are to be worshipped.*

God loves every man and women. Israel's temple was to be a beacon for the foreigner to find Yahweh. So often that never really happened. We are temples of the Holy Spirit – in us people should find Jesus. If they don't see the splendour of the glory of Jesus Christ – then what's gone wrong?

Finally, the temple was the source of strength - *44 "When you command your people to go into battle against their enemies and they pray to you, wherever they are, facing this city which you have chosen and this Temple which I have built for you, 45 listen to their prayers. Hear them in heaven and give them victory.*

This item plays a minor part in the prayer. There is a lot about being right with God and only a bit on battles. Why? Because when we are right with God, the battles are easy and straightforward.

So as we come around the table this evening, we come recognising all the battles in life we have - in our families, in our won lives. Do we find them a struggle? The we need to examine our lives and recognise again our own sinfulness and our total reliance on Christ, so that as we do so we find that the battle becomes easier, winnable in the power of the Holy Spirit whose temple we are.

The third prayer is different from the other two – it's a benediction – a prayer that they will remain faithful to

God. It's longer than the NT ones but recognise in a positive manner just what they can be if they remain faithful to their God. More on that at the end of the service. 56 *"Praise the LORD who has given his people peace, as he promised he would. He has kept all the generous promises he made through his servant Moses. 57 May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us or abandon us; 58 may he make us obedient to him, so that we will always live as he wants us to live, keeping all the laws and commands he gave our ancestors. 59 May the LORD our God remember at all times this prayer and these petitions I have made to him. May he always be merciful to the people of Israel and to their king, according to their daily needs. 60 And so all the nations of the world will know that the LORD alone is God--there is no other. 61 May you, his people, always be faithful to the LORD our God, obeying all his laws and commands as you do today."*

Praise the LORD who has given us peace, as he promised he would. He has kept all the generous promises he made us through the Lord Jesus Christ

May the LORD our God be with us as he was with those who went before us; may he never leave us or abandon us; may he make us obedient to him, so that we will always live as he wants us to live

May the LORD our God always be merciful to us according to their daily needs. And so all the nations of the world will know that the LORD alone is God – there is no other. We ask this all in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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