

1 Kings 8-9:9 Lecture

Well, we're down to just a couple of lessons – amazing how time flies, doesn't it? Seems like we were just gathering together last September with eager anticipation of learning about the United Kingdom section of Scripture – yet, here we are – in the final years of this segment of Biblical history. I want to congratulate each of you for hanging in there throughout this study. I hope you have been able to take away from these studies a deeper understanding of the true character of God and His endless love for you.

Last week, Carol talked about the construction of the temple, and in today's section of reading we are given a listener's ear to King Solomon's prayer to God and the dedication of the temple. You have read through the verses, you have done the homework, and you have met in your groups to discuss the reading. Instead of regurgitating the reading again, I want to approach it from a different angle. If you'll bear with me for a moment or two, I want to bring up some Scriptures to help put your minds and hearts in a certain framework before I go through the reading. My goal is to help make Solomon's words more personal and applicable to you.

The temple we have been reading and talking about for the last several lessons has been a physical structure – an elaborate building designed by David under the influence of the Holy Spirit. David's objective of constructing the temple was that it would be a place where God's presence could reside at all times. The Jews have always been obsessed with the temple since its initial construction and even to this very day they still are. There are already plans in place to construct a third temple – this will be the one that the Antichrist will help make possible and then enter it and demand to be worshiped as God. This is known as the “abomination of desolation,” and it will be the event that sets off the Great

Tribulation that will last for 3 ½ years when God will pour out His wrath on an unbelieving world.

When Jesus came on the scene, the temple was in its second iteration. As Carol mentioned last week, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had torched the city and destroyed Solomon's version of the temple. The version of the temple at the time of Jesus was the one rebuilt under the leadership of Nehemiah and Zerubbabel and was currently under renovation by Herod the Great. Yet, Jesus, as He always did and still does, introduced a new perspective – this time on the temple. Let's look at what He says in chapter 2 of John's gospel beginning with verse 19, "*Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"*" *But the temple he had spoken of was his body.*"

What is Jesus doing with this statement? He sees that the focus of the Jewish leadership was on the temple *building*. Jesus' objective is to make them change their focus to the **Occupant** of the temple. Without God's presence, the temple was nothing more than an elaborate building – it was just a magnificent structure. What made it special was God dwelling in it. I am blessed to own a house. It's a nice house, but it is just a structure of building materials. It didn't become my home until my family moved into it – until Vickie brought all of her incredible love and amazing creativity that made it a place I want to come back to and live in every day. Our *love for things* should *never exceed* our *love for God and people*. Are you following where I am going with this?

Jesus is God, so wherever He goes, the presence of God comes with Him. We come to church [hopefully] with the desire to meet Him, worship Him, and learn from Him. Here's the thing, though, church isn't the only place to meet, worship, learn from, and commune with Him. When Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well, she makes a point that her ancestors worshiped on

the mountain she and Jesus were on at that moment. She then makes the point that the Jews say the place they must worship is in Jerusalem. Jesus replied to her in John 4:21, *“Woman, believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.”*

For the believer in, and follower of Jesus Christ, we are given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as a down payment for our redemption – a guaranty that upon our death or the Rapture, we will be assured of going to heaven and living in peace with God for eternity. The Holy Spirit is a co-equal member of the triune Godhead. Keeping that in mind, let’s look at 1 Corinthians 3:16, *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?”* 2 Corinthians 6:16b adds, *“For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’”*

What does this all mean? As human beings, we are amazing examples of God’s creative genius. However, until God’s Spirit comes into us, we are, in effect, mere vessels, or structures if you will, made up of bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments, organs, blood, and skin. Until we confess Jesus as Savior and Lord, our spirits are dead. However, when we come to faith in Christ, we are born again – we’re given a new life. Our lives go from being empty structures to becoming temples with God’s Spirit dwelling in us.

So....you may be asking why am I spending all this time on this point? Well...I want you to hold onto this perspective as you being the temple of God and listen to Solomon’s dedication and prayers – not so much as for a building – but as for you *personally*. I’ll attempt to hammer home the applications as I go through the today’s reading. So let’s get into it.

Our story begins with the moving of the ark of the Lord’s covenant from Zion, the City of David. Verse 2 tells us this was the month of Ethanim, which is

the 7th month of the Jewish calendar – this means it was in the fall – sometime around September or October. We’re also told this is at the time of the *festival*. The fall festivals consist of the Feast or Festival of Trumpets, The Day of Atonement, and the Feast/Festival of Tabernacles. Verse 8:65 confirmed that Solomon observed the festival and celebrated it before God for 7 days. This coupled with the nature of what is happening in our story, we can probably safely assume the festival verse 2 is speaking of is the Festival of Tabernacles.

All the Israelites and the elders had gathered with Solomon at the temple, and the priests brought up the ark of the Lord, the tent of meeting, and all the sacred furnishings in it. They were sacrificing so many sheep and cattle they couldn’t count them. The ark was placed in the Holy of Holies portion of the temple, as it was a representation of God’s constant presence. Verse 9 may have caused some confusion as it states all that was in the ark was the two stone tablets Moses had placed in it – these were the 10 Commandments – the written Word of God. The confusion is, as our homework points out, Hebrews 9:4 tells us there was once also in the ark a gold jar of manna and Aaron’s budded staff. Is this an inconsistency in Scripture?

In reading commentaries on this issue, I found an explanation of what makes the most sense to me. If you remember, the Philistines back in 1 Samuel 19 took the ark into captivity. It is possible that they could have removed the pot of manna and Aaron’s staff. Why wouldn’t they also remove the stone tablets? Well, I wasn’t there, but I like Jon Courson’s explanation of this situation. He says the pot of manna and Aaron’s budded staff were examples of the signs and wonders of God. They come and go, but the Word of God always stands the test of time.

So after setting the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, the priests withdrew, and a cloud – representing the presence and the glory of the Lord – filled the temple. I think it is important that we note that this cloud didn’t occupy

just a portion of the temple of the Lord – *it filled it completely*. God doesn't do things halfway. He's an all or nothing God. When the Holy Spirit came into each of you when you came to faith in Jesus, He didn't just come into your head or your left big toe. He *fully* and *completely* occupies *all* of you. He's given to us to tap into the fullness of God's presence and power to overcome our flesh that was crucified with Christ and enables us to love God and others as God loves us.

Solomon remarks in verse 12 that the Lord has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud. These are references from Psalm 18:11 and Psalm 97:2. He then gets a case of the "I's" as he says in verse 13, "*I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever.*" I added the emphasis on "I" as taking credit for an accomplishment that was so clearly a team effort is a real hot button for me. What about the 30,000 men that went to Lebanon to get the cedars and the cypress logs? Or what about the 70,000 who carried the burdens or the 80,000 who quarried the stone, or the 3,300 who supervised the work? Yes, Solomon was the guiding force behind the project, but where did he get the wisdom to provide the guidance? – From God. We need to be very careful about how we look at the accomplishments and successes in our lives – in my opinion, *everything* that happens is by the grace of God.

Amidst his blessing in verses 15-21, Solomon hammered home a vital component of God's character – the answer to question 8 of the homework – ***God is a God Who keeps His promises***. In this case, he is referencing the promise God made to David that the temple David wanted to build for the Lord would be built. Psalm 119:160a says, "*The entirety of your word is truth.*" And Numbers 23:19a says, "*God is not a man that He should lie.*" Titus 1:2 bluntly says God cannot lie. Why is it so critical that we believe God is a promise keeper – that He cannot lie? If we're going to place our faith – our hope of our eternal destination – on Someone, don't we want to place that faith in Someone we can trust without

question or doubt? More importantly, we were designed to have a close, intimate, and loving relationship with God. What is the foundation of a love relationship? It's not fun, companionship, or happiness – it is trust. We can be completely safe and at peace in our relationship with God because He first loved us, and He is faithful and completely trustworthy to keep His promises – *everyone of them!*

Now we get into the meat of this lesson – Solomon's prayer of dedication. Question 9 asked us to summarize the requests Solomon made to God – did anyone note how many requests were made? - Seven. What is the number 7 a symbol of in Scripture? – Completion. One could make a case that these requests comprise the complete list of things we need from God – I'll talk about this towards the end of the lecture. As I go through these requests, here is where I now want you to shift your perspective from these requests being about the temple *building* – but being about *you* – the temple of the Holy Spirit. My objective is to make you understand how *personally* important these requests are.

As opposed to the back-slidden Solomon we read about in Ecclesiastes, this is a younger Solomon who is still strong in his faith. His approach to these prayers is very intense – we're going to learn that he is on his knees raising his hands to heaven as he prays. Imagine a modern day leader showing such devotion and commitment to God in front of his/her people? Wouldn't our always unbiased media have a field day with that?! Listen to some of the key words that he offers up to God that demonstrate the position of his heart before God – not just as an individual but that also of a nation's leader. He uses words like “servant”, “mercy”, and “forgive”. These are words that demonstrate a position of humility – the right place all of us should be in when approaching God.

Okay – let's begin with the requests in verses 31 and 32. Now when I initially planned to present this, I was going to read all of these verses. But you can give thanks to Vickie and Carol who politely told me that if I really read all these

verses, I can expect food to be thrown at me and a hook pulling me off the stage. Therefore, while I'm going to put the verses up on the screen, I'm just going to reference the verses and move forward with my comments. Hey, I'm still a teachable – at least a little. The point being covered here in verses 31 & 32 is whether or not someone is guilty of a crime. God needs to be the judge and rule accordingly. What about us? Well, we are **all** guilty – remember **all** have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. God's judgment on us is sending His Son to die on our behalf for the penalty of our sins. We are only innocent because the innocent blood of the Lamb of God covers us.

Beyond this central truth, are we not surrounded daily by what seemingly is an unjust world? People who are committing evil seem to be getting away with it while it may seem like we're trying to live righteously but getting a bunch of bad breaks. One of the biggest stumbling blocks for us as Christians in our relationship with God is paying too much attention to our circumstances as opposed to the One Who is allowing them. We need to come to the point of complete conviction that God is in **total** control, and He will keep the promise He made in Romans 12:19, *"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."* The question we need to ask ourselves regarding the issue of judgment is if we trust God enough to show His mercy and fairness in His judgment on **us**, shouldn't we also come to the point of letting go of the offense of another's sin against us and trust Him to handle the judgment of others? He showed grace to us in His judgment towards us, so we need to put our gavels down, take off our robes of unfounded self-righteousness, and do what Jesus commanded us to do – **love** others.

Verses 33-34 bring us Solomon's second request,. These verses speak to the issue of being defeated by an enemy because of sin against the LORD. Who is **our** enemy? It is not an unpleasant neighbor. It is not an ex-spouse. It is not an unfair

boss. It is not the person who cut you off on the road. We only have one enemy – **Satan**. He is our enemy because he hates God. We are God’s adopted children, so he hates us. His goal is to make our lives miserable, and he does this by manipulating the hearts and minds of those around us to inflict his misery on us. This weakens us, and we, in our weakness – which is really trusting in our delusional idea of our own strength – commit sin.

Sin is an offense to God, so doesn’t it make sense that God must do the forgiving to restore our relationship with Him – to bring us back to the place where we were originally designed to be? This is why that despite the permanent forgiveness Jesus offers through His sacrifice on the Cross – our past, present, **AND** future sins are forgiven – it is healthy for us to periodically confess our sins directly to God. Confession comes from a place of humility – a place where you are no longer depending on your own strengths but relying on God’s strength to lead and protect you. 1 John 1:9 offers an important promise to those who regularly confess their sins, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

The third request comes from verses 35-36. Solomon is linking sin against God as a reason for a nation to experience droughts or extended periods of no rain or water. That is what sin does – it produces dry times. Solomon exhorts the Lord to forgive the peoples’ sin if they turn from their sin, to send rain on the land He gave His people for an inheritance.

Interestingly, in 7th chapter of John’s Gospel, Jesus is speaking at what festival? – The Festival of Tabernacles. Listen to what He says in verses 37-39a, *“On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.”* What is

He promising to those who will turn from their sin and turn to Him? He will give rivers of living water to flow through them via the Holy Spirit. If you're feeling dry in your relationship with God, I suggest you return to the Cross, confess your sin, and then wait for the Holy Spirit to turn the spigot back on of refreshing, life-giving water.

Request #4 comes in verses 37-40. All of these things Solomon mentioned in these verses – famine, plague, blight, mildew/mold, locusts/grasshoppers, and the enemy – they all end up doing one thing – they all bring **destruction**. Nobody gets through life in this fallen world without experiencing some destruction. I can't explain why some experience more than others – God's ways are not my ways, and His thoughts are higher than mine. What I can offer you is my compassion for the destruction you may be experiencing. Destruction brings pain, and pain can do a real number – a lot of damage – to the heart. Solomon speaks an important truth that only God knows everything that is going on in your heart. For some of us, that can be scary, but it shouldn't. If you are afraid of God knowing your heart, then you have an incomplete or deceived understanding of His character.

What did Jesus say in John 3:17? *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* God's desire is not to judge and condemn your heart – His desire is to forgive, heal, and restore your heart. He has seen the destruction in your life, and He knows the pain it has caused. He is willing and able to bring healing to your life, but you have to ask Him. God is a gentleman – He will not force Himself on you. Oh – He'll encourage you to come to Him time and time again – just like right now as I'm encouraging you to go to Him. But **you** have to **ask** Him.

Some of you might want to shout at me right now, “But I **have** come to Him! In tears and cries of desperation – but He's not answering! Here's one of the most difficult lessons I have had to learn about God – He can bring healing even when

the circumstances aren't changing. That may sound like a stretch, but I have personally experienced this. The storms around me are still blowing, but as He has revealed Himself to me through His Word, I have found a greater peace within the storm – not because of **my** strength or ability – but by my growing confidence in **God's** strengths and abilities. He Who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. Amen? It's not easy, my friends – I get that. All I can encourage you to do is to take a chance on trusting God's character more –just like this child jumping off the edge of the pool into his parent's hands – jump into the nail-pierced hands of Jesus and allow Him to bring healing to your life – even inside a storm.

Verses 41-43 make up Solomon's fifth request. Solomon is talking about foreigners coming to the temple. The magnitude of what Solomon is asking in this request cannot be overstated. The Jews were not evangelizers. Moreover, they saw anyone who wasn't Jewish as Gentiles – as unclean. In these verses, Solomon is, in effect, welcoming foreigners to come to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was unheard of in these times.

How do you think these verses apply to us as Christians? Who are the “foreigners” in our lives? Where is our true citizenship? - The Kingdom of God. Jesus told Pilate that His Kingdom was not of this world. The reality is, as believers in this world, we are the foreigners. However, Jesus charged us in Matthew 28:19-20a, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*” Now listen to Solomon's request, “*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.*” As adopted children of God, we are vessels containing the Holy Spirit – we bear the name of Jesus

everywhere we go. You may have heard the saying, “You may be the only example of Jesus someone will ever know.” That may sound like a heavy burden, but it’s not if you surrender your thoughts and ways to God. If you do this, He can step forward and give you the words, the thoughts, and the deeds to be that glimpse of Jesus to a world that desperately needs Him.

Solomon’s 6th request comes in verses 44-45. Here Solomon is talking about the Jews being sent into battle by the LORD. I just talked about the great commission – Jesus sending His disciples into the world to go and make disciples. What’s he talking about? – Going into the mission field and living and proclaiming the Gospel to a non-believing world. Who do you think is directing the hearts and minds of the non-believing world? – Your enemy and mine – Satan.

In our original design, we were to be God’s property, but Adam and Eve handed us over to Satan, and we became his property. When Jesus was crucified and resurrected, He became the mechanism to win us back and be His again. Satan is not happy about that, so he is going to make it as difficult as he can for us first to believe in Jesus. If he loses that battle, and we choose to believe – then he is going seek to at least minimize or dilute our faith by bringing misery into our lives. He is especially going to fight those who try to introduce non-believers to Jesus. Therefore, the great commission is really a declaration of war against Satan, so for those who are obedient to the commission, they’re recognizing they’re going into a fight against the enemy. Solomon asked the Lord that He would hear the prayers of those in battle and uphold their cause.

In my earlier quote on Matthew 28:19-20a, I left off 20b, and now is the time to hear the Lord’s response to Solomon’s request – His response to all of our requests when we are in a battle, “*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” Listen to the promise – I am with you **always!** There is nothing greater or stronger than God, so if He is with us always, we cannot be defeated. That

doesn't mean we might get beat up a bit, but the war for our souls was won at the Cross. Are you in a battle? - Maybe it's at your job, maybe it's in a relationship, or maybe it's for your very life. Go to Jesus – He is with you always. He is the victor!

The seventh and final request is in verses 46-50. The final request deals with the inevitability of sin in the child of God's life. Solomon makes it clear – “for there is no one who does not sin.” Let's put all of our cards on the table, my friends – we **all** sin. Whether it is in deed or thought, we **all** fail. Sin is serious business – the Cross should make that pretty clear. However, the Cross should also make it clear what God's preference is in dealing with the sin in your life. Does He want to slam down His divine gavel and pronounce you guilty and send you to eternal damnation? No! His preference is for you to believe in His Son and His atonement for your sins, so you can be free from the penalty and the power of sin. Notice what Solomon said in his request – “forgive **all** the offenses committed against you.” That's what the blood of Jesus does – it washes away **all** the sin in your life – your past, present, **and** future sin. Is God amazing or what??

Upon the completion of Solomon's requests, he then confirms with God the truth of the identity of the people of the Nation of Israel – they are the Lord's people. He goes on to remind the Lord that He singled them out from all the nations of the world to be His own inheritance. What does this mean to us? Lets read Ephesians 1:3-5, “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.*” If you have chosen to believe in Jesus Christ and call Him your Lord and Savior, you are an adopted child of God – an heir who is blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. I

cannot encourage each of you enough to spend time in your Bibles understanding your identity in Christ. You are ***not the same person*** you were before you came to faith in Jesus. Remember – those who are in Christ are a ***new creation – the old is gone and the new is here!***

Solomon then goes from his prayers to God to blessing the whole assembly. In the interest of time, I'm going to summarize the messages of his blessings by verse. In verse 56, he appropriately begins with praise be to the Lord and confirming not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave to Moses. Verse 57 shows Solomon asking God to continue to be with his people – to never leave or forsake them. In verse 58, he asks God to turn the people's hearts to him, so they may walk in obedience and keep the commands, decrees, and laws he gave their ancestors. Solomon recognizes that a prerequisite to an obedient heart is one that is devoted to the Lord. Obedience without love is cold and unsustainable. I try to conduct myself in a loving and honorable way with my family – not because it's just the right thing to do – I do it because I love them. The things that I do are done because I ***want*** to – not because I ***have*** to. Love makes obedience joyful.

Verses 59-60 implore the Lord to provide for the people's need – so that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other. As children of God, we're to be living testimonies of God's goodness and love. Is your life showing that? When people see you and talk to you, are they seeing and hearing a glimpse of Jesus or are they seeing what they see everywhere else – negativity and hopelessness?

The balance of chapter 8 describes the dedication of the temple and the sacrificing of 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats for fellowship offerings. Solomon also consecrated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple of the LORD, and he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of fellowship offerings. Now that is a serious barbeque! The festival of tabernacles typically was

seven days long, but the people stayed on an additional seven days. We're then told the people went home joyful and glad in heart for all the good things the LORD had done for them. This is natural – when you spend an extended time of devotion to the LORD, you end up joyful and glad of heart.

In the first 9 verses of chapter nine, we get to hear the LORD's response to Solomon's requests. The LORD confirms He has heard Solomon's prayers, that He has consecrated the temple, and that His eyes and His heart will always be there. So far so good on the response, huh? Well, He wasn't done – He then lays on a condition to His promises – Solomon must walk before Him faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David his father did, and do all He commands and observe His decrees and laws. Well, we learned in Ecclesiastes that's not what Solomon did, did he? The LORD warned him the temple would become a heap of rubble, and that is exactly what happened when King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. Solomon started strong, but he finished poorly, and it cost him, his blood line, and the people of Israel dearly.

If we go back and look at the seven requests of Solomon, we see a pattern to them. The first phase typically deals with sin – whether the people have committed the sin or it was committed against them. The second phase is the people turning to God for help. The third phase is asking God to forgive them. The final phase is for God to either guide them in the right way or uphold them as they move forward. Does that sound familiar? We sin, we repent and turn to God, we ask for forgiveness, and then we move forward in His strength. Things really haven't changed, have they?

Well...actually they have. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us – *all the time*. We, being the temple of the living God have the power of God present with us at all times to love God and love others. The Spirit reminds us that we don't have to carry the burdens of our sins any longer because they are totally forgiven.

He gives us the power to overcome our slavery to sin. If we truly believe this important truth, this frees us from that bondage and releases us to be vessels of love – to be temples of agape love – a living example of what a life looks like when it is under the rule and reign of an ever-present, loving God. My prayer for each of you as you head into this summer is you refresh yourselves with the unfailing promises of God to His children – He loves you, and He will never forsake you. Let's pray.