

1 Kings 8:1-9:9

Limits of the Text

1 Kings 8:1-9:9 is a complete literary unit. Solomon dedicated the new temple, and God responded with pleasure and a warning.

Towards Authorial Intent

The **pace** of the text slows down dramatically for Solomon's prayer, especially for the seven requests that he makes (1 Ki 8:31-53).

This text is nearly all **dialogue**. Solomon blessed God, prayed to God, blessed the people, and then God responded to Solomon. Solomon's blessing of God was a praise for God's fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. His prayer was primarily a request for forgiveness for future sins, inevitable violations of the Mosaic Law. His blessing for the people was a reminder to obey, just like his father had told him (1 Ki 2:2-4) and God had reminded him in the midst of building the temple (1 Ki 6:11-12). God's response was another reminder to be obedient, coupled with a warning about the consequences of sin. In summary, the dialogue was all about covenant fulfillment.

External Context

This text continues with the reign of Solomon. It concludes the section on the temple, which will allow the author of Kings to move on to Solomon's other pursuits.

Interpretation

8:1 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion. 2 And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. 3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4 And they brought up the ark of the Lord, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. 5 And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. 6 Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the Most Holy Place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. 7 For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. 8 And the poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the Holy Place before the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. 9 There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. 10 And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, 11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.¹

12 Then Solomon said, "The Lord has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. 13 I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever."

The first part of dedicating the new temple was the installation of the ark. In 1 Ki 6:38, the writer of Kings stated that the temple was completed in the eighth month, yet in 1 Ki 8:2, the dedication was in the seventh month. It seems that the temple was unused for eleven months. Perhaps Solomon wanted the "the extra months to furnish the worship center and allow the priests to make necessary arrangements."² More likely he was waiting for an auspicious time for the dedication; after waiting 480 years (1 Ki 6:1), eleven months wouldn't have been too much longer to wait. That auspicious time was a feast (1 Ki 8:2, 65); given the time of year, this would have been the Feast of Tabernacles (aka the Feast of Booths). During this harvest-time festival at which every male was required to attend, the nation gathered together for a week to live in booths, offer sacrifices, and celebrate the harvest; every seven years the Torah was read publically during this feast (Dt 31:10-11). It's primary purpose was to remember how they had lived in booths when God brought them up out of Egypt (Lv 23:33-43; Dt 16:13-17),³ "It was a time to renew old acquaintances, make new friends, and refresh their

¹ ESV.

² House, 137.

³ See my commentary on 1 Ki 6:1 on the relationship between the Exodus and the temple.

awareness that God had called them forth as His own peculiar people.”⁴ Ultimately this feast pointed “to the truth that Israel’s life rested upon redemption which in its ultimate meaning is the forgiveness of sin.”⁵ It was still celebrated in Jesus’ time.

From the people who came to the feast Solomon gathered together the elders of Israel, the heads of the tribes, and the leaders of the fathers’ houses (1 Ki 8:1). The elders were “leading mature men...elevated to a position of authority”⁶ at the national level; the heads were the same, but at a tribal level. The leaders were the patriarchs, the heads of each family, the ones “responsible for learning the law and leading their families to obey it.”⁷ Though these men were gathered, all the men of Israel joined in. What was significant about all these people? Solomon was not acting unilaterally to force some new form of worship upon the people. Everyone wanted to see worship centralized again at the new temple,⁸ the place God promised David; Solomon had very broad support.

Although the tabernacle was in Gibeon (1 Chr 1:3-7), the ark had already been moved to Jerusalem (1 Ki 3:15). The men brought the ark out of Jerusalem to the temple (1 Ki 8:1), which means the temple was at this time located outside of the city walls. The map below shows that the original boundaries of Jerusalem, called the Lower City, did not encompass the temple. Solomon expanded the city, as did future, post-exilic generations, such that the city was much enlarged by Jesus’ day.

The author was careful to note how the ark was moved (1 Ki 8:3-6). Only priests carried it, and only the Levites carried the various implements. Innumerable sheep and oxen were sacrificed. It seems that Solomon was careful to avoid making the same mistake his father made, carrying the ark the wrong way, which led to a man’s death (2 Sa 6:1-8).

At the end of the procession the ark was carefully placed under the cherubim in the Most Holy Place (1 Ki 8:6). This was the place where the high priest offered atonement for the entire nation once a year (Lv 16). Within the ark were the two tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments. House suggests that the tablets were mentioned in order to clear up any misconceptions about Aaron’s rod (Nu 17:10) and the jar of manna (Ex 16:33);⁹ though they had once been in the ark (Hb 9:4), they were no longer.

⁴ Freeman, 119.

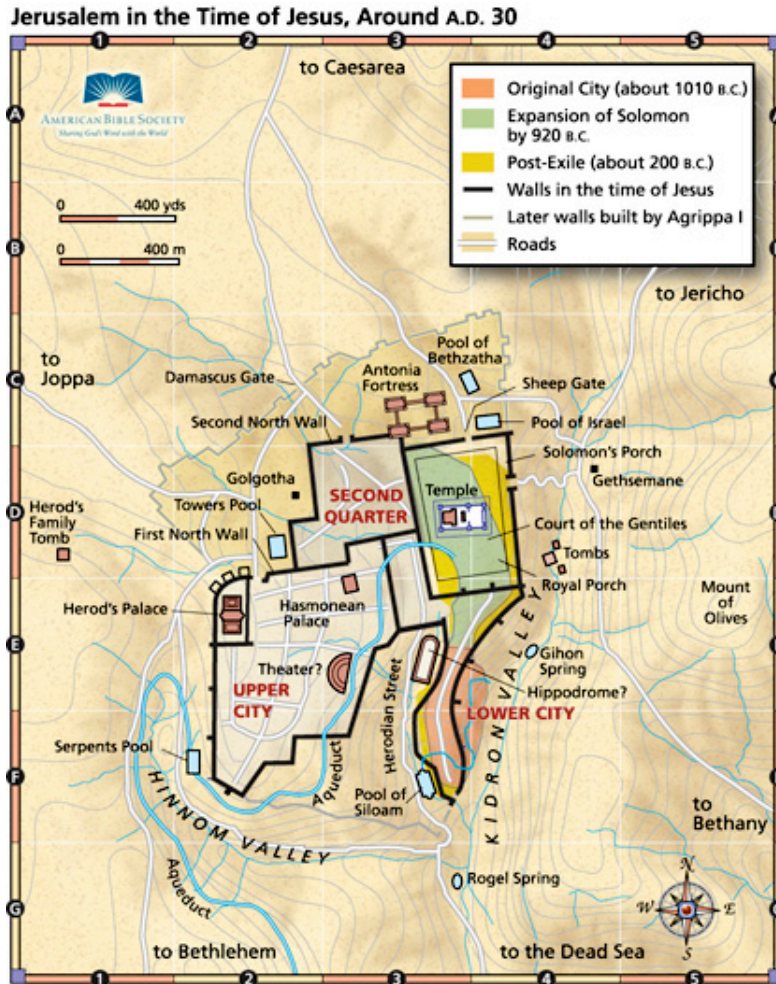
⁵ Wood, 1148.

⁶ DeVries, 123-124.

⁷ House, 136.

⁸ As opposed to the de-centralized worship at the high places (1 Ki 3:2).

⁹ House, 139.



After depositing the ark, the author noted that a cloud filled the house (1 Ki 8:10) and the glory of the Lord filled the house (1 Ki 8:11). So which was it, a cloud or God's glory? I think it is both. When Israel left Egypt, the Lord went before them in a cloud by day and fire by night (Ex 13:21-22). At one point while Israel was in the wilderness, Moses wrote that the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud (Ex 16:10). God came to Moses in a cloud (Ex 19:9). When the tabernacle was finished, the cloud covered it and the glory of the Lord filled it (Ex 40:34-35). "The cloud of glory indicates the reality of the Lord's presence."¹¹ But despite his immanence, God was still transcendent; he was holy and unapproachable, thus his glory was hidden within a cloud. "The cloud also conceals—they do not see Yahweh in the full blaze of his presence."¹² When the cloud filled the temple, it indicated God's approval for the work Solomon had done. Solomon may not have been perfect, but God was pleased with his attempt to complete the Exodus and fulfill the Davidic covenant.

¹⁰ <http://www.americanbible.org/brcpages/diggingin-maps-jerusalem2>.

¹¹ House, 139.

¹² Davis, 81.

After the cloud filled the house, Solomon responded in awe. He knew that God dwelled in thick darkness.¹³ Ps 18:11 says, “He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water.” Similarly, Ps 97:2, “Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.” Yet Solomon realized that God’s very presence was in the temple that he had built. The transcendent became immanent.

14 Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. 15 And he said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying, 16 ‘Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there. But I chose David to be over my people Israel.’ 17 Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. 18 But the Lord said to David my father, ‘Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart. 19 Nevertheless, you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.’ 20 Now the Lord has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and I have built the house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. 21 And there I have provided a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord that he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.”

The second part of dedicating the new temple was Solomon’s blessing of God. To bless God means to praise God, to acknowledge who he is and what he has done.¹⁴ Solomon acknowledged that God was a faithful, covenant-keeping God. What God began in the Exodus, he completed with the temple; time is no barrier to God’s faithfulness. Specifically, God had covenanted with David to have his son on the throne and have that son build a house for the name of the Lord. God had done his part, and Solomon had done his. “God had shown his word to be utterly trustworthy.”¹⁵

22 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven, 23 and said, “O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart, 24 who have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day. 25 Now therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your

¹³ This could be translated as heavy cloud; Brown, 791.

¹⁴ Harris, 132.

¹⁵ Carson, 1 Ki 8:14.

sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.’
26 Now therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father.

The third part of the dedicating the new temple was Solomon’s prayer of dedication. In the first part of his prayer, Solomon requested that God continue to act in the future as he has in the past. Solomon stated that God was unique because he was faithful to keep his covenants and show steadfast love (*hesed*) to those who obeyed him; there is no fickleness in God. Solomon’s words here echoed Dt 7:7-9. Solomon gave the Davidic covenant as one example of God’s faithfulness. God’s actions in the past became the basis for Solomon’s request for the future; this was why Solomon had a basis for hope, for believing that God would continue to protect the Davidic dynasty.

27 “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! 28 Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Lord my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, 29 that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. 30 And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

In the second part of his prayer, Solomon requested that God hear the prayers of his people. When God spoke to Solomon while he was building the temple, he said that would dwell among his people Israel (1 Ki 6:13). This statement brought up two issues that Solomon dealt with. First, dwelling among his people does not mean that God would be contained in a building; if not even the most expansive parts of creation could contain him, then certainly the temple wouldn’t. Davis refers to this as the unboxibility of God, stating that Solomon’s “words drip with our happy failure to get a grip on the massive majesty of God.”¹⁶ Solomon knew that the temple was not a dwelling place, but a meeting place. The personal God interacts with his people through prayer, accepting praises and answering petitions. Solomon knew that Israel didn’t even have to be physically at the temple; God could hear prayers from anywhere. Thus the temple was not just a meeting place, it was also a reminding place, a reminder that God listens to his people. Second, if God was going to dwell among his people, Solomon knew sin would be an ongoing problem. God is holy, and sin must be dealt with from God’s mercy and forgiveness. Thus Solomon asked God specifically to forgive his people when they prayed toward the temple.

31 “If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house, 32 then hear in heaven and act and

¹⁶ Davis, 86.

judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.

In the third part of his prayer, Solomon requested that God answer specific prayers. He listed seven situations where he wanted God to hear and act, usually by forgiving sin. These situations echo the language of Lv 26 and Dt 28.¹⁷

Why did Solomon give seven situations? In the Bible, the number seven “seems to signify completeness, fulfillment and perfection...Probably, then, these seven examples are meant to represent all possible situations which could call forth the prayers of individuals and the nation. All contingencies are covered.”¹⁸

The first situation is when one neighbor sins against another (contra Lv 19:18) by accusing his neighbor of something but without having witnesses to verify his accusation.¹⁹ In this case Solomon asked God to be the Judge, condemning the guilty and vindicating the innocent.

33 “When your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and if they turn again to you and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house, 34 then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them again to the land that you gave to their fathers.

The second situation is when sin leads to military defeat by an enemy. Defeat by the little town of Ai (Jos 7:1-11) and losing the ark to the Philistines (1 Sa 4:1-11) are examples from Israel’s history.

35 “When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them, 36 then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk, and grant rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

The third situation is when sin leads to the loss of rain (Dt 28:23). It’s interesting to note that God has a purpose in punishment: To teach his people the good way in which they should walk. “Punishment will have a positive...function. God corrects in order to effect needed changes, not to vent personal anger.”²⁰

37 “If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemy besieges them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, 38 whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by

¹⁷ Davis lists specific verses on 87-88.

¹⁸ Carson, 1 Ki 8:22.

¹⁹ House, 144.

²⁰ House, 145. Tangential note: This should be true of parents, too.

all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house, 39 then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind), 40 that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers.

The fourth situation is when any of a variety of calamities comes upon the land. Whereas the previous two situations required corporate repentance, this situation allowed for corporate or individual prayer. The prayers of any individual can move God to forgive and act, because God knows the heart of all people. There is a second purpose in God's punishment: To cause his people to fear him. The word for "fear" can mean to be afraid or to respect and revere. "In several passages, 'fearing' and proper living are so closely related as to be virtually synonymous ideas...It is plausible that this usage of 'to fear' as a virtual synonym for righteous living or piety grew out of viewing 'fear'...as the motivation which produced righteous living."²¹ Thus the NET translates this verse as "then they will obey you." The Creator God's absolute power over his creation, which can be a tool for punishment, brings fear and respect to his people, causing them to obey him.

8:41 "Foreigners, who do not belong to your people Israel, will come from a distant land because of your reputation. 8:42 When they hear about your great reputation and your ability to accomplish mighty deeds, they will come and direct their prayers toward this temple. 8:43 Then listen from your heavenly dwelling place and answer all the prayers of the foreigners. Then all the nations of the earth will acknowledge your reputation, obey you like your people Israel do, and recognize that this temple I built belongs to you.

The fifth situation is when a foreigner comes to Israel because of God's reputation and prays to God. Recall that Solomon has already seen this happen as people came to investigate his God-given wisdom (1 Ki 4:34). In this case Solomon asked God to answer their prayers, thus causing them to obey God. "Solomon did not expect the temple to remain Israel's best-kept secret. He expected it to be a kind of mission station...The temple was God's gift to Israel, but it was intended to draw those far beyond Israel into the joy of atonement and prayer."²²

44 "If your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to the Lord toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, 45 then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause.

²¹ Harris, 400.

²² Davis, 91.

The sixth situation was fighting an enemy. Fighting was for a cause, a word that has a legal connotation; it's as if God is a judge, deciding between the claims of the two nations at war. Presumably God would maintain their cause when their cause was God's cause, such as the conquest of Canaan.²³

46 "If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near, 47 yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,' 48 if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, 49 then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause 50 and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them 51 (for they are your people, and your heritage, which you brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace).

The seventh situation was captivity by a foreign enemy, "the ultimate punishment God may use against Israel— expulsion from the very land that the Lord has given the chosen people."²⁴ If the author did not have his readers' attention yet, he certainly did now, because this is exactly what had happened to Judah and Israel. Of the seven situations, this one is not only last but longest; it seems Solomon was most concerned about it (as well he should have been). He knew that there is no one who does not sin (Ro 3:23), not even kings and sons of David. He had heard all the warnings of obedience from God (e.g., 1 Ki 6:11-13), warnings that required him to obey faithfully; he knew that sooner or later he or his descendants would fail. This seems like a hopeless situation, but Solomon knew the remedy, God's desired course of action for his people. This was a call to repentance and prayer, to restoring a right relationship to their God.

In order for the nation to return to their homeland, God would have to change the heart of their captors, giving them compassion upon Israel;²⁵ fortunately Israel would not be required to do this for themselves. Solomon finished with an encouraging reminder: If God could rescue his people from Egypt, he could rescue them from anywhere. There is always hope that exile was not God's final word for them.²⁶ Surely this petition resonated with the author's readers.

²³ House, 146.

²⁴ House, 146.

²⁵ And this is exactly what happened. Cyrus knew God had appointed him to rebuild the temple; he released his captives and even returned articles from the temple (Ez 1:2-3, 7). It pleased King Artaxerxes to send Nehemiah back (Ne 2:6).

²⁶ House, 146.

52 Let your eyes be open to the plea of your servant and to the plea of your people Israel, giving ear to them whenever they call to you. 53 For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage, as you declared through Moses your servant, when you brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God.”

In the fourth part of his prayer, Solomon concluded with a plea for God to hear his people when they prayed. He reason was based on the past; if God chose them²⁷ and saved them, if God gave grace and mercy in the past, then it was reasonable to expect God to give them more grace and mercy in the future.

54 Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven. 55 And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying, 56 “Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. 57 The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, 58 that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. 59 Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, 60 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other. 61 Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the Lord our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.”

The fourth part of the dedicating the new temple was Solomon’s blessing of the people. Solomon had started his prayer standing (1 Ki 8:22), yet to bless the people he had to stand; apparently he had sunk to his knees during the prayer. House believes that “under the weight of his petitions Solomon had sunk to a kneeling position, an act of submission.”²⁸ Standing once again, Solomon blessed the people with a two-fold blessing; in this context (i.e., a sovereign to his subjects) a blessing expressed a desire for God’s favor to be on the people. But before Solomon blessed them, he gave the basis of the blessing: God is faithful. God promised he would give rest to his people (Dt 12:10), and he had done so. In fact, God had followed through on all of his promises. Based on God’s faithfulness, Solomon blessed the people.

The first part of Solomon’s blessing was the presence of God (1 Ki 8:57). God promised to be with Moses (Ex 3:12) and Joshua (Jos 1:9), and Solomon wanted God to be with Israel in the future. Why did Solomon express this desire? One might expect him to ask for wisdom for future leaders or military victories such as David had. But Solomon said that when God is present, he inclines the hearts of people to himself, which leads to obedience. Solomon had been paying attention; he had heard time (1 Ki 2:2-4) and

²⁷ Provan rightly refers to this as gracious election (80).

²⁸ House, 147.

again (1 Ki 6:11-13) that obedience was the key to sustaining the benefits of the Davidic covenant. If God were among his people, then God would change the hearts of his people. Obedience always begins with a change of heart.

The second part of Solomon's blessing was the support of God (1 Ki 8:59). Solomon wanted God to maintain the cause of he and his people. Cause is the same word used in 1 Ki 8:45; it has the idea of God choosing them over someone else, perhaps during a war. Why did Solomon express this desire? God's strong support for his people was a means of attracting the nations to God himself (1 Ki 8:41-43). Perhaps Solomon was thinking about people like Rahab and Ruth, foreigners who chose to follow God. The power of God active in the lives of his people is a powerful testimony.

In summary, Solomon wanted the Davidic covenant to continue to be fulfilled, and he wanted God to be glorified. Solomon finished his blessing with a plea, asking the people to have hearts wholly true to God and to be obedient.

62 Then the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the Lord. 63 Solomon offered as peace offerings to the Lord 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord. 64 The same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord, for there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the Lord was too small to receive the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings.

65 So Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the Lord our God, seven days. 66 On the eighth day he sent the people away, and they blessed the king and went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had shown to David his servant and to Israel his people.

The fourth part of the dedicating the new temple was Solomon's festival activities. As mentioned previously, this was the week of the feast of booths, and during the week Solomon and the people continually offered sacrifices to God; Solomon alone offered 142,000 peace offerings (2 Chr 8:5).

The peace offering (aka fellowship offering) was a voluntary offering, a spontaneous act of the will, by which the worshipper confessed his thankfulness, fulfilled a vow, or made an agreement before God; probably thankfulness was the primary cause here. The worshipper killed the animal, and the priest, acting as the mediator, splashed the blood on the sides of the altar. Some parts of the animal were burned, some of the meat was given to the priest, and rest was eaten as part of a fellowship meal between the worshipper, his family, and any invited guests in the presence of God. This offering

taught God's people that God desires to be in fellowship with his people, and that fellowship requires a blood sacrifice.²⁹

The conclusion of the chapter emphasizes unity. All Israel were together worshipping the one true God in the same place, same time, and same manner and following the leadership of one king. This is as good as it gets; this is the pinnacle of Israel's history.

9:1 As soon as Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord and the king's house and all that Solomon desired to build, 2 the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. 3 And the Lord said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. 4 And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, 5 then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' 6 But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 8 And this house will become a heap of ruins. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?' 9 Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the Lord their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the Lord has brought all this disaster on them.' "

This is the final section in the author's writings about the temple. Solomon prepared for the temple, built the temple, furnished the temple, and dedicated the temple, and now God responded to his prayers. The exact time of God's appearance to Solomon is unknown; it seems that it was at least 13 years after the start of the temple, because that's how long it took to build the palace complex which included the king's house (1 Ki 7:1, 8).

In Dt 12:11, God had promised that his Name would dwell in a permanent location; God fulfilled that promise here. He consecrated the house (1 Ki 9:3), which means he regarded it as holy,³⁰ and this happened when he put his name there, a mark of ownership.³¹ God also had his name upon the people of Israel (Nu 6:27) and the city of Jerusalem (I Ki 11:36).

²⁹ Dwayne Million, Lv 3:1-5, 18 May 2008. See also Lv 3:1-17, 7:11-38.

³⁰ Swanson, DBLH 7727.

³¹ Carson, Nu 6:22.

God answered two requests from Solomon's prayer of dedication. First, God agreed that the temple would be a focal point of prayer, as Solomon requested in 1 Ki 8:28-30; his eyes and heart would be upon it. Second, God agreed to establish the Davidic throne forever, as Solomon requested in 1 Ki 8:25-26. Clearly God approved not only of the temple itself (1 Ki 8:10-11), but also of Solomon's requests.

God's promise concerning the covenant, however, was conditional; Solomon must walk before God, as David had done, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing everything God had commanded (1 Ki 9:4). It's interesting to note the emphasis that God put upon the heart; external obedience was insufficient. His promise also came with a severe set of warnings; disobedience would bring dire consequences, like those promised in Lv 26 and Dt 27-28. If Israel turned aside—the "you" in verse 6 is plural—then they would be removed from the land, lose access to the temple, and become a proverb and a byword. In this context, proverb doesn't have the meaning of a proverb such as is found in the book of Proverbs. It means to be a well-known reference with a bad reputation;³² God would make Israel a public example, an object lesson for their contemporaries.³³ A byword is "a word of scorn and taunt, with a focus on the word itself as the word which taunts."³⁴

How do we understand these dire warnings from God? House interprets them as God's grace to Solomon. He knew exactly what God wanted, and all he had to do was obey. Provan on the other hand interprets them as a dark cloud of gloom looming over the kingdom; apostasy and destruction was inevitable. Certainly House is right; in his grace God lets his people know how to serve and obey him. And Provan is right to a degree; apostasy and destruction were not inevitable—Solomon and his descendents could have chosen to walk in God's ways—but these warnings were certainly a foreshadowing of what was to come, much like 1 Ki 3:1. The original readers of Kings would have realized that captivity should not have been a surprise; God had been diligent to warn them of the consequences of turning aside from him.

³² Swanson, DBLH 5442.

³³ Harris, 533.

³⁴ Swanson, DBLH 9110.

Three Levels of History

1. Personal history – This is a story of a king dedicating a temple to his God.
2. National History – This is a story about a nation centralizing the worship of their God.
3. Redemptive History – This is a story about the God who desires people to live and relate with him.

Jesus and the Gospel

This story reflects mankind's **need for redemption** through Jesus and the gospel.

1. What does this text teach us about ourselves? What need or deficiency in our lives does it expose? We cannot live and relate with God. We are sinful. Our hearts are untrue. We forget quickly.
2. What does this text teach us about God? How does it reveal God's grace to meet our need? Since we cannot go to God, God must come to us. Since we cannot change ourselves, God must change us, starting with our hearts.

Outline

This outline is based primarily upon the dialogues of the story:

1. Solomon assembled the people (1 Ki 8:1-13).
2. Solomon blessed God (1 Ki 8:14-21).
3. Solomon petitioned God (1 Ki 8:22-53).
4. Solomon blessed the people (1 Ki 8:54-61).
5. Solomon celebrated with the people (1 Ki 8:62-66).
6. God responded to Solomon (1 Ki 9:1-9).

Central Truth of the Story

The author of Kings wrote 1 Kings 8:1-9:9 in order to remind exilic Jews how they were supposed to live with their God.

Teaching Outline

God's people take great care to live and relate with God in a manner that is pleasing to him, and God wants our church to be very careful how we live with our God. From this text in Kings we are going to see 6 reminders for living with God:

1. God is holy, so do not treat him casually.
2. God is faithful, so praise him faithfully.
3. God judges sin, so confess quickly.

4. God is immanent, so follow him whole-heartedly.
5. God desires fellowship, so worship him extravagantly.
6. God requires obedience, so obey him carefully.

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