

## Sermons 9 & 10: A House of Prayer, 1 Kings 8

- I. God's Presence in the Temple: The Ark, and the Glory Cloud (vv. 1-13)
  - A. The Presence of God's People (vv. 1-2a)
  - B. The Time of Year: The Feast of Booths and the Reality of Settlement (v. 2b)
  - C. The Official Move from Tabernacle to Temple (vv. 3-9)
  - D. The Presence of God in the Shekinah Cloud (vv. 10-11)
  - E. Solomon Fulfills God's Promise (vv. 12-13)
    1. Notice that Solomon has his back to the people
    2. Cf. Zech. 6:12-13 for the Messianic Significance of Building the Temple of the LORD
- II. First Benediction: Faithfulness to David's Son (vv. 14-21)
  - A. To Bless God is to Bless His People (vv. 14-15)
  - B. The Faithfulness of God; Hand and Mouth are Totally United in Him (v. 15)
  - C. God's Plan: A King, and a House for the Name (vv. 16-19)
  - D. God's Exodus Plan Fulfilled: A King, and House for the Name (vv. 20-21)
- III. Prayer (vv. 22-53)
  - A. The Unchanging Character of God: A Record of God's Faithfulness (vv. 23-27)
    1. The Incomparability of God (v. 22-24)
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    1. God Hears Prayer (v. 28)
    2. God Watches the Temple (vv. 29-30) (illustration: watching the Cassidy home when Carolyn was inside)
  - C. Seven Scenarios of Prayer (vv. 31-53)
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    2. Sin-Caused Defeat in Battle, so Please Forgive Sin and Restore to the Land (vv. 33-34)
    3. Sin-Caused Lack of Rain, so Please Forgive Sin and Send Rain (vv. 35-36)
    4. Natural Disaster or War, so Please Forgive Sin and Give Fear of God (vv. 37-40)
    5. A Foreigner hears of Your Name, so Please Demonstrate the Reality of Your Presence in the Temple and Give Fear of God (vv. 41-43)
    6. Fighting in Battle, so Please Maintain Your People's Cause (vv. 44-45)
    7. Sin-Caused Exile, so Please Forgive and Show Favor even in Exile (vv. 46-53)

- IV. Second Benediction: Faithfulness to Israel (vv. 54-61)
  - A. The Posture of Prayer: Standing or Kneeling (v. 54)
  - B. To Bless God is to Bless His People (v. 55)
  - C. God's Gift of Rest to Israel (v. 56)
  - D. God's Gift of Presence to Israel (v. 57)
  - E. God's Gift of Obedient Hearts to Israel (v. 58)
  - F. God's Gift of Attention to Israel (v. 59)
  - G. God's Gift of Himself to the Nations (v. 60)
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- V. Feasting in Celebration Before God (vv. 62-66)
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**Homiletical Outline: Sermon 9, A House of Prayer pt. 1, 1 Kings 8:1-21, 54-61**

- I. The Presence of God (vv. 1-13)
  - A. The Presence of God's People (vv. 1-2a)
  - B. The Time of Year: The Feast of Booths and the Reality of Settlement (v. 2b)
  - C. The Official Move from Tabernacle to Temple (vv. 3-9)
  - D. The Presence of God in the Shekinah Cloud (vv. 10-11)
  - E. Solomon Fulfills God's Promise of His Presence (vv. 12-13)
- II. The Faithfulness of God (vv. 14-21, 54-61)
  - A. Faithfulness to David's Son (vv. 14-21)
    - 1. To Bless God is to Bless His People (vv. 14-15)
    - 2. The Faithfulness of God; Hand and Mouth are Totally United in Him (v. 15)
    - 3. God's Exodus Plan: A King, and a House for the Name (vv. 16-19)
    - 4. God's Exodus Plan Fulfilled: A King, and a House for the Name (vv. 20-21)
  - B. Faithfulness to Israel (vv. 54-61)
    - 1. The Posture of Prayer: Standing or Kneeling (v. 54)
    - 2. To Bless God is to Bless His People (v. 55)
    - 3. God's Gift of Rest to Israel (v. 56)
    - 4. God's Gift of Presence to Israel (v. 57)
    - 5. God's Gift of Obedient Hearts to Israel (v. 58)
    - 6. God's Gift of Attention to Israel (v. 59)
    - 7. God's Gift of Himself to the Nations (v. 60)
    - 8. The Proper Response to God's Gifts: A Faithful Heart (v. 61)

**Proposition: God's faithfulness to fulfill His promises guarantees His presence with His Messiah and His people!**

Intro First Kings 8 is loaded. Every commentary I read pointed out that this chapter is the theological summit of the books of the Kings. And indeed, the number and prominence of the theological themes is almost symphonic in scope. Reading this chapter is not like reading the previous chapters, full of royal intrigue or belaboring details about construction. On the contrary! This chapter is dense, like a prophet or even like an epistle. We could spend four sermons on this chapter, easily--but I'm going to try to pack it into two. Four themes are highlighted here. The presence of God, the faithfulness of God, the grace of God, and then at the end, the proper response of God's people. The presence of God is at the beginning, and the faithfulness of God is around the edges--but the centerpiece of this chapter is the grace of God, and that's what next week's sermon will be devoted to. This week, though, we begin to see that God's presence and faithfulness play into one another. He is present because of His promise, and He will always keep His promises. Indeed, brothers and sisters: you can leave here this evening absolutely confident that God's faithfulness to His promise guarantees His presence with His Messiah and thus with His people.

**I. The Presence of God (vv. 1-13)**

The main thing going on these verses, even though it can get lost in the crowd of information, is really pretty simple: the tabernacle stuff is moving into the temple. That includes the most important thing in the tabernacle--the Ark of the Covenant. The point of all these verses is Immanuel--God with Us.

**A. The Presence of God's People (vv. 1-2a)**

First, we see the "us." Who was there? Everyone who's anyone. Everyone in a position of leadership. From verse 5, we see that practically the whole country was there. Anyone who could possibly show up was in Jerusalem.

The application to us is obvious. Do we care to come into God's presence? Luther once commented that if Jesus was speaking somewhere, we would all say, "Oh, I'd run my feet bloody to hear Him!" But He speaks all the time; He is present in the worship services of the local church, which so many neglect and even despise. If all these people would come to see the symbolic tokens of God's presence, how much more ought we to come to new covenant worship, where God is present in even greater fullness and power?

**B. The Time of Year: The Feast of Booths and the Reality of Settlement (v. 2b)**

When did this take place? During the Feast of Booths--the time when Jews move out of their homes and live in little cardboard shacks, tents, and whatever else they can find to remember the years of wilderness wandering. Well, it was in this period that Solomon dedicated the temple. Nearly 11 months after it was finished (it was finished in the 8th month, 1 Kings 6:38), He moved all the holy things into it. The point is to show definitively that the time of wandering is

over. God has settled His name in a particular place. No longer will He move about in a tent; He is with His people in a permanent house. He's bought a place in town. Again, the point is to highlight His presence. He's *here*.

### **C. The Official Move from Tabernacle to Temple (vv. 3-9)**

But not only has He bought a house; the moving truck is in the driveway, and all His stuff is being moved in. Again, the symbolism should not be lost on any of us. God is dwelling with His people on a permanent basis. If my parents come out to visit us and pitch a tent in my front yard, well, none of us will think that they are serious about staying in New Hampshire. But if they come with all their worldly goods in a 53-foot semitrailer and buy a house on Baboosic Lake Road, then suddenly we would all believe that the Nelsons are determined to live with us here in Merrimack. Folks, you have to see how momentous this is. We've talked before about exile from Eden, about being cast out of God's presence and trying to find our way back. Well, God has made the first move. He has come to us! That's what's being symbolized by all of this. The Ark in particular, the place of God's enthronement, is being permanently installed in the Holy of Holies. And it's there to this day; you can see the poles, says the writer--highlighting how serious God's promise is, and how stable is His presence among us.

Now, what is the significance of the Ten Commandments residing in the Ark? Well, those were the terms of the covenant. God is saying, "I can only dwell among people who keep these laws." But the laws are *inside* the Ark, not outside it. What was the cover of the Ark called? The mercy seat. And what was sprinkled on that mercy seat every year? Atoning blood. So what stands between us and the Ten Commandments? Yes. God's mercy. God's forgiveness. God's atonement for sins. So those Ten Commandments are inside the covenant; they are given to people who have already been redeemed, typologically from Egypt, but ultimately from sin.

Do you see then what all this means? Where does God's presence truly dwell? In Jesus Christ! Who kept all Ten Commandments in His heart and in His life? Jesus Christ! You see, the presence of God, and the presence of the covenant stipulations, was simply an elaborate ritual, almost an allegory, that would show the people of Israel what was coming. When you read about the presence of God, think of the presence of God in Jesus, the true temple!

### **D. The Presence of God in the Shekinah Cloud (vv. 10-11)**

Better even than this, however, was the glory cloud, that both obscured and revealed the presence of God. He's here! We can't see His face, exactly, and His glory is so bright that it looks like darkness, but glory it is. The presence of God is so great that it surpasses any mere ritual. The priests were driven out; they could only stand in awe of the presence of God as it burned within its cloudy veil. Do you come to church every week trusting God's promise of His presence? Do you expect God to be present even more powerfully among us than He was in the Old Covenant temple? Do you expect to see sinners saved, weak believers sanctified, strong believers becoming more like Christ? Do you expect to see the power of God for salvation to all and upon all who believe? Brothers, the power of God is really present in the worship of this church. Ask

some of the old-timers about what has been done here. And then turn around and beg God to keep doing it!

**E. Solomon Fulfills God's Promise of His Presence (vv. 12-13)**

Now what do you say at a moment like this, when the ritual has come to a halt and God Himself has stepped out in grandeur? What in the world is the appropriate response? Well, I hope you find Solomon's response staggering. He addresses God--notice that he has his back to the people; v. 14 says he had to "turn around" to face the people. So he is facing God, and he makes this staggering claim. "God, I was the one who fulfilled your promise. You said you would dwell in thick darkness. *I have built you an exalted house.*"

Now is this arrogance of the most colossal stripe? What would you think if Bruce Gordon or Pastor Allen or Rick Elliott stood up on a Sunday morning in this room and boldly and openly took credit for the transformation of this church? If one of those godly men said, "I have built First Church as an exalted dwelling place for God by the Spirit"?

We would all be horrified. And yet God doesn't smite Solomon then and there; rather, everything in the text indicates that the Lord was pleased, and that this statement was a perfectly accurate and thus humble summary of what Solomon had done in building this house. In short, he had every right to claim this. Why? *Because He was the Prince of Peace.* Brothers, the earthly king most like Jesus Christ, the one who typologically prefigured Him, was Solomon ben David, King in Jerusalem. Solomon is not claiming to be the Messiah, but he is claiming to be like Him. He's saying, "God, you have appointed me as the one through whom your promise to dwell with your people would be realized." And you know what? God had! Solomon was a mini-Immanuel. Through his labors, the people could truly say "God is with us!"

Building the temple is one of the quintessential activities of the Messiah. Our text this evening is jam-packed, and we don't really have time to do this. But you can't understand 1 Kings 8:13 without understanding Zech. 6:12-13. Do you see what the Man whose name is THE BRANCH will do? He will build the temple of the LORD. He will share a throne with Yahweh. In fact, He will be both a king and a priest, and He will be Yahweh. Brothers and sisters, Solomon's claim here is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is the one who is truly building the temple. He is the one who has built an exalted house, a place for God to dwell in forever. Pastor Bruce and Pastor Allen are servants in the Kingdom. Solomon was David's great Son, and he knew what that meant. It meant that his role in the kingdom was analagous to that of Christ. And so he took on himself the responsibility of building the temple and taking credit for the temple because that's what Christ would do.

Do you marvel now at the humility of Jesus Christ? He is building the temple of the Lord. But He is not afraid to set up David and Solomon as types of His coming glory. He is willing to exalt them very high, because by comparison He is exalted infinitely higher! In other words, as a leader He is not afraid of His subordinates; He delights to honor them, because His position is not thereby threatened; it is enhanced. Oh, fellow Christians, *love and admire and adore Jesus Christ!* Who among us would have the simultaneous humility and greatness to set up a Solomon

and give him the credit for temple building, knowing all the time that the glory and honor given to Solomon were but a foretaste of the glory that would follow for Jesus Himself? As it turned out, God only dwelt in this exalted house for a little less than 400 years. But He will dwell in His Son to all eternity. Solomon's temple has faded; the glory of Jesus Christ is only growing brighter every day. Oh, believe it! Love and admire Christ, for His simultaneous exaltation and humility. He increases not by putting His servants down, but by exalting them!

## **II. The Faithfulness of God (vv. 14-21, 54-61)**

This dual theme--the exaltation of David's Son, and in that exaltation the exaltation of His people, and through it all the faithfulness of God--is what dominates the frame around Solomon's great prayer. We will look at that prayer next Sunday; for now, we focus on the frame. You see how God's presence is a function of His faithfulness. He is present--why? Because He is keeping His promises.

### **A. Faithfulness to David's Son (vv. 14-21)**

In the first of these sections, the emphasis is on the faithfulness of God to His Anointed King. Thus, we first see His faithfulness to a particular individual.

#### **1. To Bless God is to Bless His People (vv. 14-15)**

How does Solomon bless the people? By giving praise to God. "For us to bless God, then, is to thank Him for all His blessings to us" (Ryken *in loc.*). He blesses us with the gift of good things; we bless Him by telling Him about all those good things.

In other words, if I praise God and I mean it, then that will alter my attitude toward you. If I am disgusted with my wife, a little bit of heartfelt praise to God for her will remind me what a blessing she truly is. When you want to bless a fellow believer, you can do so best from a heart that is filled with love and admiration for God.

#### **2. The Faithfulness of God; Hand and Mouth are Totally United in Him (v. 15)**

Further, Solomon points out the obvious: God is faithful. His mouth and His hand are united. He says one thing, and then does it. How often do we fail to fulfill with our hand what we have spoken with our mouths? But God is faithful. God is faithful! Do you realize what this means? No other god keeps his promises. Think of the entertainment god. He promises that if you watch enough of your favorite shows and listen to enough of your favorite musicians, you will find fulfillment and happiness. What a big fat liar. Think of the sex goddess. She promises that if you do with your private parts whatever feels good, then you will find fulfillment and happiness. Ask anyone who's tried it: they'll uniformly tell you it's a big fat lie. Think of the money god.

Years ago, I was watching a television profile of David Geffen, the billionaire music and film producer. At some point, he said, "Show me someone who thinks that money buys happiness, and I'll show you someone who has never had a lot of money." The remark was accompanied by an ineffably sad smile on Mr. Geffen's face, which said that he had been there, done that and knew what he was talking about. The whole vignette struck me

in a way that "money can't buy happiness" never had, and my visceral reaction was reinforced by one especially memorable shot during the profile, taken down the length of Mr. Geffen's private jet, along the rows of empty leather seats and sofas, to where he sat all alone in the rear.<sup>1</sup>

The money god will not keep its promises. Only the true God is faithful to fulfill everything He has promised.

The implication is obvious: we ought to have no truth gap between our mouths and our hands. What you say you'll do is what you'll do, if you're a Christian. Banish the habit of saying you want to do something, but never planning to do it. Get rid of lip service. Be faithful, like God.

Well, to what was God faithful?

### **3. God's Exodus Plan: A King, and a House for the Name (vv. 16-19)**

He was faithful to His plan. Ever since the exodus, God says, He had not identified a particular location. He was in the real estate market, looking for a place, but He had not announced definitive plans to purchase anything. But where He did make a definite move was on King selection. He chose David. But David was not the temple builder. Like the great Son of God, so the great Son of David would be a temple builder. Notice how this entire passage is individually-targeted. David and his son are the centerpieces of everything that's going on here.

These are two of the most important themes in the Old Testament: Land and King. God has picked a King and put Him in the Promised Land. Now He is going to the next step. He is coming live permanently in the Promised Land. That's why it was promised. It's not because there's anything inherently special or holy about the strip of land on the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean that God chose it. Rather, it is special because He dwells in that land. It's His homeland, if we can make so bold.

### **4. God's Exodus Plan Fulfilled: A King, and a House for the Name (vv. 20-21)**

This was God's plan ever since the Exodus, nearly 500 years before. But only now is He bringing that plan to fruition. Now the promise of the Exodus is being realized. As we have talked about several times in Kings, this is another step on the path toward the true spiritual meaning of the exodus. It was about leaving Satan's kingdom and coming out to worship God. Now the place of worship is built; God is living in the Promised Land, and His Anointed King is setting up true worship. The exodus promise is that much closer to being realized, through the royal son.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Murray, "Advice for a Happy Life," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2014; available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304418404579465244191453008>

## **B. Faithfulness to Israel (vv. 54-61)**

But furthermore, God has not just been faithful to the King and to the Land. He has also been faithful to the people. This is a mirror of the truth that God is preeminently faithful to Christ, and in Christ to us. Faithfulness is to the King first, then to the people.

### **1. The Posture of Prayer: Standing or Kneeling (v. 54)**

Now, Solomon started this prayer out standing. By the end, the weight of his petitions had forced him to his knees. Now, how do you pray? Do you stand before God respectfully, or kneel before Him and show your humility in His presence? Or do you sit down in His presence as though He were not a monarch? I know that most churches in this country have a number of times of seated prayer, but from what I understand, that's not how it used to be. Obviously the Lord understands those who have bad knees and who are in wheelchairs. But most of us don't have bad knees, and we can walk just fine.

Earlier in the sermon we saw Solomon's staggering claim to have built the temple. But even he did not presume to sit in the presence of God. Just a note. God is faithful; how do we treat Him in return?

### **2. To Bless God is to Bless His People (v. 55)**

Once again, the narrative makes the point that praising God is a way of blessing His people. How do you try to bless people? Have you ever thought about simply asking them to praise God with you?

### **3. God's Gift of Rest to Israel (v. 56)**

God has given rest to Israel, just as He promised. This means the absence of war and the absence of wandering--a settled place to live. But it means more. *Every promise* made to the people through Moses has been fulfilled, and those promises can be summarized in the word *rest*. They had spiritual refreshment through the worship in this temple in the land God had promised.

Let me ask you a question: are you busy? Do you get all the sleep you need? Would "laboring and heavy laden" be an accurate description of your condition? Homeschooling mothers . . . I don't even need to ask you. Sole-breadwinning fathers . . . I don't need to ask you either. Students--are you busy? Young professionals--do you have too much to do? Well, God has given *rest*. Tangibly, that rest is in the form of a Sabbath day where you are freed from schoolwork, from a large chunk of the housework, from the pressures of worldly employments and sports leagues. Intangibly, that rest is in the form of worship that refreshes your spirit and gives you the strength to go on for another week. God knows what we need. Guess what? Ancient people were just as smart as we are. They had the same problems we do. They had the same needs we do. And one thing they really needed was rest. In fact, they needed it so much that Solomon puts it up front in his list of God's blessings. Keep in mind that this comes at the beginning of a two-week-long national holiday. How many of you would like the next two weeks off so that you could party with your fellow Christians and celebrate God's good gifts? Well, do you take the day off God has given you every week? Do you work to be refreshed by worship? Worship is refreshing. It may be tiring for people like me and Pastor Allen, who are up front,



leading all of us in God's worship, but it's spiritually refreshing. The point is not an emotional high, but a whole-being recharge. You get to rest by doing exactly what you were created to do for about three whole hours every Sunday. What a tremendous gift!

#### **4. God's Gift of Presence to Israel (v. 57)**

But more than that, God promised not to leave them. Again, the God with Us theme! God has bought a house and moved in. What a tremendous gift to the people of Israel! He is with us too. He's there at your first ball game. He's there when you've hurt yourself, when your spouse has hurt you, when your first grandchild was born and when your grandmother dies. God is there for all of these things. Do you believe it? Do you consciously share the moments with Him? Do you delight in His delight? There is more moss here in New Hampshire than there has been anywhere else I've ever lived. I love to see the beautiful little moss plants growing out of the sandy, rocky soil--and I praise God for them and think about how much more He loves them, how He appreciates them far better than I can. Share those moments with your God. That's a blessing you have as His child. You're never alone.

#### **5. God's Gift of Obedient Hearts to Israel (v. 58)**

But His presence does something more: it inclines our hearts to obey Him.

Let me ask you another question: where does obedience come from? Does it come from trying really hard? Does it come from fear? Does it come from a "yuck" factor that just regards sin as dirty?

No. Beloved, it comes from being with Jesus. God's presence is directed toward our obedience. We will have hearts shaped by His grace and inclined toward Him only when we consciously and deliberately commune with Him every day. One of you told me the other week, "I have an extremely trying job. But as long as I spend enough time in prayer, I'm able to do it without the least bit of complaining or grumping." Now, is that because prayer is magical? No, it's because of the personal connection. Know God, and He'll rub off on you. Suddenly, your obedience will be motivated by *delight*.

#### **6. God's Gift of Attention to Israel (v. 59)**

All of us want attention. Is anyone listening? Kids, wouldn't it be wonderful if your daddy were to get down on the floor and play with you for two hours tonight? There is not a kid here but would go berserk with joy at the very thought. When we get older, we don't change. We may hide it better, but we still want attention. A lot of attention. And through Solomon's blessing, God effectively promises that Israel will have His attention, anytime and all the time. Solomon's words are laid up before Him. Now, do you know that you have God's attention? Even if doesn't seem like it, He's listening. Your prayer may not be changing the situation, but it's changing you. And that's a tremendous divine gift. Further, notice that Solomon blesses the people in their daily needs. God cares about whether you'll get your bologna sandwich for lunch. That's not too petty for Him to deal with, because He's just like that.

### **7. God's Gift of Himself to the Nations (v. 60)**

Israel, Israel, Israel--every one of these gifts has been for God's chosen people. Now, suddenly, Solomon makes a missionary request: Lord, let your favor to us make your name known everywhere! Do you pray this? Psalm 67 opens this way. God's gifts are partially calculated to draw in outsiders. Your obedient children in the grocery store are not just so you can enjoy the adulation of other people; they are also so that God might be known and admired. What a tremendous gift from our Father! Does this list of God's blessings fill you with missionary zeal? It should. It did for Solomon.

### **8. The Proper Response to God's Gifts: A Faithful Heart (v. 61)**

Our text this evening closes on the note of how we ought to respond to God's presence and His faithfulness, first to His Messiah and then to us. How do you respond to the massive list of the blessings of His faithfulness? You turn your heart toward Him, that's how. You keep His commandments. As we said about the Ark of the Covenant, the commandments are *inside* the covenant. Because you are child of God, a son of Israel who has received all these tremendous gifts, you can turn to God and worship Him faithfully. You can keep His commandments. You can know His presence and His faithfulness, and you can in turn be present for Him and faithful to Him. Because of the Son of David, the God with Us in whom God's faithfulness is best displayed, we can appropriate and enjoy these blessings. We can dwell in the promised land of heaven, worshipping the greater Son of David and rejoicing in His presence and faithfulness. Won't you make every effort to join me there? And if you're the outsider, who doesn't know about this covenant, who doesn't have the blessings, what will you do? Turn to the great Son of David. Ask Him for His presence. In His faithfulness, He will give it to you! Amen.