

1 Kings Chapter 8 Continued

Verses 22-53 (see note on 2 Chron. 6:12-40). Solomon then moved to the altar of burnt offering to offer a lengthy prayer of consecration to the Lord. First, he affirmed that no god could compare to Israel's God, the Lord (verses 23-24). Second, he asked the Lord for His continued presence and protection (verses 25-30). Third, he listed 7 typical Israelite prayers that would require the Lord's response (verses 31-54). These supplications recalled the detailed list of curses that (Deut. 28:15-68), ascribed for the breaking of the law. Specifically, Solomon prayed that the Lord would judge between the wicked and the righteous (verses 31-32); the Lord would forgive the sins that had caused defeat in battle (verses 33-34); the Lord would forgive the sins that had brought on drought (verses 35-36); the Lord would forgive the sins that had resulted in national calamities (verses 37-40); The Lord would show mercy to God-fearing foreigners (verses 41-43), the Lord would give victory in battle (verses 44-45); and the Lord would bring restoration after captivity (verses 46-54).

According to 2 Chron. 6:13, Solomon had a tall scaffold erected; so the people might see him clearly, as he knelt before God in prayer. The chronicler reports that Solomon closed his dedicatory prayer with a plea for God's salvation and goodness to be realized by His people, and with the invoking of God's grace so as to remember the mercies of David (2 Chron. 6:40-42).

1 Kings 8:22 “And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:”

“Spread forth his hands”: The spreading of open hands toward heaven was a normal posture of individual prayer (Exodus 9:29; Isa. 1:15).

This is a picture of a man who is surrendering himself to the LORD. He stands with both hands raised to the LORD in praise, and then kneels. We know he kneels (because of verse 54), which says the following.

1 Kings 8:54 “And it was [so], that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.”

He raised his hands up to heaven as if to say, LORD I surrender all to you. Solomon was not ashamed to humble himself before God in front of the entire congregation. In my opinion, the most beautiful prayer in the Bible begins here.

Verses 23-26: The beginning of Solomon's prayer reminded the people that obedience (wholehearted devotion), is required to experience the blessings of God's presence.

1 Kings 8:23 “And he said, LORD God of Israel, [there is] no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart:”

Their covenant God and Father; whereby he was distinguished from all the gods of the Gentiles.

“There is no God like thee”: In heaven above or on earth beneath; none among the angels in heaven, nor among kings and civil magistrates on earth. Who both are sometimes called “Elohim” gods; but only in a figurative sense. And not to be compared with the one only true God, for the perfection of his nature, or the works of his hands.

“Who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart”: Performs his promises, by which he both declares his mercy or goodness and his faithfulness to such who walk before him, in his ways and according to his word. And in the sincerity and uprightness of their hearts.

Notice, this prayer begins by recognizing God for who He is, and for His greatness. This prayer begins with praise. The Israelites had been guilty of following false gods. Solomon explains that there is no other true God. Solomon recognizes the omnipresence of the LORD God, when he says in heaven, or on earth. God always keeps His covenant. Men break covenants. God is merciful, and no one should know this better than the Israelites, whom he had forgiven over and over. The only thing that the LORD wanted from them and wants from us, is to love him with all our heart.

1 Kings 8:24 “Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled [it] with thine hand, as [it is] this day.”

Concerning a son, his successor, and the builder of the temple.

“Thou, spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day”: The temple being now finished by him (see 1 Kings 8:15).

The fact that God had allowed Solomon to build the temple reassures him that God does what He says he will do. God had promised David that his son would build the temple, and now it is done. Solomon is totally aware that it was the hand of God that brought this into being.

1 Kings 8:25 “Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.”

That, as he had fulfilled one part of his promise respecting himself, his immediate successor, so that he would fulfil the other respecting his more remote offspring.

“Saying, there shall not fail thee a man in my sight, to sit on the throne of Israel”: One of David’s posterity to inherit his throne and kingdom, but with this proviso.

“So that thy children takes heed to their way”: In what way they walk, and how they walk in it.

“That they walk before me as thou hast walked before me”; meaning as David walked (see Psalm 132:11).

This does not anger God for Solomon to remind Him of the promise He made to David, that “his descendants” would sit on the throne forever. He does remember that this promise is conditional on the people keeping the commandments of God. God will keep His part of the agreement, if they will keep theirs.

1 Kings 8:26 “And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father.”

Truly made good, and punctually performed.

“Which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father”: The same request in other words, repeated to show his ardent and vehement desire to have it fulfilled.

“Verified”, in this particular instance, means built up. This is a building up of the Word that God had spoken to David. This is a proving, if you will. The temple for God is built.

Verses 27-29: God’s “name” represents all that He is, but He cannot be confined by the temple because He is everywhere, transcending place and time.

1 Kings 8:27 “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”

“Heavens cannot contain thee”: Solomon confessed that even though the Lord had chosen to dwell among His people in the cloud at the temple, He far transcended containment by anything in all creation.

Applied to God, immensity means that God cannot be limited by space and is in fact beyond space. Space is the area where physical reality (matter), and being (energy), exist, and to that degree is limited. Where space ends, God still persists infinitely beyond all limits.

Yes, He will dwell on the earth and in the heavens, all at the same time. He cannot however, be confined to one place at a time. There is no house big enough to hold him.

Deuteronomy 10:14 “Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens [is] the LORD’S thy God, the earth [also], with all that therein [is].”

1 Kings 8:28 “Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee today:”

Meaning himself, who, though a king acknowledged himself, and esteemed it an honor to be the servant of the Lord, and who was also a humble suppliant of his, and desired his prayers and supplications might be attended to.

“To hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee this day”: The particulars of which follow (in 8:29).

One of the most unexplainable things about God is, since He is so great that all the world cannot hold Him, why does He bother to hear one man’s prayer? And yet the very existence of man is an answer to prayer. If God stopped listening to the prayers of individuals, there would be no existence. Solomon knows that all his greatness is because God allowed it. He is great in the LORD.

1 Kings 8:29 “That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, [even] toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.”

That is, to the people that prays in it, as they are to his righteous ones (Psalm 33:14). Even towards the place of which thou hast my name shall be there. There should be some displays of his presence, power, and providence, of goodness, grace, and mercy.

“That thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make towards this place”: Not only to what he should make in it, but to what he should make in his own house, with his face directed towards this, as would be, and was the practice of good people in later times. Yea, even when the temple lay in ruins (see Dan. 6:10). Figuring the respect gracious souls have to Christ by faith in their prayers, in whom the Godhead dwells bodily (see Jonah 2:4). And it is observable, according to a Jewish canon, one at a distance, in another land, was not only to turn his face to the land of Israel, but direct his heart to Jerusalem, and the temple, and the Holy of Holies. And if in the land, to Jerusalem, etc. And if in Jerusalem, not only to the temple, and Holy of Holies, but if behind the mercy seat, he was to turn his face to it; which was a symbol of Christ, the propitiatory and throne of grace, to be looked unto by faith (Rom. 3:25).

God has chosen this temple to glorify His name in. Solomon wants the LORD to keep his eyes and ears turned toward the temple, and the people who are its congregation. Solomon calls himself, God’s servant. God’s eyes are on us all. He sees and hears everything we do. God also knows what is in our hearts. This temple will bear the name of the LORD. Now that God has revealed His presence in the temple, Solomon will look to this temple when he prays.

1 Kings 8:30 “And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive.”

“Supplication” means to beg favor based on God’s grace. The prayer of the people was to be directed toward the sanctuary, God’s earthly dwelling. While “heaven” itself is His eternal “dwelling place” (8:39, 49; Psalm 11:4; Hab. 2:20), He also lives among His people.

Solomon is crying out for the LORD to hear him and these people, when they pray. He knows how forgiving God has been, but he wants Him to forgive them when they cry out to Him.

Verses 31-53: The bulk of Solomon's prayer recognizes that God's presence provides help for the difficulties people face in life, even their own failure.

1 Kings 8:31 "If any man trespass against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house:"

By being unfaithful in a trust committed to him, or the like.

"And an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear": He denying that ever anything was committed to his trust, and there being no witnesses of it, the judge obliges him to take an oath he never had any.

"And the oath come before thine altar in this house": Where it was taken, as in the presence of God, and as appealing to him: hence in corrupt times they came to swear by the altar (Matt. 23:20). And so, the Heathens used to take their oaths in the temples of their gods, and at their altars, as the instances of Callicrates and Hannibal show. And others Grotius refers to; yea, they also laid hold on the altar, at least touched it when they swore to give the greater sanction to the oath.

1 Kings 8:32 "Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness."

When the injured person makes supplication to have justice done him.

"And do, and judge thy servants": Contending with one another, the one affirming, the other denying.

"Condemning the wicked, by bringing his way upon his head": Inflicting upon him the punishment imprecated by him in his oath.

"And justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness": By making it appear that his cause is just.

Solomon recognizes the LORD as the righteous Judge in this. Only God can decide many matters. Some will even swear a lie, but God knows who is telling the truth. Only God knows who to condemn and who to bless.

Verses 33-34: God's presence makes it possible for those who have rebelled to turn back to him.

1 Kings 8:33 “When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house:”

Beaten and routed, many slain, and others carried captive; which had been their case, and might be again, and was, though now a time of peace.

“Because they have sinned against thee”: Which always was the reason of their being given up into the hands of their enemies.

“And shall turn again to thee”: To thy worship, as the Targum, having fallen into idolatry, which was generally the case when they fell before their enemies.

“And confess thy name”: Own him to be the true God. Acknowledge his justice in their punishment, confess their sin, repent of it, and give him glory.

“And pray and make supplication unto thee in this house”: Not the captives, unless it should be rendered, as it may, “toward this house”. But those that escaped, or their brethren that went not out to battle, who should pray for them here.

1 Kings 8:34 “Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers.”

It being not personal, but public sins, which would be the cause of such a calamity.

“And bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers”: As had been often their case in the time of the judges.

This has been the condition of Israel from the beginning. God always wants to bless them, but sometimes they sin and go after false gods. The wars they had lost were for that very reason. They were unfaithful to the LORD, and He would cause them to lose a battle. The minute they asked for forgiveness and turned back to the LORD, He would forgive their sins and bless them again. They are scattered into foreign lands over and over for their sins. Solomon prays that God will forgive them, and bring them back home.

1 Kings 8:35 “When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them:”

As it may be said to be when the air is quite serene, and not a cloud in it.

“And there is no rain”: In its season, neither the former nor the latter, as it was in the times of Elijah.

“Because they have sinned against thee”: Want of rain was threatened in case of sin, and was always the effect of it (Lev. 26:19).

“If they pray towards this place”: In any part of the country where they were; for it sometimes rained on one city, and not on another (Amos 4:7).

“And confess thy name”: Own his power and his providence, and the justness of his dealings with them.

“And turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them”: Their affliction being made useful, to bring them to a sense of their sin, and to repentance for it, and reformation from it. Or, “when thou hearest” or “answerest them”; so the Targum, receives their prayer; thus the goodness of God leads to repentance.

1 Kings 8:36 “Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.”

By removing the judgment of drought upon them.

“That thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk”: The way of worship and duty prescribed by the Lord which was good in itself, and good for them. Good things being enjoyed by them that walk therein. And this the Lord sometimes teaches by afflictions, as well as by his word. But whenever he does it, it is by his Spirit, and then afflictions are blessings (Psalm 104:19), where the same phrase is differently rendered.

“And give rain upon the land which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance”: As he did at the prayer of Elijah (James 5:18).

So much of this prayer is a statement of why it does not rain, or why storms come, or any of nature’s disasters. The heaven is shut up and it does not rain, because the people have turned against God. The only solution to natural disasters, such as drought, is to pray for forgiveness for our sins, and ask God to change the situation. When God hears from heaven and answers the prayer, the drought is over. God had promised them rain at the right time for their crops, as long as they were faithful to Him.

1 Kings 8:37 “If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, [or] if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness [there be];”

Through want of rain, or any other cause, as there had been a three years’ famine in the time of David, and it is supposed it might be again, though Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey.

“If there be pestilence”: As there had been, for David’s numbering the people.

“Blasting”: Or blights, occasioned by the east wind.

“Mildew”: A kind of clammy dew, which falling on plants, corn, etc. corrupts and destroys them (see Amos 4:9).

“Locust”: or:

“If there be caterpillar”: Creatures very pernicious to the fruits of the earth, and cause a scarcity of them (see Joel 1:4).

“If their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities”: So that they cannot go out to gather the increase of the earth, or till their land.

“Whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be”: Whatever stroke from the hand of God, or what judgment or calamity whatsoever befalls.

Notice, what causes these calamities. Notice also, that these come from God, not the devil. We might look at this Scripture and ask God to forgive us, so the plague of A.I.D.S would be stopped in our land. The only thing that will stop A.I.D.S. is repentance and prayer and turning to God for help. Everyone gets hurt by a plague. Some of the people who get this disease, are innocent. Everyone must return to true worship of God.

1 Kings 8:38 “What prayer and supplication soever be [made] by any man, [or] by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:”

On account of any of the above things, or any other.

“Be made by any man, or by all the people Israel”: By a private man, for such a one might go to the temple and pray by himself (see Luke 18:10), or by the public congregation.

“Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart”: Be sensible of his sin as the cause of his distress, and own it, though ever so privately committed, which none knows but God and his own heart. And which may be only a heart sin, not actually committed; as all sin is originally in the heart, and springs from it, that is the source of all wickedness. It may respect the corruption of nature, indwelling sin, which truly deserves this name, and which every good man is led to observe, confess, and bewail (Psalm 51:4).

In 2 Chronicles 6:29), it is, “shall know his own sore and his own grief”. What particularly affects him, and gives him pain and sorrow, as every man best knows his own affliction and trouble, and so can best represent his own case to the Lord.

“And spread forth his hands towards this house”: Pray with his face towards it, and his hands spread out, a prayer gesture, and what was now used by Solomon (1 Kings 8:22).

The “plague of the heart” is speaking of the conscience of man. The heart is what we are. If a man has a heart stayed upon God, he is in good standing with God. Those who are evil in their

hearts, are not pleasing unto the LORD. They should look to this temple, because that is where the LORD is.

1 Kings 8:39 “Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, [even] thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)”

Which was more properly so, than this Solomon had built and the Lord had taken possession of.

“And forgive”: Remove the calamity and distress, be it what it may.

“And do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest”: That his prayer is cordial and sincere, his confession and repentance genuine, and that he is truly sensible of his sin, and sorry for it. And is pure in his intentions and resolutions through divine grace; to depart from it for the future.

“(For thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)”: He knows all men, the hearts of them all, what is in them, what comes out of them, and is according to them. Omniscience belongs only to God. It is his prerogative to know the heart and search the reins (see Jer. 17:9).

A prayer prayed from a repentant heart will get results. When our heart is changed, we are changed. Satan only knows what he sees and hears, but God knows the heart of man. God even knows our thoughts. My own personal belief is that our heart is what will condemn us on judgment day, or redeem us. Even our belief must begin in our heart.

1 Kings 8:40 “That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.”

For his goodness sake in hearing their prayer, removing their affliction, and bestowing his blessings on them, particularly in forgiving their sins (see Psalm 130:4).

“All the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers”: Not only for the present, while the mercy is fresh, but all the days of their lives. To which they were the more obliged by the good land they possessed as a divine gift, and which they held by the tenure of their obedience (Isa. 1:19).

This fear is speaking of reverence. This fear is as a child fears a father.

Verses 41-43: The temple was not only for the Hebrew people. In the Court of the Gentiles, “foreigners” were welcome. Truly, as Jesus remarked, it became “a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17).

1 Kings 8:41 “Moreover concerning a stranger, that [is] not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name’s sake;”

Of another country not belonging to any of the tribes of Israel; yet having some knowledge of, and disposition to, the true worship of God.

“But cometh out of a far country for thy name’s sake”: As the Ethiopian eunuch did, to pray to him, worship him, and offer such sacrifices as were allowed a Gentile to do (Lev. 22:18); led thereunto by the fame of him, as follows.

1 Kings 8:42 “(For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house;”

Of his great name Jehovah. Of him as the eternal, immutable, and self-existent Being. Of the perfections of his nature, as displayed in his mighty works.

“And of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm”: That had been done formerly such as the mighty works in Egypt, at the Red sea, in the wilderness, in the land of Canaan, in the times of David, and still under the reign of Solomon. And even in future ages, besides the works of creation and providence in general.

“When he shall come and pray towards this house”: Not being admitted into it, only into a court, which in later times was called the court of the Gentiles (see Acts 21:19).

1 Kings Chapter 8 Continued Questions

1. Verse 1 is a picture of what?
2. How do we know that Solomon kneels to pray?
3. When he raises his hands to heaven, it is as if he is saying what?
4. What begins with verse 23?
5. How does the prayer begin?
6. Why does Solomon stress there is no other God?
7. What did God want from this people?
8. The building of the temple reassures Solomon of what?
9. What had God told David about the throne of Israel?
10. What does “verified” mean in verse 26?

11. What question does Solomon ask in verse 27?
12. What does the author believe to be unexplainable about God?
13. Why was Solomon saying, to look to the temple to pray?
14. In verse 32, Solomon recognizes God as what?
15. What had been the condition of Israel from the beginning?
16. Why does Solomon say, there is no rain?
17. What is the only solution to natural disasters?
18. What is a modern plague in our land?
19. What is the “plague of the heart” speaking of?