

# SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**1 KGS. 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:

**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:

**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.

**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.

**26** And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which

thou spakest unto thy servant David my father.

**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?

**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 to day:

**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.

**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.

## NOTES

# Solomon's Dedication Prayer

Lesson Text: 1 Kings 8:22-30

Related Scriptures: 2 Samuel 7:4-25; 2 Chronicles 7:11-16;  
Nehemiah 1:1-11; Acts 7:44-50; 17:22-28

TIME: about 959 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"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" (1 Kings 8:30).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **THE LORD'S LOYAL LOVE DISPLAYED—1 Kgs. 8:22-24**

Solomon's dedication prayer highlights the profound background of God's promises to David as Solomon remembers what led to this momentous occasion for the nation. The focus of the occasion was rightly on God.

**Solomon's posture (1 Kgs. 8:22).** Solomon chose a symbolic location for His temple-dedication prayer—the altar. He could have prayed outside the temple's entrance like a modern-day ribbon-cutting ceremony, but he chose the place where the temple's atoning sacrifices would be made for Israel's sins. There, the lifeblood of animals would be accepted by God for repentant, trusting worshippers (cf. Lev. 17:11).

Solomon mentioned sin several times in his dedication prayer. He also used several synonyms for sin. Sin is why the temple was necessary. Without sin, there would be no separation between humanity and God that needed to be mediated by blood.

Solomon reached toward heaven with his hands (1 Kgs. 8:22). Solomon

postured himself with all the piety and solemnity of a new phase in God's activity in the world through Israel. There is a hint of desperation in Solomon's hand placement, judging how the prophets used the phrase (cf. Isa. 1:15; Jer. 4:31). Hands raised to heaven signify the need for help (cf. Ps. 68:31).

Solomon's location and posture must have been important to the narrator, because at the end of the prayer he mentioned them again and added that Solomon knelt at some point during the prayer (1 Kgs. 8:54). It seems the narrator wants the readers to remember what the hands and the altar represent—need and atonement. That is the recipe for what the readers in exile needed. They needed repentance.

**Solomon's prayer (1 Kgs. 8:23-24).** Solomon began his prayer with praise. Solomon praised God for four things. First, God is incomparable (vs. 23). There is no one like the God of Israel.

Second, Solomon praised God for linking Himself to Israel. The Lord made covenant promises to the whole nation (cf. 19:5-6).

Third, Solomon said that there is a special way that God is unparalleled in the universe: He is faithful to the covenant promises He made to His people (8:23). Many nations and kings made covenants with one another in the ancient world, but not with their gods.

Fourth, Solomon praised God for the promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7 (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:24). God promised David at least three things there: that David's son would build the temple (2 Sam. 7:12-13), that God would discipline but not abandon David's royal descendants (vss. 14-15), and that David's royal line would never end (vs. 16).

### **THE LORD'S LOYAL LOVE CONTINUED—1 Kgs. 8:25-26**

In verse 25, Solomon transitioned from praise to petition. He was still talking to God about his father, David, though, and quoted what God said to David about the future of his royal line. Solomon was understandably concerned about the second and third elements of the promises to David: that God would discipline yet not abandon David's line and that David's royal line would rule forever.

Solomon himself would later test the durability of the promise to discipline but not abandon David's royal sons. Solomon would break four of the clear rules for Israelite kings commanded in Deuteronomy 17:14-17: do not amass horses (1 Kgs. 4:26), do not get horses from Egypt specifically (10:28), do not amass wives (3:1; 11:1-3), and do not amass silver and gold (cf. 10:23-25, 27).

Solomon also asked God to keep the most audacious aspect of the promises to David: an eternal dynasty (1 Kgs. 8:25; cf. 2 Sam. 7:16). Solomon's wisdom is on display here by what he did in his prayer. Solomon quoted God's words back to the Lord in prayer. In essence, he said, "You said this, so please do it, Lord." When Solomon prayed this prayer in 959 B.C., it is en-

tirely possible that 1 and 2 Samuel had not yet been written. So Solomon may not have quoted 2 Samuel 7 *per se*, but he used the same wording his father used when passing royal leadership to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:4.

Of course, the New Testament shows how God did keep this promise of an eternal dynasty (Luke 1:32-33). God did not mean that for every moment from David until eternity there would be a political ruler from his line ruling Judah. Forever can mean every moment or can mean that, once established, it would never end. God's way of fulfilling this promise did not contradict Solomon's wording, because in Hebrew the promise uses a word meaning "cut off" (1 Kgs. 8:25). God would not cut off, or end, David's line—ever. God always keeps His promises.

After quoting God's promise in his prayer, Solomon asked God to keep the promise. All signs point to Solomon trusting the promise about which he asked God to prove trustworthy. That makes Solomon righteous by faith even though his subsequent obedience would waver greatly.

God knows that human faithfulness and performance cannot secure an eternal dynasty. Reflecting on the same promises to David a few centuries later, Isaiah would remind God's people that only the Lord's strength can yield an eternal kingdom (cf. Isa. 9:7).

### **THE LORD'S NEARNESS TO HIS PEOPLE—1 Kgs. 8:27-30**

Solomon was not a salesman. He was at the temple's grand opening, and he marveled at how the temple was technically unnecessary (cf. vs. 27). The Lord is above and beyond the created universe. If the universe cannot hold Him, a building cannot either. That was brilliant on Solomon's part. He did not want Israel's hope to be in the temple itself, as would occur later in Israel's history (cf. Jer. 7:4). He wanted their hope to be in God.

Despite the temple's inability to hold or pin down the Lord, Solomon boldly believed that God would use the temple to interact with His people. He proceeded to list three different words for prayer to convey the audacious belief that while God did not need the temple, He would allow it to be a place for fellowship with Him and forgiveness.

First, Solomon used a general noun for "prayer" and the general verb for "pray" (1 Kgs. 8:28-30). The noun form often arises in situations of difficulty (cf. Pss. 4:1; 17:1) whereas the verb is more general (cf. 72:15).

Second, Solomon used a word for the specific type of prayer that seeks God's mercy (1 Kgs. 8:28; cf. Dan. 9:20). Third, Solomon used a word for "prayer" (1 Kgs. 8:28) that connotes loud shouting (cf. Ps. 126:5) and singing (cf. 107:22). The repetition of words for various kinds of prayer leaves the reader with the impression that interacting with God would be the purpose of the temple. Urgent prayer, repentant prayer, and joyful prayer would mark this place. Both Isaiah (Isa. 56:7) and Jesus (Matt. 21:13) would certainly agree!

Solomon added twice that subsequent Israelites would offer these kinds of prayers not just *at* the temple but *toward* the temple (1 Kgs. 8:29-30). Centuries later, Daniel would heed Solomon's words and pray toward the site of the Jerusalem temple at great personal risk (Dan. 6:10). Later in 1 Kings 8, Solomon prescribed that praying toward the temple site would be a way for God's people in exile to request the end of exile (vss. 48-50). What a perfect truth for the original exiled readers of 1 and 2 Kings to hear!

God did not need His people to face a certain way to be heard by Him, but perhaps He knew it would help them offer their bodies (cf. Rom. 12:1-2) in repentant prayer while postured toward home. God did not need a temple but knew it would help the people learn to approach Him in repentant faith to have

one. Solomon trusted God's grace, for twice he asked God to listen to His people's prayers (1 Kgs. 8:28, 30). The original readers in exile, and believing readers today, need not wonder whether that was Solomon's wish or dream. God later appeared to Solomon and answered the king's multifaceted prayer with a resounding yes (9:3).

—Matthew Swale

## QUESTIONS

1. What was the symbolic location where Solomon made his prayer, and what did the symbol mean (1 Kgs. 8:22)?
2. Why was the temple necessary?
3. What was significant about Solomon's hands and the altar during his prayer?
4. In what way is God unparalleled in the universe, according to Solomon's prayer in verse 23?
5. What three things did God promise to David in the covenant that Solomon mentioned in his prayer (vs. 24)?
6. Why did Solomon quote to God the promise that He made to David about the future of his royal line (vs. 25)?
7. How could God promise David an eternal kingdom when David's descendants were disobedient (vss. 25-26)?
8. Why did Solomon say that the temple was technically unnecessary (vs. 27)?
9. Why was the temple important for the relationship between God and Israel (vss. 27-28)?
10. Why did Solomon prescribe praying toward the temple (vss. 28-30)?

—Glenn Weaver

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Sometimes our posture in prayer reflects our heart attitude (1 Kgs. 8:22).
2. God always keeps His promises (vss. 23-25).
3. It is sometimes appropriate to pray that God would keep His promises (vs. 26).
4. When we pray, we should realize our inadequacy before God (vs. 27).
5. Sometimes we must plead to God in prayer (vs. 28).
6. We can and should pray for God's watchful care in certain situations (vs. 29).
7. We should pray not only for God to hear our prayers but also that He would hear our future prayers (vs. 30).

—James Frohlich

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What are some examples in the Bible where the location of an event contained symbolic significance (1 Kgs. 8:22)?
2. What are some other examples of Old Testament believers who walked before God with all their heart (1 Kgs. 8:23; cf. 2 Kgs. 23:25)?
3. How can a person today walk before God with all his or her heart (cf. Deut. 10:12; 13:3; Josh. 22:5; 1 Sam. 7:3)?
4. What was the promise that God made to David (1 Kgs. 8:24-26; cf. 1 Kgs. 8:17-21; 2 Sam. 7)?
5. If heaven and earth cannot contain God, where does He dwell (1 Kgs. 8:27; cf. Ps. 139:7-12)?
6. When did God promise that He would reside in the temple (1 Kgs. 8:29; cf. Deut. 12:11)?

—James Frohlich

## Golden Text Illuminated

**“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” (1 Kings 8:30).**

In World War II, a group of soldiers found themselves trapped behind enemy lines. They were exhausted, hungry, and desperate for a way out. With the enemy closing in, fear and anxiety overwhelmed them. In their darkest hour, one soldier fell to his knees and began to pour his heart out to God. Surprisingly, the other soldiers joined him. As they fervently prayed, a sudden fog swept over the area, allowing them to escape unharmed.

Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:30 shows the heart of a servant who had worked to build a resting place for God's presence. It highlights several essential aspects that can transform our understanding and practice of prayer.

Solomon began his prayer by acknowledging the assured presence of God. He did not approach God with arrogance or entitlement; he identified himself as God's servant. He actively pleaded for God to listen to his cry and prayer. Our Heavenly Father is not distant or uninterested.

Just as the soldiers found deliverance in their desperate prayer during wartime, our prayers possess the same potential impact in our lives. May we be encouraged to approach prayer with humility, recognizing the promised presence of God and His attentiveness to our cries. Prayer can change the course of our lives and usher in God's miraculous intervention.

—Page Brooks