

1. My title for this lesson is, "What's wrong with Solomon's speech". First, know that this chapter is a long one that features a long speech by Solomon to dedicate the temple. All of the construction details of the last two chapters are over and now we are dedicating the temple. I admit, my first thought as I read this chapter is Solomon is a politician: He organized a big gathering of Israelites and he can't resist giving a big prayer-speech about God and to all gathered at this event. I'm not positive it's the longest prayer in the bible, but I would guess that this is it.
 - a) With that said, let me share a great proverb on prayers made from a pulpit:
 - i) The first three minutes the audience prays with you.
 - ii) The next three minutes the audience prays for you.
 - iii) The next three minutes the audience prays for you to finish. (David Guzik)
 - iv) There was a famous moment in the 19th century when one of the greatest pastors of that century (D.L. Moody) had someone else praying on stage with him. After this other person kept going with a long rambling prayer, Moody told the crowd, lets all turn in our hymnals to number 135 while our brother finishes his prayer.
 - b) I share all of that because Solomon is going to give a long speech in this chapter and we are the one's that have to bear with it. While there are a lot of good things I can and will say about this prayer, it is like listening to a politician go on and on and pretty soon one is no longer focusing on what that politician is saying.
 - i) With that disclaimer out of my system, let me say what is good about this prayer: It repeats back a lot of God's promises and warnings to Israel. A great way to pray is to repeat back God's words in our prayers. It's like saying I believe these words to be true. Help us to trust You so that the positive things it says will happen and the negative things God warns about if we turn from Him won't occur.
 - ii) My problem with the prayer is it didn't work. As we will read in the next several chapters, both Solomon and the Israelites turned from God in effect to be like the world around them and not live like God desired them to live. A purpose of this lesson is to explain why this prayer was ineffective so we ourselves don't make the same mistake in our prayer life.
2. The next thing to say about this chapter is it's not just one big prayer. The first part of the chapter talks about the gathering itself and how the worship got started in the temple Solomon built. We are witnessing a big ceremony. It's like watching the opening ceremonies of the Olympics mixed with a big political speech. The chapter then ends by coming back to that big ceremony. In short, we have a big speech by Solomon surrounded by details of the dedication of this temple.
 - a) Speaking of speeches, it is time for another of my why should I care about any of this stuff anyway speech: Yes it shows Solomon did care about pleasing God. Yes it shows that the Israelites cared about using this temple to worship God. Yes over the course of this book it will show how far the Israelites have fallen from the height of their power. None of those factors have any affect upon our daily life, so why should we care?
 - i) For starters, it gives us a few tips about how to pray and how not to pray.
 - ii) It reminds us how to trust in God through good and bad times of our lives.
 - iii) It reminds us He is there no matter what is going on in our lives.
 - b) My "what is wrong with this speech" point is again that it ineffective. If you are familiar with some of the history of Israel after this time, they went downhill. So if Solomon did pray for God to watch over Israel why wasn't this prayer effective? Answer: This prayer required "follow through" for Solomon and those people. In other words we can't pray to God once and forget about it. We have to continue to trust God. That's what they failed to do and the danger we all face when we fail to be obedient of what He desires of our lives.
 - c) With that said, it's time to start reading the chapter itself.

3. Chapter 8 Verse 1: Then King Solomon summoned into his presence at Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the LORD's covenant from Zion, the City of David. ² All the men of Israel came together to King Solomon at the time of the festival in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month.
- a) The short version here is that Solomon organized a big party. A clue that this was a major event is the fact it said "seventh month" at the end of Verse 2. That is because Chapter 6, Verse 38 said that Solomon finished building the temple in the eighth month. That means he spent about a year planning this big celebration and gave everyone time to mark it on their calendars so they could show up for it in Jerusalem.
 - i) I should comment about time here. Chapter 6 said Solomon spent seven years to build the temple and another 13 years to build his own house. This ceremony took place after that first seven-year period and during the 13-year "house" period. My only point is that Chapter 8 takes place chronologically before Chapter 7 finishes.
 - b) It would help to remember that at this time, the Israelites were still living in their ancient tribal territories. Verse 1 says the leaders of each of the tribes were invited to Jerusalem for this ceremony. So where was this ark now? David had it placed in a tent structure in Jerusalem. Therefore, the ark didn't travel far, but it was a show to transport it from the tent David had for it, to the temple structure that Solomon had built.
 - c) All right John, good for the ancient Israelites. Why should I care? The most positive thing one can say about this big ceremony is that it made the Israelites focus on God for a while. I have nothing against planning church functions if the purpose of that function is to get us to think about God and focus upon Him for a specified time. Remember that the great desire of religious Jews is for the Messiah ("eternal king") to come and rule the world from Jerusalem. Here is this temple now set up and now used to remind the Israelites that God will keep His promises to King David about the Messiah coming. The point for us is to do things to keep our focus upon Him and remind ourselves among other things that Jesus will return one day to rule the world from Jerusalem. Having special functions to get our focus upon God is a good thing if our hearts are in the right place.
4. Verse 3: When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the priests took up the ark, ⁴ and they brought up the ark of the LORD and the Tent of Meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The priests and Levites carried them up, ⁵ and King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted.
- a) One of the things I'm going to focus on in this lesson is the "ark of the covenant". I would describe it as a footlocker size box made of wood with a separate lid that was completely covered in gold. Only the high priest was allowed to even see this box and that was once a year. Therefore a motivation for the crowd to show up was for an opportunity to see the ark as it represents God's presence. Of course God cannot be contained in a box, that's not the point. The ark is designed to show us by its contents that God is holy (a copy of the 10 Commandments was in there) and its lid represented His mercy when we violate the law.
 - b) So anyway here is this big ritual where the ark was transported from a portable tent home under David's rule to the temple that Solomon had finished. The moving ceremony was for the ark to be transported by having priests carry it on poles. The reason it was carried shows how priests are responsible for bearing the ark. It is a symbol for us to teach others about God and His requirements for salvation.
 - c) Now think about the "Great Commission" for Christians: It is for us to go be a witness for Jesus and make disciples of all nations. (See Matthew 28:19). As the priests were to bear the ark on their shoulders, so we are to bear God on our shoulders, so to speak, to share His redemption plan for mankind. That alone is a great word picture for us to learn about the importance of this ark.

- d) The text also says that whatever else was in this central worship tent that David set up was also brought into this temple. While the ark was the central item in the tent, there were also other temple pieces such as a lamp stand, an alter for burning incense and an altar for placing 12 loaves of bread. That incense altar is for prayers. The altar for the 12 loaves of bread is the reminder that God is watching over the twelve tribes of Israel and it was the job of the priests (again, think us) to draw people closer to God.
 - i) To understand, let us return to our time line. Remember that in effect, Chapter 8 comes before Chapter 7. That chapter was about other things that Solomon built. The temple was done at the end of Chapter 6, and this dedication ceremony takes place about a year after the temple was finished being built, but before Solomon finished building all of the "accessories" for the temple that are mentioned near the end of Chapter 7. I state all of that because the some of other items mentioned that were brought up from the tent to the tabernacle were probably replaced by newer versions of some of those same items that Solomon built as described in Chapter 7.
 - a) The point is the other things that God wants to be associated with the worship of Him were present even before Solomon built newer models.
 - e) Finally, the text talks about the countless sheep and cattle that were sacrificed here. To understand this, one has to learn a little about animals in that culture. Sheep wool was one of the main products that the Israelites raised for their personal use and for trading. Oxen were used to plow the fields. They were both central to their economy. When they sacrificed countless of these animals, they were in effect saying to God, "We're going to trust You to provide for our future by sacrificing of what we have." Part of it shows the wealth of the Israelites under Solomon's rule, but the more important thing it teaches us is about trusting God with part of our wealth to trust in Him to provide for our future.
 - f) Meanwhile, back to the ceremony:
5. Verse 6: The priests then brought the ark of the LORD's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁷ The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its carrying poles. ⁸ These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are still there today. ⁹ There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.
- a) Here we have the close of the main ritual. The ark was transported into the temple that Solomon had built. The text says that cherubim spread their wings over the ark. When the original ark was built, there were statues of cherubim (type of angels) carved on the lid of that box. I suspect the text here is talking about the larger statues that Solomon had built that were now in this room as part of the dedication ceremony.
 - b) I need you to bear with me for a few moments while I explain some the technical details here and then I'll explain why we should care about this stuff. The ark was carried on the shoulders of priests via two long poles. When the ark was placed in its final resting place for this ritual, the poles were left in the carrying slots carved into the ark. Also know that this temple had two key rooms: One is where the ark rested which was only entered once per year by the high priests. The other room was where the lamp stand was, as well as the table with 12 loaves of bread and an incense altar. Between those two rooms was a large curtain. The text makes the point of saying the poles stuck out from the room it was in, to the main room and the poles could be seen by the priests in that other room.
 - i) OK, John, time for the so what? Even though the ark itself could not be seen by the priests on a daily basis, the fact that the poles were there reminded the priests that the presence of God was there when they worked inside this place.
 - ii) One more time, so what? The point for you and me is we can't see God when we do service for him, but He still in His own way reminds us, that He is there.

- c) Now I come to my favorite part of this chapter. Notice a strange comment made in Verse nine. It says that the only thing in the ark was a copy of the 10 Commandments. The last the bible says of the contents of the ark was way back in the book of Numbers. The short version here is the ark once also contained a small wood stick that miraculously budded with almonds (Numbers 17:8) and a jar of manna (Exodus 16:33), Manna is the food that God provided for the Israelites roughly 500 years earlier when then had to travel through the wilderness to reach the promised land.
 - i) As to the 10 Commandments, this was the stone tablet written with the "finger of God" back in Exodus 31:18. Moses placed that tablet in this box.
 - ii) Here is where I love to speculate. First of all, how did the Israelites know what was in the box in the first place? Considering how highly they treasured this thing, note that they were not afraid to look inside of it. Second, how did the other items in that box disappear? The true answer is no one knows. We can speculate all day long how they disappeared, but the simple truth is, they did.
 - iii) So what does all of that mean for you and me? Glad you asked. Both of the things that disappeared represented miracles that God performed to show the Israelites in effect who is in charge (God) and He desires to guide us. Here, the evidence of those miracles is gone, but the word of God remains. The problem with trusting in miracles is that one is then constantly waiting for the next miracle. However when one is trusting in His word, that remains forever even after the miracles disappear.
 - iv) Am I positive that is why the 10 Commandments were still there and nothing else? No, but it does fit the pattern of how God works in our lives. To continue to trust in Him, we must not be dependant upon miracles but be guided by His word.
 - v) With that fact digested, we can now get back to the ritual.
- 6. Verse 10: When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. ¹¹ And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.
 - a) The ritual ended when a thick cloud rolled in. Somehow the priests knew that this was not an ordinary fog and somehow it represented the presence of God. For those of you who like to do word studies in the bible, I suggest searching clouds. It is amazing how often clouds are associated with the presence of God in both the Old and New Testament. The idea we can never fully comprehend God. Clouds make things, well, cloudy and we can't see very well. So it is when we become conscious of God's presence. Yes we should worship Him as God, but at the same time realize that He is God and we're not. We can't fully comprehend who He is, or what is His power. A cloud describes that well.
 - b) Remember the countless sheep and cattle that were sacrificed? In effect that was not enough to call it a day. Part of the priests' ritual was to offer a lamb twice per day (See Exodus 29:38) to constantly remind us of our sinfulness before God. My point is simply that the priests had to hold off from their normal duties because they grasped the idea that God was physically present at this moment.
- 7. Verse 12: Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud; ¹³ I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever."
 - a) So while the crowd was probably in stunned silence over this cloud that just happened to show up out of nowhere, Solomon had the boldness to say something while I visualize the rest of the crowd standing there in silence. This reminds me a little of Peter, who was the type of person who had to say something even if he really had nothing to say. There is an old biblical joke that whenever Peter opened his mouth in the Gospel accounts it was only to change the foot that was currently in his mouth.
 - b) I say that because that is how I picture Solomon speaking here in these two verses. All of a sudden this cloud shows up, and Solomon as the king feels the need to say something. Solomon focuses on himself and says in effect, "Here is this temple that I built for you".

- c) This in effect is the start of the speech that will last most of this long chapter. Remember I said the title of my lesson was, "What's wrong with Solomon's speech". His first mistake is Solomon focuses on himself and not on God. In effect Solomon is telling God, look at this magnificent temple that I built for You, as if Solomon built it himself and as if God needed a specific temple on earth to dwell in.
 - i) Again, it reminds me a little of Peter said out loud: "Let us build three shelters, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah" (Matthew 17:4), because Peter didn't know what else to say at that gathering.
 - ii) Coming back to Solomon, he started this prayer by focusing what he did for God as opposed to what God can and does do for us. If you ever want to know what is wrong with any prayer, just look for the phrase "what I did for God". That is what Solomon said here. Solomon was right in saying that the presence of God is often manifested in the bible in a dark cloud again to symbolize the fact we can't fully grasp the power of God. However, saying that we have built anyplace for Him to specifically dwell is the mistake of the verse.
 - iii) With that statement made, let us return to Solomon's speech:
- 8. Verse 14: While the whole assembly of Israel was standing there, the king turned around and blessed them. ¹⁵ Then he said: "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his own hand has fulfilled what he promised with his own mouth to my father David. For he said, ¹⁶ 'Since the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city in any tribe of Israel to have a temple built for my Name to be there, but I have chosen David to rule my people Israel.'
 - a) The first thing to realize here is that Solomon is just getting warmed up. In effect he has stopped praying directly to God and now he has turned around the face the crowd.
 - i) Remember that there was a huge crowd gathered outside of the temple to watch the procession of bringing the ark into the temple. I picture Solomon standing on a platform just outside of the building. At first he faced toward the temple to say to God, here is what I built. Now Solomon turned around to speak to the crowd. This speech covers most of the chapter.
 - b) Know that not everything Solomon says in this prayer is bad. In fact, much of it is was to simply restate things God has already promised in the bible. Praying in a way to state out loud God's promises to us is a good thing. Rambling on for say 50 verses with any type of public prayer is usually when the Dwight Moody's of the world need to step in and tell us to turn to Hymn Number 135 while our brother finishes his prayer.
 - c) Meanwhile, back to Solomon's speech itself. The first thing Solomon says to the crowd is the fact that God has chosen a son (descendant) of David to rule over his people. What Solomon is doing is interpreting what God told David specifically that a descendant of his would rule over his people. Solomon's interpretation is of the promise was of himself and not "The" Messiah to rule forever.
 - d) I need to explain that better. Back in 2nd Samuel Chapter 7, God told David that he could not build a temple for God. However, a son (or descendant, same word) would rule over God's people and the world from Jerusalem. Since Jesus is a direct descendant of David, Christians have interpreted that fact to Jesus returning one day as He promised to come rule the world from Jerusalem. Unfortunately many Christians interpret that promise as being "spiritual" in the sense they don't believe He literally rule from Jerusalem, but just rule over hearts. Think of the politics of the Roman Empire. You can't have Jesus literally rule and overthrow Rome's power, so that view prevailed for centuries. Those of us who take our bible seriously, hold the view that Jesus will literal come to rule from Jerusalem one day. If you want to understand why the world is so dead set against the idea of the Jewish people being in the Promised Land, all one has to do is understand about the idea of The Messiah coming to rule again from Israel one day. I'm absolutely convinced there are demonic forces doing all they can to prevent that concept from literally happening.

- e) You may recall from the last lesson that a danger many political leaders have is what I call the "Messiah syndrome". That is the belief that they are called to be the great ruler who is called to rule over the world or at least their corner of it. This is about the danger of letting one's ego think they are more special than they really are. I state that here because we see Solomon in effect praise himself for fulfilling what his father David wanted to accomplish by building this temple.
 - i) This speech has both good and bad elements. Solomon correctly states that God did not require a temple to be built anywhere in Israel. However, God did tell David that a son or descendant of his would rule forever. Solomon is partially fulfilling that as he built the temple that David himself wanted to build. To state the obvious again, Solomon is not the promised Messiah, just the one who actually built a temple for the name of God to be known.
 - ii) A key point is the word "Name" in Verse 16. Solomon is well aware that God is not a figment of the Israelites imagination or a man made god that can actually dwell in a temple. The idea of this temple was a place for the name of God to be worshipped. In other words God Himself is of course everywhere and He does not actually dwell in that or any specific temple. The idea of this temple was to have place where the Israelites can honor God as well, God. That is the point here.
 - iii) OK, long way yet to go in this speech. Time to keep moving.
- 9. Verse 17: "My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel.¹⁸ But the LORD said to my father David, 'Because it was in your heart to build a temple for my Name, you did well to have this in your heart.¹⁹ Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, who is your own flesh and blood--he is the one who will build the temple for my Name.'
 - a) Here we actually have the restatement of the prophecy given to David. The idea that a son of his would build that temple. With that said, I need to give a brief discussion about how prophecy works in the bible: There is a view both in Judaism and Christianity that prophecy usually has short term and long term fulfillments. In other words, in order to validate a message as being from God, there is often some sort of short term fulfillment to prove that message came from God and a long term fulfillment that is the true intended message to be sent. The classical biblical example is predictions about the restoration of Israel as a nation. The short-term fulfillment is that after 70 years in captivity, they did get reunited as a single entity, but they were under the rule of another empire. The long-term fulfillment is in our modern age when Israel became an independent country again.
 - i) I state all of that here, because that principal of double fulfillment does tie to the specific prediction made to King David. The short-term fulfillment is that his son, Solomon did build the temple that God wanted him to build. The true fulfillment is when the Messiah begins his eternal rule from Jerusalem. If you ask a religious Jewish person today, how do you know when the Messiah has come? The answer is, "He will lead us to rebuild our temple". For those of us who hold the view that Jesus will literally return one day to rule the world from Jerusalem. That future reign is the long-term fulfillment of that prophecy.
 - ii) Which leads me back to Solomon's speech. The positive news is that Solomon did correctly state the promise made to David. The incorrect news is that Solomon is not the true fulfillment of that prophecy. Whether or not Solomon understood the double fulfillment is not known. However it is part of my what is wrong with this speech argument that Solomon missed that.
 - iii) Again think about the "Messiah syndrome", which is when a leader thinks they are "the one" and their ego gets in the way of what God intends by a given message? I suspect Solomon has some of that. The problem is Solomon may be thinking he's the fulfillment of that prophecy. Consider that as we read the next few verses.

10. Verse 20: "The LORD has kept the promise he made: I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the LORD promised, and I have built the temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ²¹ I have provided a place there for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with our fathers when he brought them out of Egypt."
 - a) The short version here is this temple was David's idea. God told David that he could not build it himself but a son or descendant would build one. Solomon keep the ball rolling plus the preparation work his father did to build the thing.
 - b) Even if Solomon did understand that he was not the promised Messiah, I still think he was thinking, "OK, God, here is the temple You wanted, the ark is in it, let's get the show on the road". My point is there is nothing we can physically do to speed up God's timetable when the Messiah (i.e., Jesus in His Second Coming) will begin that eternal rule. My point is we can't say go to Jerusalem, clear out that space, build a structure like Solomon's and say, "OK Jesus, here is your building, come on down and let's get started".
 - i) The only way we do encourage that event is when we pray, "Thy kingdom come". That prayer is the desire for God to rule over our lives now and eternally and in effect start that eternal rule. One of the fundamental beliefs of Christianity is that Jesus will return one day to rule as king over the world. I can give lots of scripture support for that idea, but I suspect you get the idea by now
 - c) Meanwhile, Solomon is back to his "me, myself and I" speech as he states that he built the temple that David designed. Again it is the "Here it is God, let's get going" syndrome.
11. Verse 22: Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven
 - a) One has to remember that Solomon is speaking both to God and the crowd. There were no microphones back then. However, he stood at the top of a hill and I suspect his voice would carry to lower elevations from that hilltop. With that said, this verse focuses on how Solomon prayed: With his hands spread out toward heaven.
 - i) That point reminds me state, I don't think the posture of prayer is as important as the sincerity of our prayer. Whether we stand with our hands spread or down on our knees or any other position. I'm pretty positive God does not care about our physical position as much as the sincerity of our prayer. Personally, I'm an on my knees man myself. I figured it shows my sincerity of thinking God's in charge and I'm not by that style. However, the bible has lots of examples of people praying in all sorts of styles if for nothing else to show that position style is not important.
12. Verse 23: and said: "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below--you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. ²⁴ You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it--as it is today.
 - a) Here we get into the heart of the speech. What hit me as I thought about this is whether or not this prayer is effective. It's one thing to restate God's promises to us both good and bad, and it is another to actually live based on those promises. The good part of the heart of this prayer is that Solomon was telling the truth. For the next thirty verses or so, we are going to have Solomon state a bunch of scriptural truths that say in effect, God is willing to forgive us when we sin and turn back to Him and He can't un-love what He loves.
 - i) The issue for me is why isn't this prayer more effective? If Solomon understood all of these things about God why do we read in a few chapters of him turning away from God, to marry hundreds of women and be like the other kings around him?
 - ii) One thing to learn from this prayer is even if we state the right things and even if we are sincere about our trust in Him, we can't "pray once and then go about our lives and forget about God". In effect, that is what Solomon and the Israelites of that time did here. Prayed a very sincere prayer restating God's promises to those of us who trust in Him. The issue is the follow through.

- b) With that said, let me come back to the specifics of this section of the prayer. Solomon's point here is that he understood that God kept the short term fulfillment of His promise that the temple would be built. Solomon's temple did stand for centuries. God did allow Israel to be at peace long enough that this thing could be built. Solomon speaks of God's love being eternal. Again, my point is Solomon is stating biblical truth in this prayer and there is nothing wrong with reminding ourselves of God's promises to our lives. The trick of course is to regularly remind ourselves of that promises to keep our focus upon Him as we go through our lives. Meanwhile, Solomon is getting on a role.
13. Verse 25: "Now LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, 'You shall never fail to have a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons are careful in all they do to walk before me as you have done.'²⁶ And now, O God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David my father come true.
- a) Here we are back to the "Messiah syndrome". That is the idea where a leader thinks that they are the "Promised One". Solomon did correctly state in these verses both the concept that a son of David would rule forever and correctly state that obedience is necessary.
- b) However, Solomon is also praying, "let your word that you promised...come true". Does that mean that Solomon realized he was not the Messiah? Probably. However, I think he was thinking if a son of David is to be "the one", then it has to be a son of mine too. If one studies the family lineage of Jesus, Mary was a descendant of David through a half-brother of Solomon. Joseph's family lineage was through Solomon himself.
- i) I should mention that occasionally Jewish people ask me how Joseph can be the father of Jesus. The short answer is that one has to understand the Jewish system of adoption. Legally Mary's baby became Joseph's by adoption. That still makes Joseph the legal father of Jesus even though he wasn't the actual father. It is based on something Moses taught about families marrying within their own tribe so that none of their inheritance would be lost or transferred. (Numbers 36:1-13.) If you are interested in that topic, there is a lecture on the virgin birth on my website.
- c) In these verses he is correctly stating that obedience is necessary in order for God to fulfill His promise of a descendant of David ruling as a king. Since none of us are part of royal line how does any of this apply to us? Yes we get the idea that God is going to fulfill that promise and Jesus will literally rule the world one day from Jerusalem. If one needs proof of that concept see Luke 1:32, where an angel told Mary that Jesus would literally be given the throne of David, which is not in heaven, but the throne Solomon is discussing here.
- i) But what about the obedience part? Jesus said what He requires of believers is to believe in His existence and His redemptive plan for our lives. If it is just a matter of belief, where does obedience come into play? My favorite answer is we become obedient to God not to earn His love or earn our salvation, but out of gratitude for what God has already done and what He promised He will do for us. That is why we, like these ancient Israelites should be obedient to what He desires for us. Not to earn salvation, but out of gratitude for what He does for us.
14. Verse 27: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!²⁸ Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, O LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day.²⁹ May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, 'My Name shall be there,' so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place.³⁰ Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.
- a) Short version: God cannot literally fit in this temple and the Israelites knew it. However it was a place for the Israelites to focus their attention on Him. More importantly, they got the idea that God is willing to forgive when we sincerely turn from our sin.

- b) It is important to state that Solomon is going to focus on God forgiving us of our sins. I don't know if he was feeling guilty about something or just fearing tragedy. Anyway the point is no matter what the circumstance, we can always turn back to God and repent of sin and that is the focus not only of these verses, but the next whole bunch of them.
 - c) Short version #2: No matter what we have done, God is always willing to forgive. We still may have to pay the price on earth for our mistakes but there is no sin beyond His forgiveness. That's the key point here. Jesus essentially said that the only unforgivable sin is a lifetime denial that He is God. (Based on Mark 3:29).
15. Verse 31: "When a man wrongs his neighbor and is required to take an oath and he comes and swears the oath before your altar in this temple,"³² then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on his own head what he has done. Declare the innocent not guilty, and so establish his innocence.
- a) For the next 20 verses, get used to Solomon giving specific examples of how God can and does punish us for our sins and how we can turn back to Him.
 - b) So why the heavy emphasis on the negative? I don't know what Solomon was thinking so I can't speculate what was on his mind. However, I do know human nature. We are more likely to pray and focus on God when things go wrong. Maybe that's why this is all here.
 - c) As to the specific's of these verses, the focus is when we do something wrong against a neighbor and makes an oath based on that wrongdoing. We turn from that mistake we want God to forgive us and that is the focus here.
 - d) As we go fairly quickly through the next bunch of verses, keep in mind that none of the sins and mistakes listed here are beyond forgiveness. That's the big theme here.
16. Verse 33: "When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and confess your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple,"³⁴ then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to their fathers.
- a) These verses talk about when we lose at war and wonder what we did wrong? The first thing is to check to see if we have sinned. Let me comment briefly on wars for freedom. The United States lost millions of lives in order for slaves to be freemen. We have lost almost as many to prevent tyrants from ruling over the world. My point is war is expensive in terms of the cost of human lives. That price is still cheaper than living under tyranny of a all controlling government.
 - b) The point as it relates here, is that God doesn't want us to live under tyranny. There are times when war is necessary to preserve that freedom. If we lose such battles, we want to cry out to God in effect, "Where did we go wrong?" When aspects of our lives seem like they are falling apart, the first thing God requires us to do is check for sin. That in effect is what Solomon is doing here in these verses both individually and collectively.
17. Verse 35: "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them,"³⁶ then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance.
- a) It's almost as if Solomon is thinking, "What other bad thing can I think of, where life is not going well and we need to turn to God". In this section, the bad thing is a lack of rain. So is every drought God ordained? I do believe in a God that knows all things. I also believe that prayer and seeking forgiveness of sins is a key to living a good life. I have also heard some amazing stories of desperate nonreligious farmers coming to prayer meetings just to try anything to bring rain back in their lives. If nothing else, this teaches that God will go to desperate measures in order to draw people back to Him in their lives.
 - b) Meanwhile, we still have a few more bad things to consider before this long prayer that Solomon gives comes to an end. Let's work our way through it.

18. Verse 37: "When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when an enemy besieges them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come,³⁸ and when a prayer or plea is made by any of your people Israel--each one aware of the afflictions of his own heart, and spreading out his hands toward this temple--³⁹ then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of all men),⁴⁰ so that they will fear you all the time they live in the land you gave our fathers.
- a) OK, so far we've had bad oaths, war losses and drought. While Solomon is trying to think of bad things that can happen to us individually or collectively, he comes up with a list of more bad things in Verses 37. Solomon's point is when disaster strikes, God is more than willing to listen to us plea for help. A key point is that God still works on His timing. He may not bring to and end immediately our problems when we turn to Him. However, he does help our perspective on life when we see the eternal picture and not just focus on the disaster of the moment in our lives.
 - b) If God is all loving, we does He allow all of these bad things to happen anyway? The first thing to say is that it helps to get our focus back on Him in the first place. The next thing to remember is that we live in His world and He has a right to do with it as He pleases, no matter how painful it may be for us. If this world is all that life is, it would be a horrible existence for most people in most of history. However, if there is an eternity, then living to make a difference for Him for eternity is worth putting up with whatever problems we have to deal with in this lifetime. That is why we seek Him and that's Solomon's point.
19. Verse 41: "As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name--⁴² for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm--when he comes and prays toward this temple,⁴³ then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.
- a) The next category Solomon focuses on is non-Israelites praying to God. What Solomon is essentially praying is that if a non-Jewish person is willing to trust in God, may He turn and here that prayer. In other words, may Jewish people be a good witness to other non-Jewish people when they hear of this temple. That's the focus of this paragraph.
20. Verse 44: "When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to the LORD toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name,⁴⁵ then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.
- a) Here we are back to war. I would guess the fear of losing a war, and say the temple being destroyed and losing one's nation is a greater fear than a big plague or bad oath made my an individual. That is why this topic gets an "encore" prayer. Notice in Verse 44 the "you" (God) send them to war. Does God ordain war? Good question. I believe He allows war if the cause is great enough. Always remember that Christians are in effect constantly in a state of war, as we battle spiritual forces that don't want us to be a good witness for Jesus. My point is one has to accept war as a part of life rather than just chant we want peace at any given time.
 - b) In the meantime, Solomon is pleading that if the cause is a right one, like say to continue to allow people to live peaceful lives, or say to allow the worship of God to continue, God may bless the cause of that war, even at the cost of many lives.
 - i) To state the obvious war is a complicated topic. There is no easy way to explain the loss of lives and the tragedies that occur due to war. While world leaders go back and forth arguing over territory, real lives are lost and real pain is felt.
 - ii) The point to learn here is through the worst of tragedies, we can still trust that God is there to guide our lives and help us deal with whatever pain we have to deal with, even if it is war related.

21. Verse 46: "When they sin against you--for there is no one who does not sin--and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to his own land, far away or near;⁴⁷ and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their conquerors and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly';⁴⁸ and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name;⁴⁹ then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.⁵⁰ And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy;⁵¹ for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace.
- a) We are now back to sin itself. To summarize this, Solomon is saying that when we sin, be it individually or as part of a collective group, we always have the right to ask forgiveness of that sin and turn back from God, no matter how often or how bad it is.
 - b) One thing we are guilty of is well, guilt over what we do wrong. Our ego's think, "we can do better than that and I can't believe we messed up that badly". God in effect is saying to us, "No, you are not as good as you think you are, but that's ok, because I am still willing to forgive you, no matter how often and how bad the sin, if we are willing to turn from that sin and acknowledge that God was right about that issue.
 - c) It may help to realize that in the next chapter, God Himself speaks to Solomon to tell Him that He has heard this prayer and in effect, "God likes it". God is not saying, I will now let you go sin all you want because you asked for eternal forgiveness here, but I want you to keep on trusting Me. This gets back to my introduction point that despite this prayer that calls for repentance and trust in God, the Israelites still messed up. They messed up in the sense they thought, "OK, that's that, we prayed for forgiveness, now we can do whatever we want". That is why one needs to keep on trusting God all of their lives.
 - d) So does that mean we can lose our salvation by not confessing a particular sin? No. The issue is not salvation, but being a good witness for Him. Our salvation is only based on our trust in what Jesus did for us. Our living witness for Him is based on how we live out our lives and continuing to trust in Him daily. That is the point of this text. Speaking of the text, we still have a good handful of verses left to finish this chapter.
22. Verse 52: "May your eyes be open to your servant's plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to them whenever they cry out to you."⁵³ For you singled them out from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, O Sovereign LORD, brought our fathers out of Egypt."
- a) John's loose translation: God, You called us to be a witness for You to the world. That is why we ask that You to forgive us when we sin and are not a good witness for You. You brought us up out of Egypt (i.e., separated us from the world) to be Your witnesses about You to a lost and dying world. Therefore, help us to be a good witness for You not only to nonbelievers but fellow believers.
 - b) If that reads like a closing benediction, you are right. That is the end of Solomon's prayer. However, it is not the end of the chapter. The last dozen verses or so focus on the events of this ceremony that surround this speech.
 - c) Remember that my lesson title is "what's wrong with Solomon's speech". The speech itself was good. The problem is it was not effective. The Israelites still turned from God within a short time of this speech. That issue is the "why" is this lesson. To state it again quickly, being a good witness is a continual commitment, not a one-time prayer and let it go.
 - d) Before I finish the speech comments, I am well aware that I have gone through a lot of text fairly briefly. My goal is not to give an exhaustive study of every aspect of this text. That is not possible anyway. My goal is to give you something to think about as we study this text and the "gist" of what it is trying to get across to us.

23. Verse 54: When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the LORD, he rose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven.⁵⁵ He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying:
- a) Here we get a few comments here about how he physically prayed. Verse 54 says that he had been kneeling with his hands spread open to God. As I stated earlier in this lesson, I don't believe the physical position of how we pray is as important as our sincerity. Still, I do love kneeling myself as to show our humility and trust in God. To quote the title of an old Christian song I like, "It's hard to stumble when you're on your knees". (That is by the Jackson Southernaires, if interested.)
 - b) While Solomon has in effect, finished praying to God, he still needs to tell the crowd in effect, he is done. The next set of verses is Solomon's benediction to the crowd. This is Solomon saying in effect, now that you all know what God requires of you and know that you know you can seek God for forgiveness, now go out and make a difference for Him.
 - c) With that said, it is time to finish this ceremony.
24. Verse 56: "Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.⁵⁷ May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us.⁵⁸ May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations he gave our fathers.⁵⁹ And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need,⁶⁰ so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other.⁶¹ But your hearts must be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time."
- a) Well, Solomon didn't have fireworks go off to say this is the big finish. Instead, he said I'm guessing in a loud voice in effect, "May God be with us as we trust in Him to guide our lives and make a difference for Him in this world. May each of us be fully committed to serving Him and making a difference for Him".
 - b) As one who has sat through many church benedictions in my life, this one is good. Again, my problem with this prayer isn't the words it is the follow-through. What Solomon and the Israelites failed to do is follow through what Solomon said here and what God desires of our lives, continual and daily trust in Him to guide us to make a difference for Him.
 - c) Meanwhile, it is time for "fireworks" as Solomon ended this closing ceremony with a few big moments of his own. Let us read on.
25. Verse 62: Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD.⁶³ Solomon offered a sacrifice of fellowship offerings to the LORD: twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the Israelites dedicated the temple of the LORD.
- a) My first thought reading this was, "who was counting?" How did they know it was say, 22,000 cattle and not 23,000 cattle? I don't think the exact number is as important as just to show that Solomon and Israel was incredibly rich and could actually afford to make that large a sacrifice. The next few verses give us more details about this final offering.
26. Verse 64: On that same day the king consecrated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple of the LORD, and there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings, because the bronze altar before the LORD was too small to hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings.
- a) Try to picture all of these animals being driven up the hill to the site of the temple to be sacrificed. The text states the normal sacrificial alter wasn't big enough for the huge size of this offering.
 - b) Here is the other neat thing about this offering. Only parts of the animals were burnt up on the altar. The rest was for everyone to eat. In short, this was now a giant BBQ for the whole crowd to enjoy and spend time eating and probably talking about the show itself.

27. Verse 65: So Solomon observed the festival at that time, and all Israel with him--a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. They celebrated it before the LORD our God for seven days and seven days more, fourteen days in all. ⁶⁶ On the following day he sent the people away. They blessed the king and then went home, joyful and glad in heart for all the good things the LORD had done for his servant David and his people Israel.
- a) At the end of this long chapter, it is time to come back to when we started, this festival did occur in the seventh month after the temple was completed. If you're familiar with Jewish holidays, this is the feast of "Tabernacles", which is one of the seven holidays ordained by Moses for all the Jewish people to celebrate. My point is Moses organized this event to be celebrated at a time when many people normally travel to Jerusalem for this holiday. In this text, it says in effect there was so much BBQ food available, the festival that normally lasts for seven days extended for 14 days. On the 15th days, Solomon in effect stood up in front of the crowd and said something like, "OK everyone we've finally finished up all of the lamb chops. Time for everyone to go home". Yes I made that up, but you get the idea.
28. At this point, let me say congratulations for sticking with me through this long chapter and all of my comments that went with it. Since the prayer and banquet are over, it is time to close up this lesson with a quick prayer. I'll sneak my closing comments in that prayer.
29. Father, help us to use our lives to make a difference for You. While big prayers and nice speech's may fire us up for a time being, what You really desire of us is a life long commitment to making a difference for You with our lives. Help us to remember that it is by Your power that we can use our lives to make a difference for You. Help us to stick close to You while we be Your witness to a lost and dying world. May our time be used to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.