

# Solomon's Messianic style during the dedication of the temple

## *1 Kings 8*

When you see a beautiful house then you might say, 'I definitely wouldn't mind living there.' However, if that house is located in the rough part of town, it would be less attractive to live in that house. A beautiful house was built for the LORD, but not in very decent surroundings. It is located in a 'neighbourhood' of sinful people, even though he is the Holy God! And yet he says, 'That is where I want to live.'

Solomon is allowed to do the work which David would have liked to accomplish, but for which he did not receive permission. Just turn back to Outline 7, section 1.

### **1. Verses 1-11**

The feast which verse 2 refers to must have been the Feast of Booths. The Feast of Booths and the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple were probably celebrated consecutively, each feast lasting seven days (v. 65). Both feasts fit well together. The Feast of Booths was a feast of protection (in the desert) and blessings (harvesting). Israel celebrated to express their thankfulness to God who wants to live with his people.

Notice the generous sacrifice. It is a sign of exuberant joy and great thankfulness. See also verse 64: the altar is too small to express his thankfulness!

***Question 1:** Compare verse 8 with Exodus 25:15. Do you have any idea why the carrying poles had to remain in the rings of the ark, even after the ark had been placed in the temple? What does that mean for us?*

***Question 2:** What is the significance in the fact that the Tables of the Covenant were located in the ark? What does that mean for us?*

Read verse 10 and 11. Notice what happens there. The priests are chosen by God himself to do service in the temple, but the first thing that happens is that they are being set aside! When God enters his house, people have to move aside. They have to make way before the glory of the LORD! Priests are needed for the service of reconciliation, but they are not agents who ensure that God lives among his people. God comes to his people on his own accord, based on his own good pleasure. Also during this great celebration, the special office-bearers (and we are not excluded from this group) are assigned a modest position.

***Question 3:** In the context of this passage, what can you say about the position of the priests in the Romanist Church?*

***Question 4:** We do not serve the LORD in order to ensure that he may live among us. Why, then, do we serve him? See Lord's Day 32 of the Catechism (Answer 86).*

### **2. Verses 12-21**

Verse 12 reminds us of passages like Exodus 19:9 and Leviticus 16:2. In the old dispensation, God appears to his people only by wrapping himself in a dark cloud. This points to sin, which

creates distance. However, the emphasis here lies on the fact that God **wants** to live among his people. It can only be done in a certain way, but that is what he really wants, too.

Verse 13 sounds like the words of a real estate agent who passes the house over to the Owner. You need to read this verse in connection with verse 15. Solomon completed the building, but he gives all honour to God. It is God's hand that brought about its completion.

***Question 5:** "...a place for you to dwell forever." Is it correct for the Jews (as well as quite a number of Christians) to expect the rebuilding of the temple on the basis of these words?*

God fulfilled with his hand what he has spoken with his mouth (v. 15, see also v. 24). He is faithful! In the verses 20 and 21 Solomon conveys what God's mouth has spoken. In the verses 20 and 21 he indicates what God's hand has accomplished.

### 3. Verses 22-30

In the previous passage, Solomon made it clear to the people that there are many reasons to give thanks to the LORD. Now, he leads the people in this thanksgiving. This thanksgiving begins with praising the LORD, with standing in awe before his majesty. This God is a faithful God. You will find no one like him! Notice how often Solomon repeats the words, which God has spoken in the past. He did that while addressing the people; he does it again in his thanksgiving prayer to God. This is what God has done; he has fulfilled his promises. Solomon pleads with God, also for the future, on the basis of these promises (see vv. 25 and 26).

***Question 6:** What is beautiful about this sequence -- first thank the LORD for fulfilling his promises and then pray to God to fulfill his promises?*

Verses 27-30 form an introduction to the prayer concerning concrete matters which Solomon is going to lay before the LORD. The beginning of that introduction (v. 27) is marvelous. Even though God really lives in an 'earthly' dwelling (see vv. 12 and 13), you may not put him on the same level as **human** inhabitants of earthly dwellings. His habitation is not limited to this earth. He is too great for that. God is not bound to 'earthly' space or 'earthly' possibilities. And because he is not bound to earthly possibilities, he is able to hear the prayer of his people and attend to their needs. In this context, think of the frequently recurring words, '...then hear from heaven, your dwelling place.' Compare that with the answer of HC, Q&A 121!

"Toward this place" (vv. 29, 30). One has to seek God where he reveals himself ('My Name shall be there' - v. 29). In other words, the temple particularly is a place of prayer. The king intercedes for his subjects in this temple prayer (v. 28); they will follow the example of their king (v. 30). They will address the LORD **according to** how he reveals himself in this temple: as the God of grace and reconciliation. Therefore Solomon can also say, "...and when you hear, forgive". The prayer of the king is that God will keep watch over his temple and thereby over his praying nation (v. 29). In interceding for his people, Solomon displays the messianic style (see the title of this outline). Recall how Christ intercedes for his people (Jn 17, the ending of Rom 8:34).

### 4. Verses 31-53

In summary, Solomon asks, 'Be a Hearer of prayers in all situations when your people draw near to you in faith.' As a true messianic king, he prays on behalf of his people for justice (v.

32, 39, and 49), for peace, and for his blessing (endings of vv. 34, 36, 50). All that Solomon is concerned about is a kingdom based on justice and peace, as extolled in Psalm 72. This kingdom of peace can only be based on God's grace. Solomon knows that, time and again, sin will play a large role in the life of the nation. For this reason, Solomon's prayer focuses on obtaining grace and forgiveness. He pleads on the basis of God's choice to put his love on this people (v. 51 and 53).

Solomon also knows that God does not 'automatically' forgive someone's sins. For that reason he asks God to grant forgiveness if they repent (vv. 33, 35, 47, 48). Thus, he actually prays that the people of Israel may indeed repent. In his prayer, he does not lose sight of the goal of repentance: "that they will fear you..." (v. 40).

It is clear from this prayer that Solomon remembers what God has commanded his people in his law. The punishments that will come upon God's people (vv. 33, 35, 37, 46) have already been announced in that book of law. See Deuteronomy 28! Solomon even anticipates the exile on the basis of this chapter (v. 63 ff). In this context, remember the first outline of this book. The king was expected to carry the law of the LORD with him (Deut 17:18, 19). Knowing this, look at what Solomon says in verse 58.

Notice the beautiful combination of words in the verses 38 and 39. First, every one of them is aware of the afflictions of his own heart. This refers to Israelites who, on the basis of the punishments which God sends, learn to realize that their heart is not right before the LORD. As a result, they then go to the temple to pray with contrite hearts. Because God knows their hearts, he knows that true repentance lives in their hearts.

You can find a remarkable part of the prayer in verses 41 through 43. Solomon's prayer does not limit itself to Israel! In this context see verse 60 also. God's granting of Solomon's petitions will cause the surrounding nations to worship the God of Israel.

***Question 7:** Is the phrase 'for there is no one who does not sin' in verse 46 meant as a kind of excuse? If not, what is the intent then?*

## **5. Verses 54 - 66**

At the end of his prayer, Solomon, his eyes on the **future**, pleads with God on the basis of the words which God spoke to Moses. Now he addresses the **people** again. He points out to them that God has **fulfilled** those same words in the **present**. Not one of the promises intended for this time period has remained unfulfilled. Concerning the promised rest you can read for example Deuteronomy 12:10.

***Question 8:** What Solomon says here can also be found in the book of Joshua (Josh 21:44, 45). Yet, the word 'rest' does not mean exactly the same in both situations. Can you indicate the difference? Is the 'rest' that Solomon speaks about a permanent rest? Read Heb 4:1-11, especially verses 8-11.*

In verse 57 ff. Solomon offered petitions to the LORD concerning the future. He pleads with him on the basis of God's faithfulness to his covenant ("...as he was with our fathers."). You can sense how much he is concerned about God's people being obedient (vv. 58 and 61). Yet, this obedience is at the same time a gift from the LORD (v. 58: "May he turn our hearts to him...").

The supplications of Solomon are impressive. The same can be said about the thank-offerings and the jubilation. The fact that God wants to take up residence among his people is cause for great rejoicing and celebrating. And when they return home to resume their daily tasks, the joy remains (v. 66).

*Question 9: Why is David mentioned at the conclusion of verse 66 instead of Solomon?*

## 6. The work of the LORD in this account

God fulfilled his promise to David (2 Sam 7). His faithfulness shines majestically in this history. God is working towards the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness and peace. For that reason he chooses a fixed habitation on earth. And he gives to his people a king who, in Messianic style, prays for his people and has his sights set on that kingdom. In this prayer we can also hear the plea for the coming of the Messiah. The fullness of God's kingdom (see HC, LD 48) will not come during the reign of king Solomon. Neither will it come during the reigns of his successors. After all, sin will still play a dominant role among God's people. This comes clearly to the fore in this prayer. Christ, the great Son of David, will have to come to break the power of sin. He will ensure that God can live among his people forever. And then the kingdom of God will come, in which peace will reign forever, by "establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness" (Is 9:7). Whoever believes in the Messiah will experience this peace. The dedication of the temple serves as another step in the direction of that goal.

## For the introduction

1. Addition to part 1 of the outline: The booths in which the Israelites lived during the Feasts of Booths were a reminder of the temporary dwellings they had in the desert. At that time, God lived in a mobile dwelling place as well i.e. the tabernacle or the Tent of Meeting. Now that they have found a fixed dwelling place in Canaan, they may celebrate the fact that the LORD also wants to dwell in a fixed location amongst themselves (v. 4). The connection between God's dwelling in the tabernacle and his dwelling in the temple must be clear. The initiation of God into the temple also reminds us of his initiation into the tabernacle. Compare verses 10 and 11 with Exodus 40:34 and 35.
2. In connection with our passage, you could mention something about the history of the dwelling of God on earth. When Solomon speaks in verse 13 about a fixed location to dwell there forever, then you must realize that there is a condition attached to this! A permanent temple is not an automatic fact. God may leave again. See Ezekiel 10:3 and 4 (notice the correspondence with 1 Kings 8:10 and 11, except the departure of the LORD is announced, rather than his initiation). See also the prophesy in chapter 43. And after that, moving into the New Testament: Matthew 24:1 and 2 (the temple is again destroyed, this time for good. In this context, think about the tearing of the temple curtain!), John 1:14 (God has come to live on earth in his Son), I Corinthians 3:16 (the congregation is now God's temple; the Spirit of God dwells in her).
3. Emphasize the fact that the LORD is **pleased** to dwell among sinful people, people who deserted the house of God because of their fall into sin. What happens here is a prelude to the new paradise (see the last sentence of part 1)!

4. In connection with verse 12, if you know something about the meaning of God's Eclipse (for many people today, God has become a hidden God) you could indicate, using our passage, that the exact opposite is true.
5. In connection with verse 16, the text in 2 Chronicles 6:5 and 6 is more elaborate and seems to be constructed in a more logical manner. Here, in the book of Kings, the emphasis appears to be on the fact that the election of David, who as king had to seek after the well-being of his people, receives primary importance. The completion of God's own dwelling was, so to speak, of lesser importance. See 2 Samuel 7:4-9.
6. In connection with verse 31-51, don't get into every discussion about individual supplications; your introduction will become too long. Using this outline, emphasize especially the most important elements of this prayer.

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