
Day 134 – May 14

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

Dedication of the Temple

Readings: *1 Kings 8:1-66; 2 Chronicles 5:2-14; 6:1-42; 7:1-3*

Reflections:

- The dedication of the temple echoes the dedication of the tabernacle, yet its grandeur is far greater. The refrain of praise (“He is good; his love endures forever”) was a common unison refrain used through out the Psalms. The glory of God in the cloud overwhelms the priests so they cannot go through their rituals. When God takes centre stage no ritual or religion is needed.
- Solomon’s words summarize everything we have come to understand to this point. His prayer expresses worship to God for his covenant faithfulness to his father and to Israel. He praises God that even though God cannot be contained in all of the heavens and earth, that God has made this temple a place of relationship (knowing his name, praying and being heard) and a place of reconciliation (forgiveness). This is significant to understand as the new community that Jesus will form will take the place of this temple in the world. No longer do the nations need to go up to a physical building to meet with God and be restored, but they are now to gather into community and experience God through people.
- Solomon now prays through a list of case studies of “what if” situations and how the people are to approach God and receive mercy and grace here at this temple. Again, this helps us understand two things. Having an incredible temple and having a way to relate to God externally ultimately does not change the heart of Israel. Here again Solomon is basically predicting how Israel will fall into sin over and over. In time, even the temple itself will come under judgment because of the sin of the people and priests.
- Here we see the high point of God’s religion. We have a people settled in their own land and living in peace. We have the law, an enormous and beautiful temple and a priesthood. And we have the wisest possible king. What more could the people want to now begin to live lives of holy devotion to God? Solomon’s words show us again the heart of people totally devoted to God and wanting to do the right thing. “May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us or forsake us. May

he turn our hearts to him, to walk in his ways and to keep his commands, the decrees and regulations he gave our fathers.”

- The problem is that even with a perfect surrounding, excellent leadership and the best possible religion from God, the human heart remains sinful and broken. This high point in religion will now begin its descent into destruction until finally in 70 AD the final temple that Israel will possess will be destroyed once and for all as Jesus’ prophesied. Between now and then we will watch how the human heart cannot help but sin unless God changes the person from the inside out by his Spirit.
- One more thing we should note. The goal of this temple is that “all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and there is no other.” The purpose of the temple was both relational (“know that the Lord is God”) and irreligious (“there is no other”). This same purpose is carried on through the new temple of the community of Christ-followers as they carry the message of irreligious relationship into the world.
- The story ends with a big religious celebration and with great joy. Again this is the high point of religion in the Old Testament. As we will see, it will not take long before Solomon himself falls from this pinnacle to a place of idolatry and breaking covenant with God.