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1 Kings 8

“God’s Character, Man’s Condition”

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After the Temple was built, Solomon gathered the nation of Israel together on the Temple Mount, and the first thing he did was to have the priests bring the Ark of the Covenant into the inner chamber of the Temple (the Holy of Holies), along with all of the other articles of the Temple. Something remarkable took place when the priests withdrew from the Temple, and it’s recorded in **1 Kings 8:10-11**: *“When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.”* This tells us the very presence of God appeared as a thick cloud or a thick fog, which prohibited the priests from performing their duties.

When everything was in place, as the Lord had directed, Solomon offered a prayer of dedication over the Temple, which was not only of a prayer of dedication, but a prayer of dedication over the Temple to the glory to God and for the purpose of God.

In this study, we’ll look at the ways Solomon’s prayer teaches us about the character of God and the condition of man.

The Character Of God – God Is Unequaled

1. **1 Kings 8:23a** – *“[Solomon] said: ‘O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below...’”*
2. We serve a God who is unparalleled and unequalled in the Universe, because he is the One, True, and only God.
 - a. When we say things like this, we open ourselves up to criticism from others who think that making such a definitive statement to the exclusion of all other gods is haughty, but it’s only haughty if it isn’t true.

- b. If the God of the Bible is just one among many gods, then it would be haughty to say that he is the One, True, and only God.
- c. It comes down to what we believe, because if we really believe what the Bible teaches, we won't have any trouble saying God is the One, True, and only God.

The Character Of God – God Keeps His Covenant Of Love

- 3. **1 Kings 8:23b** – *“... you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.”*
- 4. A covenant is a biblical term, which describes a binding commitment from God to us.
- 5. The closest thing we have when it comes to understanding covenant is a contract, but a covenant is more than a contract, because involves two parties who agree to the terms of the contract or mutually decide to dissolve the contract.
- 6. A covenant is unilateral, whereby God enters into a binding commitment with us, and the fact is that he initiates and ratifies it, and therefore it cannot be altered or broken by us because it is not dependent on us.
- 7. To say that God keeps his covenant of love means that:
 - a. He is faithful to love us even when we are unlovely and undeserving of his love.
 - b. We can't do anything to undo his love because the covenant is not contingent upon our performance or anything we can offer.
- 8. **Jeremiah 31:3b** – *“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”*
- 9. **Romans 8:38-39** – *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

The Character Of God - God Keeps His Promises

10. **1 Kings 8:24** - *"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."*
11. God is always faithful to his Word, so when God promises:
 - a. **Deuteronomy 31:6b** - *"... [I] will never leave nor forsake you."* - We are never alone!
 - b. **Jeremiah 31:3** - *"I have loved you with an everlasting love."* - He always loves us!
 - c. **Jeremiah 31:34b** - *"... I will forgive [your] wickedness and remember [your] sins no more."* - He always forgives us!
 - d. **John 14:2-3** - *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* - He's making Heaven ready, and he will come again!
12. **Psalm 145:13b** - *"The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made."*

The Character Of God - God Is Uncontainable

13. **1 Kings 8:27** - *"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"*
14. God is not restricted to time and space, and as beautiful as the new Temple was, Solomon was saying that God was not limited to buildings made by hands, rather he was the infinite, Omnipresent God of the Universe.
15. **Psalm 139:7-10** - *"Where can I [David] go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."*

The Character Of God - God Alone Knows The Hearts Of All People

16. **1 Kings 8:38-39** - *"... 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 – 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)..”

17. We need to remember that none of us is qualified to judge the heart of another person, because only God can know the heart of a person.
18. Christians should be careful not to get into the habit of forming an opinion about another person’s salvation.
 - a. A “proof text” that’s often used is [Matthew 7:16a](#), which says: “... *By their fruit you will recognize them.*”
 - b. In this case, the context is crucial to a right understanding of the Scriptures, because Jesus was talking about false prophets.
 - i. [Matthew 7:15–16a](#) – “*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.*”

The Character Of God – God Hears Our Prayers And Forgives Our Sins

19. [1 Kings 8:49–50](#) – “... *from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. 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...*”
20. Throughout Solomon’s prayer of dedication, he continually appealed to the listening ear and forgiving heart of God, and in response, the Lord appeared to him and promised to hear our prayers and forgive our sins.
21. [2 Chronicles 7:14](#) – “[*If*] *my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*”

The Condition Of Man – We Are All Sinful

22. [1 Kings 8:46a](#) – “*When they sin against you – for there is no one who does not sin...*”
23. Notice that the Scripture says, when, not if.
24. [1 John 1:8](#) – “*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*”

25. **1 John 1:10** – *“If we claim we have not sinned, we make [God] out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”*

26. John is writing about two things: sin as a condition, and sin as an action.

27. Sin as a Condition

- a. We are born with a sinful heart that is bent on doing sinful things.
- b. Ever since Adam sinned against God, the spirit of man became corrupted and that corrupted nature was passed from Adam through the human race.
- c. **1 Corinthians 15:21-22** – *“For since death came through a man [Adam], the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man [Jesus]. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”*
- d. David knew this reality when he wrote in **Psalms 51:5**, *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*

28. Sin as an Action

- a. **Galatians 5:19-21** – *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*
- b. **Romans 3:23** – *“[For] all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*
 - i. The Greek word for falling short is hamartia, which means, to miss the mark, meaning that we don't measure up to God's perfect standard.

The Condition Of Man – We May Face Consequences For Our Sin

29. **1 Kings 8:33a** – *“When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you...”*

30. **1 Kings 8:35a** – *“When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you...”*

31. **1 Kings 8:37** – *“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...”*

32. Solomon recognized the fact that when we sin against God, there will be consequences.

33. This doesn't mean that when we obey God we won't have to deal with problems.
34. We have no control over some of our hardships, because we live in a sinful world where there is death, disease, crime, war, terrorism, etc.
35. However, some of our hardships are self-inflicted because we sin against God and suffer for it.
- a. **Proverbs 13:15b** - *"... the way of the unfaithful [transgressor - KJV] is hard."*
36. We should, at the very least, eliminate all the hardships we can by obeying God.
37. However, when we do sin, the Bible tells us that we have an advocate - Jesus Christ!
- a. **1 John 2:1-2** - *"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one [advocate] who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*

The Condition Of Man - We All Need Forgiveness

38. **1 Kings 8:46-50** - *"When they do 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; 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'; 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; then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. 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."*
39. Forgiveness requires a change of heart and a change of direction, in addition to pleading (prayer/ask) with God.

40. [1 John 1:9](#) - *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and will purify us from all unrighteousness."*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [1 Kings 8:10-11, 22-30](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Spend time talking about experiences you've had regarding conversations with people who reject and/or ridicule your belief in God as the One, True, and only God.
4. Read and discuss the difference between a covenant and a contract. (See #3 through #7 above)
5. Read and discuss [Jeremiah 31:3](#).
6. What are some of the ways you've experienced the faithfulness of God in your life?
7. Read and discuss [Romans 8:38-39](#). (See #11 and #12 above)
8. Read and discuss [Psalm 139:7-10](#).
9. Allow the people in your group to share examples of their prayer life and how the Lord has answered prayer.
10. Would you say your "prayer life" is decreasing, static, or growing?
11. Are you keeping "short accounts" with the Lord by seeking his forgiveness when you've sinned?
12. How would you describe the way you feel when you receive the Lord's forgiveness?
13. Read and discuss [2 Chronicles 7:14](#).
14. Provide an overview before spending time talking about sin as a condition (See #27 above) and sin as an action (See #28 above).

15. Read and discuss [1 Kings 8:33, 35, 37](#).
16. How have you experienced the truth of [Proverbs 13:15b](#) in your life?
17. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember the faithfulness of a covenant keeping God; remember the fact that God is unequalled; remember that God always keeps his promises; remember that it is God alone who knows the hearts of all people; remember that God hears and answers prayer; remember that when they sin, God is faithful to forgive their sin (read and pray [1 John 1:9](#)).

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).