

Special Focus Session

June 30, 2024

PRAYING FOR OUR NATION

2 Chronicles 7:1-3,12-20

Last week I suggested that 2 Chronicles 7 doesn't apply directly to the US as a country, or to the church as an entity. It's all about Israel! But you might remember me saying there are indeed some *principles* that *do* apply to us. The secret of good Bible interpretation is discerning what the original author was trying to say to the intended audience at the time it was written, then lifting out the truth-principles and applying them in "like" circumstances. And that's what we are going to do here. Three main ideas are evident.

God's presence (vv. 1-3). This chapter recounts the final dedication of Solomon's temple. By all counts, it was a magnificent structure that took seven years to complete, stretching 180 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 50 feet tall. You may recall that the plan to build God a temple was nearly dead on arrival. King David, Solomon's father, was troubled that the sacred Ark of the Covenant was housed in a tent. He proposed a more permanent site in the form of a temple. But he was met with divine opposition! First, God said He didn't want or need a temple (see 1 Chr. 17). Then, when permission was finally granted, King David was told that he was not qualified to build the Lord a temple since he was "a man of war" who had "shed much blood" (1 Chr. 17:26 ff). So David gathered the supplies and four years after Solomon took the throne, construction began. Seven years later, following Solomon's dedication prayer, the Lord manifested His presence there. Notice the order of events: a prayer of dedication was offered; sacrifices were made, accepted, and consumed; then the Lord's glory filled the place. Notice as well the combination of *consuming fire falling*, and *magnificent glory filling*. The result? All of Israel (including the priests) witnessed this outpouring and responded with worship and praise. For reflection: *Do you see the connection between the peoples' preparation and the Lord's manifestation? Do you think the Lord would have responded the same way if Solomon, the priests, or the people had approached the event half-heartedly? What does that say to us today?*

God's promises (vv. 12-16). Here, God responds to Solomon's personal pleas for his people (from the previous chapter) with a private revelation. After the festivities, in the dark of night, God spoke to the king. His promises are preceded by His declaration that He Himself had chosen the temple for three specific purposes. First, it would be the place for sacrifices (v. 12). These ceremonies acted as mediation between sinful man and holy God. Second, the temple would be a place for prayer in general (v. 15), but repentance in particular (vv. 13-14). Third, the temple would serve as a perpetual witness to Israel and the surrounding nations that the God of Israel was the one eternal Lord (v. 16). Notice again the focus on mediation centered at the temple: sacrifice was mediation for man's forgiveness; prayer (and repentance) was mediation to restore man's fellowship; and His witness was a source of mediation between Israel and her neighbors. For reflection: *Some compare the Old Testament temple to the New Testament church. Do you see similarities in their function? Differences? Is that comparison valid?*

God's prohibitions (vv. 17-20). The first set of verses restates a promise to Solomon that was originally made to David; that God would establish a kingdom through the Davidic line, the throne of which would not depart it (see 1 Chron. 17:11 ff). Ultimately, this royal lineage would

lead to the King of Kings, Christ the Messiah (see Is. 9:7). But here, specific conditions are added that applied specifically to the earthly reign of Solomon. Notice the conditions were obedience related. Solomon was to (1) do what God commanded and (2) keep His statutes and ordinances (v. 17). Verse 19 clarifies God's expectations: Solomon was specifically ordered to stay away from idolatry, the worship of other gods. This prohibition was then followed by a threefold penalty. Failure to stay faithful to the one true God would result in (1) the loss of the land; (2) the loss of the temple; and (3) the loss of their witness. For reflection: *Once again, the context is aimed squarely at Solomon. But what truth-principles might apply to us today?*