

Solomon's Speech

Bible Background • 1 KINGS 8:14–21; 2 CHRONICLES 6

Printed Text • 1 KINGS 8:14–21 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 132:1–5, 11–18

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXAMINE how Solomon's building of the Temple fulfills a promise God made to Solomon's father, David; APPRECIATE that God keeps promises, even if the fulfillment takes many years; and REJOICE wholeheartedly when God's promises come to pass.

In Focus

Another empty promise! The store owner, Mr. Young, had promised to give the traditional Christmas bonuses, but then he told the employees that his family-owned store was losing money. Everyone believed him and worked extra hours to keep the store afloat. The yearly end-of-the-season sale was great.

When the store managers Joyce and Ian stepped forward and asked all the employees to gather around. As Ian began to speak, the joyous occasion became somber. He was trying to explain why there would be no bonuses. Joyce stepped forward and tried to further explain what was happening.

Then, someone shouted, "Mr. Young promised us a bonus. Where are our bonuses? We sacrificed and made him, his family, and the company money." Mr. Young appeared and asked the upset employees to quiet down. It took a few moments, but they stopped shouting. Eventually, Mr. Young spoke. He and the accountant went back over the numbers. Although the bonus would not be as large as he had planned, each employee would receive a bonus and a \$100 gift card from the community grocery store. Mr. Young did indeed keep his promise.

What is your response when you are unable to keep a promise or when someone breaks a promise to you? How much do you trust or doubt God's promises?

Keep in Mind

"And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying" (1 Kings 8:15, KJV).

Words You Should Know

A. Performed (v. 20) qum (Heb.) — To stand, arise, rise up, establish

B. Word (v. 20) dabar (Heb.) — Speech, saying, utterance; matter, thing

Say It Correctly

Davidic. dah-VID-ik.

KJV

1 Kings 8:14 And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood;)15 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying,

16 Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.

17 And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

18 And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.

19 Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name.

20 And the LORD hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

21 And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

NLT

1 Kings 8:1 Solomon then summoned to Jerusalem the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes—the leaders of the ancestral families of the Israelites. They were to bring the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant to the Temple from its location in the City of David, also known as Zion.² So all the men of Israel assembled before King Solomon at the annual Festival of Shelters, which is held in early autumn in the month of Ethanim.

3 When all the elders of Israel arrived, the priests picked up the Ark.

4 The priests and Levites brought up the Ark of the LORD along with the special tent and all the sacred items that had been in it.

5 There, before the Ark, King Solomon and the entire community of Israel sacrificed so many sheep, goats, and cattle that no one could keep count!

6 Then the priests carried the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant into the inner sanctuary of the Temple—the Most Holy Place—and placed it beneath the wings of the cherubim.

7 The cherubim spread their wings over the Ark, forming a canopy over the Ark and its carrying poles.

8 These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place, which is in front of the Most Holy Place, but not from the outside. They are still there to this day.

9 Nothing was in the Ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Mount Sinai, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel when they left the land of Egypt.

10 When the priests came out of the Holy Place, a thick cloud filled the Temple of the LORD.

11 The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of the LORD.

12 Then Solomon prayed, “O LORD, you have said that you would live in a thick cloud of darkness.

13 Now I have built a glorious Temple for you, a place where you can live forever!”

The People, Places, and Times

The Name of the Lord. In the ancient Near East, when an emissary came “in the name of” their king, they had all the power the king commanded. They were also to be treated with all the respect and dignity the king himself would enjoy. This is because the “name” of a person represented all their power and reputation. We speak even today of someone trying to preserve their “good name.” The name of the Lord, therefore, refers to all of God’s power and greatness. To glorify His name is to add to His reputation. As God is worthy of all honor and glory, He is rightfully offended when people do not respect His name, either in their words or actions. To keep from using the name of the Lord “in vain”—that is, lightly—one must not only refrain from throwing

around His personal, covenantal name (Yahweh) without due respect, but one must also refrain from sully His reputation through unrighteous action.

Background

The scene for our Scripture text is just one in a string of many events that display Solomon's wisdom and thoughtfulness as he began his reign as King of the Israelites. After forty years of leadership as the king of Israel, Solomon's father David dies at seventy years of age (1 Kings 2). However, before he dies, David instructs Solomon about maintaining obedience to God and making diplomatic decisions while dealing with surrounding nations. Solomon takes his father's words to heart and is credited with having complete control of his kingdom—eliminating potential threats while making peace treaties with potential allies. Solomon is approached by God in a dream and given permission to “ask what I shall give thee,” to which Solomon famously asks God for the wisdom to lead His people with a discerning heart (1 Kings 3:5, 9). This request pleases God so much that God grants Solomon the wisdom he requested and the riches, long life, and wealth that he did not ask for. Through this exchange, Solomon confirms he can be trusted and is given the wisdom, resources, and clearance to begin the building of the Temple.

To be sure, the building of the temple proves to be a massive undertaking, fueled by the labor of thirty thousand Israelites (1 Kings 5:13), “threescore and ten thousand [seventy thousand] that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand [eighty thousand] hewers in the mountains ... three thousand and three hundred [thirty-three hundred], which ruled over the people that wrought in the work” (from 5:15–16) and seven years to complete the work (1 Kings 6:38). After beginning construction on his own palace and completing and furnishing the temple, Solomon “brought in the things his father David had dedicated.” He summoned all of the leadership in Israel to bring the Ark of the Lord's Covenant to the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. All of Israel came to see the Ark brought into the Temple, and when the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the glory of the Lord filled the Temple in a dark cloud of smoke. This was a sign to Solomon that God would dwell in the Temple for generations (1 Kings 8:10–13).

At-A-Glance

1. A Prelude of Praise (1 Kings 8:14–16)
2. A Proper Perspective of the Past (vv. 17–19)
3. A Promise-Keeping God (vv. 20–21)

In Depth

1. A Prelude of Praise (1 Kings 8:14–16) The cloud of smoke is confirmation to Solomon that he is still in step with God and God's plan for the Temple and God's people. This project was literally two generations in the making! Here he was looking at what was only a dream for his father David who wanted to build a permanent dwelling place for the God of his ancestors. This was not a shabby house but a house of worship beautifully adorned with silver and gold. Solomon was the man leading the charge—successfully managing the Temple into existence after seven long years. The completion of the Temple and the confirmation of God's presence through the cloud could have led Solomon to begin the festivities with a sense of great pride. Instead, Solomon uses this moment to provide great praise.

Solomon's posture at this moment of the completion of the Temple is instructive for us. As we achieve major milestones in our lives, careers, or ministries, we too can be tempted to become prideful. We can look at the finished product of our efforts and become intoxicated by memories of our own efforts, ideas, and ingenuity. To be sure, taking pride in our work is not sinful, but becoming blind to God's role in our successes and opportunities is. Solomon recognizes that to have the opportunity to see through to the end of the project his father envisioned is a gift, an opportunity fulfilled through his leadership by the grace of God. For Solomon, the appropriate response is not to pat himself on the back or to praise his own efforts but to praise “LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father” (1 Kings 8:15).

How do you resist the temptation to take credit for an accomplishment for which God should have been praised?

2. A Proper Perspective of the Past (vv. 17–19) Maybe one of the most impressive things about Solomon’s blessing and address to the people at the completion of the Temple is his ability to see the current moment in light of history. Solomon is aware enough to understand that the work of completing the Temple is the continuation and completion of a promise that God made to his father. While Solomon is the king who is allowed to complete this important work, this accomplishment could not be divorced from the promises of the past and from the history God had with his father David. Solomon remembers and repeats the desires of his own father and the conversations God had with David around the completion of the Temple (vv. 17–19). This portion of the text is instructive in at least two ways. Solomon is able to see the work he does in completing the Temple as a continuation of what God already began in the past. The work of the Temple does not begin with him. Moreover, the text also implies that a proper perspective of the past is shaped through intergenerational conversation. The reader can assume that Solomon knows the intimate details of David’s conversations with God about the Temple because David made a point to share this history with his son, and his son remembered it. We, too, would do well to see the milestones we achieve in our own lives as the continuation of God’s ongoing work through our personal, family, and human history.

In what ways can you see God’s work in your life as a continuation of the dreams and goals of your ancestors and family?

3. A Promise-Keeping God (vv. 20–21) Solomon concludes the initial address to the people of Israel by affirming that God is a promise keeper! Solomon says, “the LORD has fulfilled the promise he made” (1 Kings 8:20). He recounts the two promises that God made to David that were now manifested for all to see. God promised that Solomon would succeed his father David and that Solomon would build the Temple for the name of the Lord. Solomon pauses to remind the people that what God said is what they now see (vv. 20–21). Solomon’s wisdom is on display as he intentionally positions the Ark of the Covenant, the sign of God’s presence that would always dwell at the center of the promised Temple. It is a reminder that the proper response to a promise-keeping God is to always make room and preparations to ensure that God is properly honored and at the center of what we do.

What considerations have you made to ensure that God remains in a central position in your life following the realization of a fulfilled promise God made you?

Search the Scriptures

1. According to verse 15, how did God speak, and how did He fulfill His promise?
2. Why did God commend David? (vv. 17–18)
3. What promises does Solomon say God fulfilled? (v. 20)

Discuss the Meaning

1. One of the themes throughout this text is Solomon’s honor and reverence for his father David. Why do you think Solomon honors his father’s memory and mission with such high regard?
2. What promises have you seen God keep in your own life? Are there any places you can look in your community or nation where God has kept a promise to a group of people at one time?
3. What role do our church buildings or worship centers have in sharing the goodness of God and testimony of God’s faithfulness within our communities?

Liberating Lesson

Following the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, many media outlets and political pundits pushed the idea that America had finally become a “post-racial” society where the race of a human being bore no weight on the heights one could achieve or the way one was treated in this country. It did not take long for many to realize that society was not nearly as post-racial as some had hoped, but seeing a man of color in the White House was

a symbol of some progress being made by people of color in the political arena and beyond. Solomon’s story in 1 Kings 8 reminds us that we cannot take full credit for the advances and milestones we experience. Our personal and cultural victories must never be seen as events disconnected from our history but as the continuation of the progressive work of a promise-keeping and praiseworthy God.

Application for Activation

Make a list of some of your proudest moments and greatest achievements. For each moment and achievement listed, identify the people who contributed most to the completion of the work, inspired you, or provided a “blueprint” to achieve the task. Spend some time writing thank-you notes or emails to three to five of those people and express to them how their work, dreams, and inspiration were continued and completed in your own work and accomplishments.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Kings 8:14–21 With the Ark safely in place, Solomon now turns his face toward the assembly of Israel to bless them. One must notice the portrait of Solomon turning to the people, then to God, and back to the people. This illustrates the position of Solomon as the king and the responsibilities that are to attend his position. The king is to be the vice-regent of God with great responsibility and privilege of mediating between God and the people and between the people and God alongside the priests.

All the groups and individuals described in 1 Kings 8:1–5 are addressed in Solomon’s blessing. They hear the king give God credit for this significant day. His blessing is a reminder of three significant concepts. First, the basis of the Lord’s covenant with David is the earlier deliverance of Israel from Egypt. That concrete historical evidence of God’s commitment to saving the chosen people paved the way for future saving events. Included in these subsequent saving acts is God’s eternal covenant with David.

14 And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood;) 15 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying, 16 Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.

The king turned his face to the standing congregation from the Temple where he was observing the thick and extraordinary darkness. Solomon had been speaking to God. He now turns to the people and blesses them. The blessing takes the form of praise to God for fulfilling his promise to David (v. 15; cf. 2 Samuel 7), not only for providing him with a son to continue the dynasty but also in providing a permanent resting place for the Ark, the symbol of God’s presence. The expressions “with his own hand” and “with his own mouth” refer to the sovereign power of God in fulfilling His promises. Since the Davidic covenant implied benefit to Israel through

God appointed leadership and ultimately the coming Messiah, God has clearly begun the fulfillment of the covenant. Israel can expect to receive the bounty of God's blessings if the people walk in His ways.

What started as a blessing on the congregation standing before Solomon suddenly shifts to a prayer of praise to God. God's fidelity to David is the underpinning of Solomon's subsequent prayer that God would faithfully respond to prayers in or toward this Temple. Solomon's prayer also shows the importance of praise. Praises ought to form part of our prayers as we learn to thank God for his past mercies and goodness toward us. Solomon is fully aware of what the Lord has promised and done. The Lord brought Israel from Egypt, and the Lord chose David to rule. David desired to build a Temple, but the Lord indicated that David's son was to build the house for the Lord's name. All this had taken place, and every promise made had been kept. The blessings for Israel that were initially given in the exodus are now fully realized with the Lord's permanent residence in the Temple. The Lord keeps His covenant; the presence of the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple gives full assurance of this.

Furthermore, Solomon reflects on the delay between Israel's entry into Canaan and the building of the Temple. After all, as verse 16 states, the Lord did not choose a city for a temple for His name, but rather He chose a king, David. God chose David and recognized David's desire to build a temple for His name but gave that task to David's son. This emphasis on God's choice of David, not a city, must be remembered together with Deuteronomy's repeated phrase regarding Israel's future place of sacrifice. No city is named in these passages, but they assert firmly that God would choose a place. The logic of Solomon's claim that God had instead chosen a king proceeds like this: the chosen king, David, chose to build a temple; the Lord delayed this procedure to the time of David's son. This son, Solomon, chose the place: Jerusalem, on a hill outside of the city of David.

17 And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 18 And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. 19 Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name.

The plan to build a house for God's name was not originally conceived of by Solomon but by David, his father. David had purposed to build a house for the Lord but God prevented him from doing so because of the many wars and the shedding of blood in the wars (2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Kings 5:3–5). Here, Solomon reviews that episode: David's heart had been warm with a passion to build a temple (1 Kings 8:17) and that God had responded to David by commending the motivation. Solomon's attribution of the plan to David is contrary to human nature that seeks glory for itself. Although it may seem insignificant, we must learn to give credit to whom it is due and recognize people for what we may consider intangible contributions to our success in life.

It is important to note that the house is for the name of the Lord God of Israel (vv. 16, 17, 18, 20). The recurring phrase "a house for God's name" echoes God's words to David through Nathan (2 Samuel 7:13). David wanted to build a house for the Ark of God (2 Samuel 7:2). God said in response (v. 5): "Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?" He states that David's son would build a house for his name (v. 13). In sum, the Lord interprets shelter for the Ark as a house for Himself and later declares this will be for His name (2 Samuel 7). Solomon says the same thing throughout this passage. The Temple of Solomon, according to this chapter, was a house for the Ark, for the Lord, and for the Lord's name.

We must understand what God's name is, He is. In other words, God's name denotes the Lord Himself. Moreover, the idea of the Temple as a "house for the name" of the Lord can be understood by comparison with the phrase, "city of David." Zion was called "city of David" (1 Kings 8:1) not simply because David lived there but because his conquest of the city made it his possession. In the same manner, the Temple in Jerusalem is known by God's name, not because it contains Him (since He cannot be contained) but He dwells there spiritually and it is His possession.

What is the motivation behind what we do? What are our intentions? These questions come to fore as we look at God's response to David's desire to build a house for God's name. There are two important lessons. First God

knows our intentions. He saw into David's heart and knew David's reasons for wanting to build a house. It was not to magnify himself but to be a place for the name of the Lord. Second, sincere good intentions can be graciously approved and accepted by God, though we may be prevented from executing our plans for them at a specific time. God may have other plans. God accepted David's good will, yet would not permit him to do the good work, reserving the honor of it for his son (v. 19): "He shall build the house unto my name." What Solomon did was not for his own glory, but the work itself was according to his father's design and his doing it was according to God's designation.

20 And the LORD hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 21 And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

The blessing begins and ends with the statement that God brought his people Israel out of Egypt (vv. 16, 21). This suggests that the fulfillment of God's promise to David through Solomon is not an end in itself. It serves the larger purpose of providing a permanent resting place for the Ark. Moses' prophetic words as he rejoiced with the Israelites when they walked through the Red Sea are now fulfilled: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established" (Exodus 15:17).

Solomon uses a repeated wordplay to emphasize the Lord's actions in making him king of Israel. The words translated "hath performed" and "am risen up" are from the same Hebrew verb *qum* (KOOM), but used differently. The root meaning of the verb is "to stand," but when first used in verse 20, the grammatical nuance is "to cause to stand." Solomon acknowledges that because God caused His promise to stand, he now can stand in the place of David. He also repeatedly uses the word *dabar* (daw-BAR), which as a noun means "word" and as a verb means "to speak." Solomon uses this root three times in verse 20: "And the LORD hath performed his word (*dabar*) that he spake (*dabar*), . . . , as the LORD promised (*dabar*)." This repetition emphasizes the power and surety of God's Word. We must always listen when God speaks, and we can always count on God to keep His promises.

Solomon portrays himself as the heir and fulfillment of the Davidic promises and as the link of the Exodus traditions—represented by the Ark and the tent of meeting—and the Temple in Jerusalem. Two things had been fulfilled, and they must be understood together. First, a son of David had indeed ascended to the throne of Israel, as promised. Second, this son built the Temple for the name of Israel's God as a fulfillment of God's promises to the man, Solomon, whom God chose to rule Israel (2 Samuel 7:13). Thus, Solomon's speech effectively ties the Ark produced by the freed slaves of the Exodus period to the Temple he built in Jerusalem. This had the effect of emphasizing the unity of the tribes and the traditions of all Israel. In the same manner as Solomon, we must recognize that whatever good we do, or whatever we accomplish in life, we must look upon as the fulfillment of God's promise to us, an act of His faithfulness, rather than the performance of our promises to Him or the result of our works of obedience or faithfulness.

Furthermore, the purpose of this Temple had been fulfilled. It provided a place for the Ark, which held the tablets of the covenant God made with Israel in the wilderness. The Ark is not a throne for God or a localization of His presence. The Almighty God cannot be domesticated, limited to, or contained in a space. But the God of the universe chose to be in a relationship with this Temple, this place, and this people.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

A House of Prayer
(2 Chronicles 6:12–21)

TUESDAY

Forgive and Restore Broken Relationships
(2 Chronicles 6:22–25)

WEDNESDAY

Send the Rain
(2 Chronicles 6:26–31)

THURSDAY

Welcome the Stranger
(2 Chronicles 6:32–33)

FRIDAY

Forgive and Restore the Captive
(2 Chronicles 6:34–39)

SATURDAY

Plea for God's Steadfast Love
(2 Chronicles 6:40–42)

SUNDAY

Solomon Reviews Temple Developments
(1 Kings 8:14–21)