

## CHANGING OUR TEMPLE MENTALITY

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### QUESTIONS

- 1) Are you someone who endures through the week until you can attend church on Sunday in order to get into God's presence?
- 2) Are you desperate for people to pray for you, and cannot wait until mid-week prayer meeting?
- 3) Have you been scheming ways to get someone you know to come to a church service so they can get right with God or get saved?
- 4) Do you seem to have great faith and boldness to pray and believe God for things while at a service, but struggle to pray at all in other places, whether at home or work?
- 5) Are you in a place that believes only your kind of church is the only way to know the Lord and all others are simply misguided?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, it may be possible that you are suffering from **TMS!** Other common side effects are: blurred vision, lack of confidence, unbelief, identity crisis, and self-inflated importance. These could be symptoms of **Temple Mentality Syndrome**. But do not worry, it is curable and does not require taking any purple, green, or blue pills!

We want to take a look at a healthy view of Solomon's just completed temple by examining some key verses in his prayer of consecration in **1 Kings 8:12-61**. Hopefully this will bring a fresh perspective and a new mindset that will impart freedom in order to see who we are as the people of God.

### WHAT WAS HIS PRAYER?

King Solomon standing before all of Israel starts out acknowledging the fulfillment of covenant promises of God toward David and His people Israel. He puts in his requests for continued reign on the throne and gives accolades to God for His faithfulness toward them through these fulfilled promises (**vv.12-26**).

It is always a good thing to start out prayer remembering what the Lord has already done for you. Why start this way? Because it is a reminder to ourselves, not to God, of His track record in our lives so we ask and believe in faith what we are about to ask! It is also a thankful spirit to come into His presence with an attitude of gratitude for His faithfulness.

**KEY VERSE** -Solomon interrupts himself by asking a powerful rhetorical question in **v.27: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!"** This is a very profound thing Solomon said! Why? People in those cultures believed in territorial gods that had influence in one region. Some even had household gods created by their hands and possessed in their houses. Solomon sees that the true God cannot be contained

in one region much less a building he just built. He is an unfathomable and uncontrollable God!

Here was this glorious temple with unparalleled beauty and grandeur, but in the middle of his prayer, Solomon asks, wow are you really going to be here Lord? Imagine that your church just built a brand new building, and it was dedication day. The pastor stops mid-sentence in prayer and asks the same question. Would that not unsettle you? But Solomon in his very youthful age was seeing something that many of us do not see: God was so much bigger than a man-made building!

The rest of his prayer was a form of intercession or supplication for the people, that God who is in heaven, would hear the prayers uttered by them when they were in the temple or faced toward the temple, to hear and forgive them, restore them, etc. (vv.28-61). Only twice Solomon mentioned about people praying in the house/temple (vv.31, 33) and the rest are from wherever they found themselves. This could also mean in places of war or captivity in another land, or in an area of famine.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

God's Name was associated with the power to heal, restore, forgive, and to support a cause. His Name is powerful and is to be sought, revered, feared, known, and called upon. You see, Solomon acknowledged in his prayer that God's Name, his eyes and heart would be there on the temple, but that His dwelling place, His throne was in heaven (v.30). He prayed in verse 29: **“that your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, ‘My name shall be there,’ to listen to the prayer which your servant shall pray toward this place...”**

#### What does it mean to put one's name on something?

- Put your reputation on it
- Your identity with it
- Your support behind it
- Ownership
- Legacy
- Your clear association with it

#### What does it mean to put one's eyes or heart there?

- Keep your eyes on what's going on, ever watchful and attentive
- Nothing escapes your notice
- Your heart is the center of you- who you are on the inside

Because of His Name (used 14 times), God was staking His reputation and identity there for all to see and in His people, Israel. His heart was for and with His people. He cannot be fooled by anything and nothing is hidden from His sight. The people can affect His heart deeply when they are faithful or unfaithful toward Him. It was foolish to think they could sin and think He does not see. He will respond to those who call on His Name.

## **WHERE DOES GOD DWELL?**

In Solomon's prayer the terms "heaven," "hear in heaven," "your dwelling place," were used a total of 18 times (vv.12-61). Solomon believed in His omnipresence; i.e., everywhere! He was not just in heaven, or just in the temple, or just in Jerusalem, or just in Israel. His reputation and His Name were in the temple but His presence is wherever His people dwelled.

This is good news because we need confidence to call on His Name, believe He hears us, and know that His abiding presence is with us when we seek His face and gather ourselves in places besides buildings of worship. He is El Roi, the God who sees and responds!

## **WHO POSSESSES WHOM?**

Now that God's omnipresence has been established, let us ponder another point: God's reputation. Other people groups heard of what He did in Egypt and they feared the Israelites and their God. Here was a God whose powers knew no boundaries, unlike their gods. In I Sam 4-6 Israel and the Philistines learned a hard and costly lesson. Israel believed that they could possess and contain God by their possession of the Ark of the Covenant and thought their victory in battle was guaranteed. Because of their idolatry, God had decreed judgment and the Philistines defeated them. An almost comical scenario ensued for whatever town the Philistines deposited the ark, that town was afflicted with tumors and plagues of mice, one town after another. No one, including Israel controlled God!

Both Solomon and Jesus wanted people everywhere to know Him. Solomon said, "...so that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no one else." Jesus in Jn 17:21,23 wanted unity in His people to be seen by the world "so that the world may believe that You [the Father] sent me." God will maintain our cause as His temple in order to draw others in.

Consider this: When we believe that God is only on our side, or with just my kind of church or denomination that can be a faulty belief system that we alone possess God or contain Him when truly He is not containable. We do not possess God; He possesses us, for we are His treasured possession. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body," (1Cor 6:19). We simply are carriers of His glory when we have His Holy Spirit within us. We are His temple, each of us. He is not our household god, fashioned by our hands, or is He? Maybe we have fashioned Him into an image of our liking- one that is definable, controlled, contained, and comfortable!

## **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US TODAY?**

**\*God is not containable and is everywhere; therefore, we can encounter Him in every place and make His presence known.**

We should not make God so small by limiting His power and presence to only our worship services in the buildings we have built. Apostle Paul reminds us that as God's holy people, His dwelling place that He "will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people," (1Cor 3:16: 2Cor 6:16). This knowledge should give us boldness to be the Church at work, in the marketplace or out in the community, knowing that God will meet us there and reveal His glory to others.

**\*His Name is powerful and trustworthy and we can confidently turn our hearts and minds toward Him at any time and at any place because He supports His Name and His people.**

Without diminishing the importance of our corporate gathering or the presence of the Lord in our worship services, this writer wants to expand our vision of a really big God who is intricately involved in the lives of His people. It is so exciting to know that we can call on His Name, and the uncontainable God, who hears from heaven, will answer our prayers because His eye is on this temple. We can believe God for bigger things for our lives whether at home, at work or out in the community reaching out to those who are hurting around us.

**\*We do not possess God; He possesses us. No one group of Christians is the sole possessor of Him, for we are all servants of the Lord and part of His Body.**

The apostle Paul spoke of the boastfulness of men as those who claim to be followers of him or Apollos, yet Paul made it clear that we are all mere men, yet all servants, all holy and all part of the temple (1 Cor 3:3-4). Let us lay aside our boastfulness of being in a certain part of the Body and remember we are all servants.

**\*Since we are the temple of the Lord, we can express God to the world around us and make His reputation known to them in all aspects of our lives.**

Our unbelieving friends and families can encounter the risen Lord through us, and even apart from us if they call on His Name! We can make known His reputation in the community in which we live. So since God's reputation is upon us as the Church, what kind of reputation do we have in the eyes of those around us?

We are His temple, highly valued and holy. Let us let go of a faulty temple mentality so we are not stumbling blocks for others to come into the kingdom. We are growing into His dwelling place as His Church, allowing the Lord to have His way with our lives so that others can find God and live in His presence forever.