January 26 Lesson 9 (NIV)

SOLOMON ANTICIPATES PRAISE

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 136:1-16, 23-

25

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 8:54–66; 2

Chronicles 7:4-9

1 KINGS 8:54-61

54 When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the LORD, he rose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven. 55 He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying:

56 "Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses. 57 May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. 58 May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to him and keep the commands, decrees and laws he gave our ancestors. 59 And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and

night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need, ⁶⁰ so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other. ⁶¹ And may your hearts be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time."



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KEY VERSES

May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to him and keep the commands, decrees and laws he gave our ancestors. —1 Kings 8:57,58

Honoring God

Unit 2: Dedicating the Temple of God

LESSONS 6-9

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

- 1. Summarize the content of Solomon's final words at the temple dedication.
- 2. Explain the relationship between the Israelites' living faithfully and remembering God's fulfilled promises.
- 3. Write a prayer that recalls God's faithfulness and that anticipates his future work.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. Remembering for the Future
- B. Lesson Context
- I. Solomon's Blessing (1 KINGS 8:54–56)
 - A. For Israel (vv. 54, 55)
 - B. Of the Lord (v. 56)

 Blessed
- II. Solomon's Desire (1 KINGS 8:57-61)
 - A. For the Lord's Presence (vv. 57, 58)
 - B. For the Lord's Help (vv. 59, 60) Faith of the Generations
 - C. For the People's Hearts (v. 61)

Conclusion

- A. Faithful to the Faithful One
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Canaan Kay-nun.

Deuteronomy Due-ter-ahn-uh-me.

Leviticus Leh-vit-ih-kus.

Moses Mo-zes or Mo-zez.

patriarchs Pay-tree-arks.

Solomon Sol-o-mun.

tabernacle **tah**-burr-nah-kul.

Introduction

A. Remembering for the Future

In his 1990 remarks on the dedication of the Washington National Cathedral, President George H. W. Bush alluded to the initial laying of its cornerstone as well as to the future use of the building. He stated, "Eighty-three years ago on this spot, President Teddy Roosevelt said: 'God speed the work begun this noon.' And today I say: God speed the work completed this noon and the new work yet to begin."

President Bush looked to the past and offered hope for the future. Solomon, in his dedication address for the temple in Jerusalem, likewise called Israel to look to the past while hoping for the future.

B. Lesson Context

The narrative of 1 Kings 8 is devoted to the greatest moment of Solomon's reign: the dedication of the temple (about 960 BC). By that time Solomon was about 10 years into his 40-year reign. His fame had spread far and wide during that time (1 Kings 4:29-34). But the focus of the 10-

year period was the construction of the temple. The required materials and manpower stagger the imagination (see 1 Kings 5:13–18; 2 Chronicles 2:1, 2, 17, 18).

The lesson text for this week comprises the final words of King Solomon's dedicatory address. A parallel account is found in 2 Chronicles 5-7. The dedication ceremony closed with a 14-day celebration, an expansion of the great annual harvest feast known as the Festival of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34; 1 Kings 8:2, 65).

Solomon's opening and closing remarks demonstrate similarities that make them fitting bookends for his prayer. The narration of the transporting of the ark of the covenant to the temple (1 Kings 8:1-11, lesson 6) prefaced Solomon's first oration (8:12-21) as the narration of the offering of dedicatory sacrifices (8:62-64) followed his final words. Solomon's final blessing (8:55-61) focused broadly on Israel in a fashion similar to his opening blessing, which focused on David and Solomon himself (8:15-21, lesson 7).

I. Solomon's Blessing (1 KINGS 8:54-56)

A. For Israel (vv. 54, 55)

54. When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the

LORD, he rose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven.

Because the congregation of Israel is gathered within the temple courts, the altar of the Lord refers to the bronze altar of burnt offering located there (1 Kings 8:64; see commentary in lesson 8). Solomon has been kneeling on a special platform that is three cubits (four and a half feet) high (2 Chronicles 6:12, 13). Kneeling and offering prayers no doubt signify the king's respect and humble submission to the Lord (contrast 1 Kings 19:18; 2 Kings 1:13; Isaiah 45:14). The Israelites will also bow down in worship to God during this dedication ceremony (2 Chronicles 7:3; compare Psalm 95:6).

The king's stretching out his hands ... toward heaven further expresses an attitude of petition and supplication (compare Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:22; Psalms 63:4; 88:9; 143:6). This demonstrates not only a sense of need but also confidence that God can and will respond to his requests (compare Exodus 9:29, 33).

What Do You Think?

Considering the prayer template Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (ACTS), how can you make sure the elements are in proper balance?

Digging Deeper

Would it be a good experiment to focus on just one element for a time? Why, or why not?

55. He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying:

Arising from his position of kneeling, Solomon blesses the whole assembly as he did earlier (1 Kings 8:14). To bless a person or group is to express a desire that God's approval and goodwill would rest on them. It invites God to invest them with success, fruitfulness, or long life (examples: Genesis 24:60; 27:1–41; 48:9–49:28).

Usually a priest blesses the people (Numbers 6:22–27), but exceptions certainly exist. Solomon's blessing echoes that of Moses when the Israelites finished work on the tabernacle (Exodus 39:43). Solomon also mirrors King David's act of blessing the people after he brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:17–19).

Solomon's blessing of Israel not only recalls his father's blessing but builds on it now that the ark has been brought to rest in its new home (1 Kings 8:6, 7, 21). The congregation will reciprocate the king's action by blessing Solomon before departing (8:66).

B. Of the Lord (v. 56)

56a. "Praise be to the LORD, who has

given rest to his people Israel just as he promised.

Solomon's blessing on Israel actually begins with a pronouncement praising the Lord, the God of Israel. The Hebrew word translated praise here is the same word that is used to speak of people being blessed throughout 1 Kings 8. Whereas blessing a person expresses one's desire that God would esteem and benefit them, one praises the Lord by giving honor to him (Genesis 24:27; Exodus 18:10; 1 Samuel 25:32, 39; etc.). The fact that Solomon begins his blessing of Israel by praising God demonstrates the king's understanding that any blessings Israel experiences come from the Lord, the source of all blessings.

Solomon has previously spoken of how God fulfilled his promise that David's son would build a temple for the Lord (1 Kings 8:15–21, lesson 7). Here, he speaks of God's fidelity to the Israelites in providing them rest in the land of Canaan (Exodus 33:14). Through Moses, the Lord had promised to give Israel rest in Canaan from their enemies (Deuteronomy 12:9, 10). Joshua had subsequently referred to the conquest of Canaan as the Lord's act of giving Israel that promised rest on every side (Joshua 1:13). The result was to be able to flourish as the people dwelled in security.

Solomon undoubtedly sees the com-

pletion of the temple as the fulfillment of the Lord's promise of that rest. The nation has become secure under the 40-year rule by his father, David, and by events at the beginning of Solomon's reign (2 Samuel 7:1; 1 Kings 5:4).

What Do You Think?

How can you personally do better at balancing rest with work?

Digging Deeper

Which one or two of the following texts convict you most in this regard: Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 34:21; Matthew 11:28; Mark 6:31; Hebrews 4:1–11? How is Matthew 26:45 cautionary to you?

56b. "Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses."

Because the nation is experiencing the promised rest, Solomon can allude to Joshua's affirmation made centuries earlier: no good thing the Lord has promised has failed (Joshua 21:45; 23:14). Not only has the Lord been faithful to his promises to the house of David, he has kept promises he spoke to Moses regarding Israel. Indeed, the promises to David and that man's forefathers are integral to God's plan and purpose for Israel. Nevertheless, the rest Israel enjoys at this time is temporary. Israel's later sin will lead to two exiles after the nation divides (2 Kings

17:1-23; 25:1-21; 2 Chronicles 36:15-21).

The Lord always desires rest for his people (compare Jeremiah 29:10-14; 30:1-3, 8-10; etc.). The writer of Hebrews affirms that the ultimate rest will be experienced at the return of Christ (Hebrews 4:1-13).

BLESSED

As a sophomore in college, I acted on God's call to ministry. More than 60 years later, I retired from vocational ministry. God had led me to city and country churches, a mission field in Africa, teaching and administration in Christian colleges, hospice chaplaincy, and a ministry to at-risk young people.

When I retired at age 81, I had the time to reflect on those six decades. Not many people have had the opportunity to experience the joys, rewards, and satisfaction in service that I have, not to mention the challenges for personal growth. I now see, more than ever, that God has blessed me far more than I deserve. I can say with Solomon, "Not one word has failed of all the good promises" God gave me.

My prayer for you is that you can reflect on your life and see God's hand blessing you, even as Solomon reminded Israel of what God had done.

—C. R. B.

II. Solomon's Desire (1 KINGS 8:57-61)

A. For the Lord's Presence (vv. 57, 58)

57. "May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us.

Having praised God for his past faithfulness to Israel, Solomon now voices desires for the future. The structure of 1 Kings 8:57, 58 pairs a stated desire with a purpose statement; the pattern repeats in the two verses that follow.

Solomon's desire is that the Lord's presence with Israel will continue. The king recognizes that Israel's special place as God's covenant people depends on God's continued willingness (Genesis 26:3; Deuteronomy 4:31; Joshua 1:5). It does not depend on any inherent entitlement the Israelites' may imagine.

The phrase our ancestors refers to the patriarchs as well as to the Israelites' leaders during the days of Moses and Joshua (Exodus 3:15; 1 Samuel 12:6). In the New Testament, the patriarch designation is applied specifically to Abraham, the sons of Jacob, and David (see Acts 2:29; 7:8, 9; Hebrews 7:4). We further think of Isaac and Jacob as members of this group. The Lord has surely kept his promises to them (see Genesis 26:3, 24; 28:15; 31:3; 46:1-4; etc.). God also kept the promise of his presence to Moses (Exo-

dus 3:12; 33:14) as well as to Moses' successor, Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Joshua 1:9; 3:7).

As Solomon repeats this ancient promise, there can be little doubt that he recalls the words of his father, David. King David had promised Solomon that the Lord would not forsake him while Solomon worked on the temple's construction (1 Chronicles 28:20)—a promise obviously kept!

Later in the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah will reiterate the promise of God's attentive and loving presence with his people (Isaiah 41:10, 17; 42:16; 44:21; 49:14–16). The Lord also encourages Jeremiah with the assurance of his presence (Jeremiah 1:8, 19; 20:11).

Our Lord has given this same pledge to new-covenant believers. Centuries after Solomon's day, Jesus promises his disciples that he will not leave them as orphans (John 14:18). Before ascending to the Father, Jesus vows his constant presence (Matthew 28:19, 20). The author of Hebrews assures us that God will never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5; compare Deuteronomy 31:6).

What Do You Think?

In what ways can Christians demonstrate better that God is "with us"?

Digging Deeper

How do we keep that effort from crossing into "holier than thou" terri-

58. "May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to him and keep the commands, decrees and laws he gave our ancestors.

Moses had taught that a proper relationship with the Lord begins in the heart and then manifests itself in obedience (Deuteronomy 5:31-6:9; 11:18; 32:46). In that regard, Solomon desires that the Lord empower his people to obey him. If the holy God is to be present among the Israelites as Solomon desires (1 Kings 8:57, above), then they must conduct themselves in holiness (Leviticus 11:44, 45; 19:2).

The image of walking in obedience to the Lord highlights Israel's obligation. This image appears many times in the Old Testament (see Leviticus 18:3, 4; Deuteronomy 5:33; 8:6; 10:12; Psalm 119:105; etc.). Solomon equates such walking with keeping the Lord's commands, decrees and laws as Moses had also prescribed (Deuteronomy 26:17; 30:16). Specifying these three related categories emphasizes the need for total and unwavering obedience to God.

Even so, Solomon's previous acknowledgment that everyone sins and is in need of forgiveness (1 Kings 8:46) highlights Israel's inability to follow God's ways without his help. Scripture else-

where testifies to the roles of both God and his people in faithfully keeping the covenant (compare Psalm 119:36 [where the word statutes refers to laws or decrees] and Joshua 24:23, respectively).

What Do You Think?

What are some ways you can help God help you obey him?

Digging Deeper

Rank the examples of biblical heroes in Hebrews 11 in terms of whom you most identify with and why.

We see this similarly in the New Testament. For example, Paul's declaration "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith" (Ephesians 2:8) affirms that God's initiative in grace is the necessary precondition for our faithful response to him. Moses had used the image of the circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 30:6) to speak of this inclining of the will (see also Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26). Such a circumcision is made available in the new covenant brought by Jesus (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Luke 22:19, 20; Colossians 2:11, 12) through the work of the Holy Spirit (Romans 2:29; 8:1–11).

B. For the Lord's Help (vv. 59, 60)

59. "And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and

night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need,

Moving to expressing his second desire, Solomon prays that God will hear his prayers and champion the cause of his people Israel. Solomon had earlier stressed the faithfulness of the Lord in keeping his word (1 Kings 8:20, 56). God's faithfulness in the past inspires faith and trust in Solomon for the present and the future.

The needs of Solomon and of God's people have been expressed, in one way or another, in all of Solomon's words to this point. His summary of his prayer invites Israel to remember what Solomon has requested of the Lord: the king previously had prayed that God's eyes would be open toward the temple "night and day" and that he would listen to his servant's prayer made toward that place (1 Kings 8:29). Solomon prays now that God will hear his prayer on behalf of the people and will not forget.

The final phrase reminds God's people that in each day and in every way, we can depend on his faithfulness (compare Exodus 16:4; Matthew 6:11).

FAITH OF THE GENERATIONS

My grandfather was a troublemaker when he was young. But the Lord used his marriage to my grandmother to change him. When Grandpa turned his life over to Christ, this often-angry drunk became a kind, peaceful man of faith. The couple's two older sons became ministers. Their younger son was a lifelong leader in the local church. One daughter married a minister, and another married an evangelist. The generations that followed have seen even more Christian leaders walking in the way of "their fathers" as ministers, teachers, and missionaries.

Other families could tell similar stories, demonstrating the value of the faithful generations that came before them. The faithful examples of our fathers and mothers can be honored only in continued faithfulness. When we make faith our own, God continues to honor his promises. Israel had to learn this lesson. We would be wise to learn it too.

—C. R. B.

60a. "so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God

Solomon's dedicatory prayer now reflects God's ultimate desire. Reaching the goal of all the peoples of the earth knowing that the Lord is God must include the Lord's attentiveness to the prayers of the Israelites and their obedience to him. That's how Israel will be an instrument of God's blessing in the world (Genesis 12:1–3; 22:18; etc.).

God's plan and purpose in choosing Israel as his people has always been that the nations would come to know him (examples: 1 Chronicles 16:23, 24; Psalms 72:19; 96:1–10). When Israel is properly obedient, non-Israelites will be attracted to the one true God (see 1 Kings 8:41–43; compare 2 Chronicles 6:32, 33).

60b. "and that there is no other.

The words there is no other stand in stark contrast to the many-gods outlook of the ancient world. Each people-group has its gods and worships them in vain attempts to address various needs. The Israelites acknowledge powers at work in the world other than God (Exodus 12:12; 15:11; 18:11; Psalm 82:1; etc.). But at their best, the Israelites worship no so-called god; they worship the Lord only. Solomon's affirmation echoes the assertions of Moses in Deuteronomy 4:35–39. It also anticipates similar statements by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 45:5, 6, 22).

C. For the People's Hearts (v. 61)

61. "And may your hearts be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time."

Whereas 1 Kings 8:58 spoke of God's initiative to empower Israel's holiness and obedience, this verse emphasizes Israel's side of the relationship that is made possible by God's initiative. Because there is only one God, Israel's devotion to

him is to be total and undivided (Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 6:5). Joshua had emphasized some 400 years earlier Israel's need to follow the Lord's commands so that blessings would continue in the land where God had granted the nation rest (Joshua 23:14–16; 24:14, 15, 20).

In biblical thought, the heart is the center of a person's character. It can refer to one's mind or will as the source of thoughts, words, actions, and feelings. Israel's obedience is to be complete and entire (Psalm 119:80), as is Solomon's (1 Kings 9:4; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 29:19).

Solomon himself eventually proves to be unable to stay wholly committed to the Lord. Although he had prayed for Israel's hearts to be turned toward God, Solomon's many wives eventually turn his heart after other gods (1 Kings 11:4). This faithlessness will lead to the fracturing of the nation of Israel (11:9–13).

Kings that follow him won't do much better. Though some kings will be wholly devoted to the Lord (examples: 1 Kings 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kings 20:3; 2 Chronicles 17:6; 25:2), many more will reign with divided loyalties or in outright rebellion (examples: 1 Kings 13:33, 34; 15:3; 16:18–20, 25, 26, 30–33; 2 Kings 1:1, 16, 17). The Israelites, like their kings, will fail to live up to their obligation; as a result, they lose their rest in the land (2 Kings 17:7–23; 24:14–16; 25:8–12).

The parallel account in 2 Chronicles 5-7 indicates that fire comes down from Heaven when Solomon concludes his words. The fire consumes the burnt offerings and sacrifices that had been prepared (2 Chronicles 7:1). The glory of the Lord fills the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1-3) as it had earlier in the celebration (1 Kings 8:10, 11; 2 Chronicles 5:13, 14; compare Exodus 40:34-38). This signals the Lord's approval of the building and the king.

What Do You Think?

What specific steps can you take to ensure that your heart becomes better aligned with God's desires?

Digging Deeper

Which stands most in the way of your personal growth in obedience: (1) things you should do and think but don't or (2) things you should not do or think but do?

Conclusion

A. Faithful to the Faithful One

The dedication of the temple was a time to remember the past, to celebrate the present, and to anticipate the future work of God for and with his people. The Lord had done great things for Israel, and he could be trusted to bless the nation in the future. These blessings would turn

out for good—not only for Israel but also for those who came to know the Lord as the only true God. Given God's past faithfulness and given the anticipation of his future faithfulness, Israel was reasonably called to have unswerving devotion to God.



Visual for Lesson 9. As you discuss verse 58, point to this visual as you ask "Why is the difference between hearing and heeding important?"

The words of Solomon during the dedication of the temple highlight the loyalty God had demonstrated to his covenant people. Prayerful consideration of what God has already done for us in Christ, is doing for us in the present, and will do for us in the future likewise is to motivate us to lead holy, godly lives.

B. Prayer

Our Father, we praise you as the one who has never failed one word of all your

good promises. We cherish your promise never to leave or forsake us. We praise you as the one who is faithful when we are not. Renew us by your Spirit so that we may have the desire and the power to walk in your ways. We pray this so that the world may know you and your Son. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Each day and in every way, God is faithful. Am I?

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible
Student (from your curriculum supplier)
and the reproducible activity page (at
www.standardlesson.com or in the back of
the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Before class, gather the wording inscribed on cornerstones of buildings in your town, including your church building. Share the inscriptions with the class. (Option. If you have several inscriptions, create a fun quiz for learners to match inscriptions to buildings.) Have participants evaluate how closely the inscriptions reflect the buildings' current uses.

Lead into Bible study by quoting 2 Kings 10:27 as an example that a structure intended for one purpose may end up serving quite the opposite! Say, "Today's text can serve as a prelude to such cautionary tales. Let's see how."

Into the Word

Have a volunteer read the entirety of Kings 8:54-61. Begin by noting Solomon's posture of prayer: kneeling. Ask, "How might the Israelites have reacted to the fact that their king was kneeling?" Discuss implications. (You may wish to keep the time spent here short if you plan to use the option in the Into Life section.) Moving through verses 54-56a, take time to explain the words supplication, blessed, and rest.

As you continue from verse 56b, divide the class into thirds. For smaller classes, each third will be its own group; for larger classes, divide the thirds into smaller groups. Have slips of paper ready on which you have written these questions, one per slip:

What does Solomon say about the past?

What does Solomon say about the present?

What does Solomon say about the future?

Give each group one of the slips of paper as an assignment. Allow about five minutes for groups to work, during which time you can write the same three questions on the board. After calling groups back together for whole-class discussion, invite responses by asking learners to help you make a complete list of answers under each question. (Expected categorizations: v. 56, past; vv. 57–60, present; v. 61, future. Some learners might make a good case that certain verses overlap time categories; ask for explanations.)

Ask class members to draw on their knowledge of Israel's later history to summarize how things turned out. Use responses as a transition to the Into Life segment.

Into Life

Give students two minutes to call out answers to this question: "Which phrase from Solomon's address is the biggest challenge to how Christians live today?" Jot responses on the board for whole-class discussion after time expires. As you move down the list, ask for shows of hands regarding which entry the class thinks to be the single, biggest challenge for Christians. (Option. Ask how and why the biggest struggle might change from culture to culture.)

Re-form the class into their thirds from earlier. Inform groups that you want them to think about God's work in and through your own church. The first third is to make a list of God's blessings in the past. The second third is to list his present blessings. The final third is to list what has to happen for God's blessings to continue; ask this group to make their list similar in form to the future-looking statements in Solomon's address.

Reconvene for whole-class discussion after about five minutes. Encourage additional entries to all lists. End with prayers of thanks for God's faithfulness and prayers of commitment to honor his desires in the years ahead.

Option. Distribute copies of the "Standing (?) in Need of Prayer" exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners work in groups of three or four to discuss as indicated. As group discussion winds down, ask learners if any postures have been left out. Discuss those and group conclusions as appropriate.

To print the reproducible activity page, simply click the highlighted text below to create a pdf file on your hard drive. Then open the pdf file in Acrobat Reader and print.

Activity Page (January 26—Solomon Anticipates Praise)