



This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.



There is No God Like You **Study Scripture: 2 Chronicles 6:12-21** **Lesson 2 March 10th, 2018.**

Key Verse

You have kept what You have promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day.

2 Chronicles 6:15

INTRODUCTION

Our Study examines the character of God, how He works and His role among His people, and therefore given these facts the worship that is required from His people

It also introduces and elaborates on the nature and purpose of the Temple of God and brings to mind what the Temple is for the people of God after the coming of Messiah, His ministry, His death, His Resurrection, and His ascension to the right hand of the Father. Remember the covenant to David is based on the covenant with Abraham which guaranteed that all nations and people would be blessed.

God's covenant and promises with David and his descendents will be the immediate subject of our Study and we will examine the prayer of David's son Solomon, highlighting what this prayer teaches about God and the nature of His relationship with His people. The great prayer of Solomon as he dedicates the Temple in Jerusalem is most instructive, for it guides us in our prayer life, stressing the great importance of prayer as we do anything as commanded by God.

God's promise to save mankind was made in Genesis 3, and as it's process unfolded we see God calling Abraham, establishing the nation of Israel, taking them into the land of Canaan under the leadership of Moses the great Law giver, raising up King David, a man after His own heart and David's involvement in God establishing the line of David forever as ruler of God's people. This guarantee of the future of David's line meant that one day there would be a 'perfect son' whose reign would never end.

He also promised David that his descendant would build the Temple that he had so longed to build himself. David had great concern for Temple worship and he had a great zeal for truthful and continuing worship of God. Since God had stopped him from building the Temple, David set about with great vigour and determination to make preparations for this magnificent project; so that at the time of actual construction everything his son needed would be at hand.

We learn from this that if God does not want you to do for Him all that your heart desires, you will be wise in making provision so that your children, whom you have obviously raised as God commanded, will carry on the work and complete your task.

The Text we study will examine these amazing promises of God.

In the first place we will be looking at the central role the Temple played in the worship of God. The Temple was the place where Yahweh dwelt and where the people could come to learn to obey the laws which dealt with the forgiveness of sin, worship and fellowship with God. The existence of the Temple made all of these requirements of God possible in a special way.

Note however that before the Temple was built other sanctuaries, especially those at Shechem and Shiloh had served to have the people carry out their religious duties there but when David captured Jerusalem that city became the centre of worship. Mount Moriah, or the Temple Mount, was where Abraham had built an altar to sacrifice his son Isaac, and this was the chosen site.

It is important to note however that the sanctuaries as well as the First Temple had been erected as an abode for the Ark of the Covenant and the Ten Commandments as well as a place of assembly for the entire nation. The Temple building itself, just as the size of the sanctuaries, was therefore not large but in the case of the Temple the courtyard was very extensive to accommodate the people. One writer therefore reminds us:

“As glorious and elaborate as the Temple was, the most important room contained almost no furniture at all. Known as the Holy of Holies (*Kodesh Kodashim*), it housed the two tablets of the Ten Commandments inside the Ark of the Covenant”.

Note carefully that the New Testament, as it looks at the destruction of the physical Temple in the land of Israel calls our body the Temple of God, the abode of the Holy Spirit. This therefore has gigantic implications for how we treat our bodies and how we are to present ourselves to the world. We must be no less beautiful in our lifestyle and our appearance, and holy in our doing and worship, as was the case required in this First Temple.

Solomon's grand prayer is therefore very instructive and a great guide for us in the principles that it exemplifies. One writer assists us in noting the good and the bad in the building of this Temple. This might assist us as we seek to mature as children of God:

“Solomon spared no expense for the building's creation. He ordered vast quantities of cedar wood from King Hiram of Tyre (1 Kings 5:20-25), had huge blocks of the choicest stone quarried, and commanded that the building's foundation be laid with hewn stone. To complete the massive project, he imposed forced labour on all of his subjects, drafting people

for work shifts that sometimes lasted a month at a time. Some 3,300 officials were appointed to oversee the temple's erection (5:27-30). Solomon assumed such heavy debts in building the Temple that he is forced to pay off King Hiram by handing over twenty towns in Galilee (1 Kings 9:11).

When the Temple was completed, Solomon inaugurated it with prayer and sacrifice, and even invited non-Jews to come and pray there”.

Our lesson looks at Solomon's official public worship of Yahweh, his repeating the promises in the Davidic covenant publicly when he completed the Temple and thanking God for fulfilling part of what God had promised. (see Psalm 89). The work was completed by a son of David and part of God's promise was fulfilled.

We will also see how Solomon considered the person of God and the significance of God's coming to dwell in His temple. Clearly God had come to indwell, have fellowship with His people, empower them and to judge them if necessary. Solomon, though not the ideal son of David certainly played an important role in bringing to fulfillment the promise of God for the building of the Temple.

The yet unfulfilled part of God's promise to David deals with the ministry of the promised Son. This ideal Son of David did come to Israel and had then to complete His work, so that another promise of God the Father would be fulfilled.

As a result of the work of this perfect Son of David, the very bodies of believers would become the Temple of God. God would now live inside true believers and their bodies would be His temple. Note we should be therefore very cautious as we apply this teaching to our personal lives. The entire significance of the word "Temple" had now been irrevocably changed.

We will look at what the ideal Son of David did and said after His resurrection. His coming, death and resurrection were necessary for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. That covenant dealt with the blessings that would come to Israel, as well as the blessing that God would bring to all nations.

The ideal Son of David will tell His disciples what would flow from His work on the Cross of Calvary. He will remind them of the Old Testament prophecies that had foretold the salvation of men from every tribe and nation because of the work of Messiah. He would commission them to proclaim the gospel to every nation. He would then declare the soon coming of the Holy Spirit, which would fill them with *power from on high*, in fulfillment of the promise of the Father.

The promises of the Father are of critical significance to us. Our Text will not look at the 'final' fulfillment of this latter promise of God. But remember that the promises of God are the basis for the Covenant and these promises were made because of the tender mercies of God the Father.

The covenant with Abraham and the covenant with David are extremely important for us and we hope that in our examination of the Text, we will not forget or minimize the graciousness of God in making the promises involved in these Covenants.

Let us note as we look at the Study Text some doctrinal truths highlighted from the prayer of Solomon by Matthew Henry:

1. **That the God of Israel is a being of incomparable perfection. The Creator has no peer. He is infinitely above all, and over all.**
2. **That he is, and will be, true to every word that he has spoke; and all that serve him in sincerity shall certainly find him both faithful and kind.**
3. **That he is a being infinite and immense, whom the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain.**
4. **That he, and *he only*, knows the hearts of the children of men.**
5. **That there is no such thing as a sinless perfection to be found in this life'**

THE TEXT

2 Chronicles 6:12-21

David had assembled an extraordinary amount of material and treasures for the building of the temple. He had organized the Levitical, the priestly, the administrative and military structures in the nation to ensure that the worship of Yahweh would proceed properly. He had fought many wars to build up the nation and to ensure it had no major enemies and so Solomon came to power in a time of peace, with no major empires threatening his kingdom.

Solomon had devoted himself to making fellowship with God and the worship of God central to the life of all the Israelites. His first official act was to worship Yahweh at Gibeon where the central sanctuary stood.

He used the resources left by his father wisely and had built and furnished the Temple of Yahweh exactly according to the plans that God had given to David. Craftsmen had been brought in from Tyre to do the work of building and decoration perfectly, and the choicest materials were brought from everywhere, north, south, east and west. It took 7 years to complete the Temple and in the 12th year of his reign, in BCE 827, Solomon dedicated the temple and its contents.

There was an elaborate and magnificent series of dedication activities or ceremonies during the feast of Tabernacles involving the installation of the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple. King Solomon addressed the people formally, prayed to God publicly and lastly there was an extensive celebration of the people. Solomon had assembled all the leaders of Israel and innumerable sacrifices were offered to God.

When the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant into the inner sanctuary of the Temple, the '*Most Holy Place*' and when they left the '*Most Holy Place*', the singers started to sing and the trumpeters started to blow their trumpets and everyone praised and thanked God in an explosion of worship.

“Within the Holy of Holies, two cherubim of olive wood stood with the Ark. This innermost sanctuary was considered the dwelling place of the Divine Presence (Shekhina) and could be entered only by the high priest and only on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), advises one writer.

Then at the dedication God responded. The House of God was filled with a cloud which represented His glory, for now God had come to inhabit His House. The presence of God so filled the Temple and was so powerful that the priests could not continue to minister, or to even offer incense upon the altar for its consecration.

We recall that the very same thing happened when Moses erected the sanctuary in the wilderness. Exodus 40:34-35 told us that at the dedication of the Tabernacle, the glory of God in the cloud so filled the sanctuary that not even Moses could enter. No one could stand before the consuming fire of God which manifested itself in the cloud, at both these dedication ceremonies.

Chapter 6 then begins with Solomon reacting to this extraordinary manifestation of God as he spoke at the completion of his work. So Solomon gladly proclaimed in chapter 6:1-2:
“The Lord said He would dwell in the dark cloud. I have surely built for You an exalted house, And a place for You to dwell in forever.”

After blessing the congregation and blessing the Lord God of Israel who had fulfilled His promise to his father David, Solomon recounted some of God's promises to David and spoke of the choice of Jerusalem as God's city. Solomon declared that he had put the Ark of the Covenant where it belonged, having thereby completed his work. Our Study Text now begins with Solomon's Prayer of Dedication.

Verse 12. Solomon declared in his prayer to God that he and the people swore to serve God with all humility and reverence, to the end that the Temple would be a place where sacrifices were made, and that the people through prayer would have a place to go where they may be near the presence of God.

Solomon's posture was one of submission to God, acknowledging that the kingdom belong to God and not to him.

He stood before the altar of the Lord before all the people and prayed. His prayer was a bit from the norm. One would probably have expected that a priest or one of the prophets would be the one to pray on an occasion like this, but Solomon undertook the part. He acted as the priest for his own family, them being the children of Israel. As the head of the family then, he took the right to offer up thanks to God. Even though he was King, he acted as a priest, even if it was for the family he presided over. This prayer was offered outside the temple.

He did not break with the traditional roles that God had established after the priesthood of Aaron had been set up. But this still puts his actions as an archetype of Christ, being both King and High Priest.

Solomon had great respect and reverence for God and it showed in his prayer. His posture was very reverent, expressive of humility and his prayer was fervent. His actions were important to show just what type of relationship he had hoped to establish with God. He knelt and then spread his hands out to God.

The education he had received from his parents and his obligation and dedication to God had afforded him the ability to communicate to God in a manner that was pleasing and acceptable for such an occasion.

Verse 13. Not much is said explicitly about the purpose of the scaffold (a sort of elevated platform) that was built. It was a large structure (*a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits long, five cubits high*) which allowed the people to see all who stood on it, especially considering its position in the court. Note the cubit is about 18 inches. However, it was the actions of Solomon that can teach us the greatest lessons.

Among his people he was king, and so when he came before them as his office required he was first standing. Then he proceeded to kneel as he was preparing to offer a prayer to God. Kneeling is one of the most reverent postures one can assume when praying to God. As Solomon did this before the entire congregation, he was setting an example and witness to let them know, that despite the fact that he was king, all must kneel before and to God.

His actions were different from King Saul as he did nothing that would mar the occasion and he did not step outside his boundary as a man or king.

It is to be remembered that the theme of kingship that runs all throughout the Old Testament **"reflects the truth the New Testament teaches us that God has called every man and woman to be a king in Christ, that we are to reign in life through Jesus Christ.**

It is very helpful to think of yourself as being given a kingdom over which you are to reign—the kingdom of your own life and of all that comes into your life. We are, in a sense, to be in charge of these matters. Now we cannot dictate everything that happens, but we can react to everything that happens. In that sense every one of us is called to be a King, and the kingship of the Old Testament is a reflection of that very truth.

Notice how Solomon brings out the fact that kingship rests always on a dual basis. First, there is a divine promise of reigning given to us. When Paul uses that phrase in the New Testament, he is not talking about reigning in heaven someday. In fact, he uses the very phrase, "reign in life" (Romans 5:17), right now, through Jesus Christ. That possibility rests upon the promise of God. But there is also the requirement of a human responsibility'. See verse 16b.

His next action was to spread forth his hands towards heaven and this continued toward the end of the prayer in like fashion. This was meant to express his desire towards, and expectations from God, as his Father in heaven. The action of spreading his arms open could also be perceived as him waiting to get something from God, and also giving himself to God, all as an expression that he is willing to serve God.

There is no indication as to the lengthy of the prayer, but some believe that there are hints that the prayer was much longer than indicated in the passage. At the throne of grace we have the liberty of speech and should use our liberty. Throughout the Bible, detailed examples have been given of people praying to God, and offering up thanks. This was done with short prayers and long ones, but all done with a fixedness and fervour of devotion.

Verse 14. Solomon gave God worthy glory in his prayer. He began with the proper act of adoration. He addressed God as the Lord God of Israel, to make it clear to who he was speaking. As he continued, he attempted to outline just who God was.

The God of Israel is a being of incomparable perfection. Solomon understood that there is none like Him in heaven or in earth. God is infinitely above all and over all. He is a being infinite and immense, whom the heaven and 'heaven of heavens' cannot contain.

Solomon also highlighted the fact that it is God who always keeps His covenants that He makes with man, nature and all of His creation. He is the one responsible for the gift of mercy shown to His servants, those that wish only to serve God with all their hearts.

Here Solomon showed the relationship and love that God displays towards His children and how His children react towards Him.

He was obviously well aware that the children of God are God's servants. His servants are expected to walk before Him in honesty and faithfulness; for God is a God who shows mercy, that is, literally loyalty, to His servants.

The faith of the servants must always be shown by their obedience. It follows that since God was present and dwelling among His people, He would hear their prayers whenever they were obedient in their walk and called out to Him.

Verse 15. Solomon showed an example of God's manifold kindness to His people and how He supported and maintained His covenants.

He recounted the promises that were made to David, promises that were fulfilled and which led to the Temple being built. He intended to show that God was not slack concerning His promises nor was time an issue for God. Read again Psalm 89.

Despite our need to have things done immediately, we can see that those who wait upon the Lord, see the fulfillment of His promises. This was the message Solomon gave to the people, as he reminded them or shared the desire of his father's heart with them. The day had arrived when the promises made to David were fulfilled. To that end we see Solomon thanking and giving praise to God for the fulfillment of His past promises.

As part of this entire discourse, we see that Solomon was not shy about calling on God to fulfill the promises made. It is clear that God not only keeps the promises He makes, but it is through His power that they move toward fulfillment.

On a personal level, Solomon thanked God for the great favour shown to his family and to his father David, in seeing the temple built. It is one thing to have God grant favour to us in our lifetime, but it is important to see that even if we pass away, we can believe and know that our children will see God bring to fruition the promises He has made to us.

This is why we must continue to pray always for the helpless, homeless, sick, widows, etc. We know that God will keep them. Pray for those children who might have walked away from God. With respect to those prayers sent to Him, He will hear and will answer.

Verse 16. Solomon moved on to some of the other promises made to David. His desire was solely to serve God; thanking God for all that He has done for Israel and for his family. While Solomon was in this state of worship, he boldly expressed his desire to God the Father. He reminded God of the remaining promises made to His people which were part of the covenant that was made with David.

God never has to be reminded of the covenants made with Him. But when we use them in our prayers, it is a good step for us, so that we know that the covenant is not kept through our power, but through God's power.

Solomon thankfully acknowledged the performance of the promise that God had kept to David. The next part was almost a prayer for a renewed covenant with God, or an expressed desire that as David had requested; as long as the children of Israel served God, there would be one to sit on the throne. In David's prayer, (1 Chron.17:18-19) he pleaded with God to maintain and hold the children of Israel close to their heavenly Father. His request was made for God to prevent their hearts from wandering, so that they may forever be in the presence of the Almighty God of Israel.

Solomon also echoed the same sentiment. The sentiment appears to have a condition or plea placed on it. So that the people would always serve the Lord the way they should, David had requested that God keep an eye on them, so that they continue to hold fast to the Lord. By having the Temple and being near them, David hoped that they would continue to serve God forever, and with that condition met, then the leader upon the throne would likewise continue to encourage the people of God to always serve Him.

The sons of God are to take heed to how they walk. This also specifically applies to us today for we are told our bodies are the temple of the living God, the Holy Spirit. Accordingly one writer examines our outlook at this and laments:

“It is very hurtful when Christians refer to buildings as the “house of God”. The New Testament never calls any building the “house of God”—you are. Everywhere in the New Testament the answer to the temple of the old regime is the human body and our personal lives. We are the habitation of God, by the Spirit. When we gather together, as this morning, when all these temple are in one place, the whole place becomes the temple of the living God; God dwelling among His people by the Spirit”.

Verse 17. Solomon asked God to prove his words to David. As he knew God's word is sure and immutable, Solomon reasserted the request that David made to God to ensure the future of Israel.

Thus by asking God to verify the promise made to David, Solomon was asking God to see to it that the people did not waver from serving God, using all means necessary to keep them. David knew that he could trust in God, and passed on this same belief to Solomon. He implored God before the congregation to see that this was the case, just as how God saw to it that the temple was built.

Verses 18-21. Here is Solomon's first request. When Solomon dedicates the Temple he acknowledges that this magnificent Temple that he has built cannot hold God for God is bigger than any manmade house.

Note therefore that the living God is transcendent, He is high above the earth and is not tied to a certain specific spot within nature, for He is beyond nature. This means as one scholar puts it: **He does not have the limited knowledge which we do. His love, mercy, and other attributes go far beyond anything found in human beings. He is also immanent and by this we mean we can see His presence and activity with nature. He is always active within the regular patterns of nature and so He can be called the God of nature, of natural law**".

The writer hastens to add that because of God's transcendence, His status is independent of the creation. There is no truth in the teaching of pantheism, that everything in nature is God. God is a personal being and we can as Scripture often reminds us, we must have personal relationship with Him.

We must, as Solomon requested have a growing sense of God's faithfulness to His promises. We must request as Solomon does, a consciousness of the reality of prayer, that God answers the cries of His people.

Solomon wanted his people to be increasingly confident in the power of prayer, for they should rest on the certainty that there would be a divine response to prayer.

As one writer states we will see **'we have a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God is at work'**.

Note the caution this writer gives when he tells us of how God treats new believers and older believers:

"You have to remember that this is the action of a very tender-hearted Father, bowing over and watching the faltering steps of a new babe in Christ. But we have to grow up too. We cannot expect those kinds of answers to prayers all our lives. The Scriptures do not encourage us to think that God is going to run at our beck and call very time we pray. Sooner or later we have to learn that there will come some extended delays that we do not understand. There will come unexpected responses; there will come apparent refusals on God's part, in an effort to test us and strengthen us. Yet with all that there will come a growing sense of God's faithfulness to his promises. So this is Solomon's first request, a consciousness of the reality of prayer".

Solomon therefore prays that God will localize His presence in the Temple. He would much later do this in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. God would hear His people's supplication from His dwelling place in Heaven and would forgive their sins. He prayed that God would help His people in answering their prayers.

Note therefore that the people had to pray and so Solomon encouraged their supplications. Heaven was God's dwelling place. This dwelling was in Heaven and not in the Temple. Their help would

come from Heaven. They would however be able to come to the Temple and pray for that was where God had instructed them to come and commune with Him, offering sacrifices.

When God heard their prayers He was implored to forgive. When He forgave their sins He would then be able to answer all their other prayers.

Note therefore that Solomon wanted God to take possession of the Temple and make it and where the Ark rested a place of rest for them, The Temple would be a place of public blessing and would bring joy to the people.

CONCLUSION

We can now look confidently at the fulfillment of the other promise of God that He made to David as we will observe the answer to Solomon's prayer.

The promised son of David, the Messiah would eventually come, minister throughout Israel, and would come to the city of Jerusalem, the city of peace where the *Prince of Peace* would rule.

God had promised He would keep and prosper His people, provide a place, now accepted it would be on Mount Moriah in the city of Jerusalem. His covenant with David had brought the sure mercies to David which God had promised and remembered.

What does that mean today? If the Holy Spirit was given to the children of God as part of the covenant and we know that God is not slack concerning His promises, then, it is up to us under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to accept all that God has provided for us. We are to continue the work of the disciples, the commission given to us, so that God's kingdom will be fully established.

We are commanded to do "*as it is written*".

It should be clear to us that evangelism is assumed, and its success is assured. Solomon knew that this Temple would be a place for all nations. There will be evangelism and there will be success. Men will repent and will be forgiven of their sins based on what Jesus has done. But the message to us is that we are not adequate for the task at hand. We cannot begin any ministry until we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

If we think that because of our knowledge or experience we can do the work of God we are totally off-base. We need to guard against the feeling that we are adequate for the situations in which we find ourselves. Solomon knew better and his prayer made that plain.

We are only able to do what God wants, if God lives His life through us. God has so designed our lives so that we must be filled by Him and empowered by His Spirit, if we are to do His work the way He wants it to be done.

Solomon inherited the commission to lead Israel.

We have inherited the 'Great Commission'. We have received the message from the Apostles to go and make disciples, to preach the gospel and to be a witness of Christ to everyone that we meet.

Jesus walked all over the land, showing love for tax collectors, sinners, blind beggars, talking to the poor, touching them, praying for them and caring for them. He loved and cared for everyone, and we are called on to do the same.

He has given us life and His Holy Spirit and we are free and able to do what He wants us to do. He has given us a wonderful commission, a wonderful message of love and hope for men trapped in sin. He is a great God. No one is like unto Him.

Our sins are forgiven. We should seek to have the sins of other men forgiven, so that they too will have the hope of eternal life which only the living God can give.