

SOLOMON, THE WORSHIPPING KING

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. The temple hosts God's presence with His people (1 Kings 8:10-13).
2. The temple declares God's faithfulness to His people (1 Kings 8:14-21).
3. The temple depicts God's forgiveness for His people (1 Kings 8:33-43).

Background Passage: 1 Kings 6–9

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

God is faithful to provide forgiveness for people so that He might dwell with them.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

The temple was to be a place where the presence of God would be experienced so that the nations would know the Lord is God. Jesus spoke of Himself as God's temple, and in His life, death, and resurrection, He made the way for all people everywhere to know God.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we know that God dwells with us in Jesus Christ, we live in devotion and obedience to God so that the original purpose of the temple can be fulfilled: the people of the earth will know our God is King.

GROUP TIME

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

SETTING: Solomon had secured the throne. He was God’s chosen king of Israel. But he came to the office with a heavy expectation and task upon him—building God a temple. And so, the “Builder King” went to work assembling material and organizing labor to build a new place for God, as well as a palace for himself, that would showcase his extraordinary wisdom and wealth to all the world. But as Israel had learned before, handling the things of God isn’t always a safe endeavor. With the completion of the temple, some may have been wondering if God would approve of this house built for Him.

INSTRUCT: Have each member of your group write down on a scrap of paper one thing that would be essential to a dream home. Put the scraps of paper in a bowl and mix them up. Then randomly draw these scraps out and see if your group can identify which “essential element” would go with which person.

DISCUSS: **Why were we able, or unable, to correctly match these “essential elements” of a dream home to each other?** (these desires reveal part of a person’s personality; we’ve heard them talk about it before; we know what the person likes; we don’t know some people as well as others)

TRANSITION: Often the places we live, or the dream homes we aspire to have, are more than just functional places to eat, sleep, and live. They reflect our passions, desires, and priorities. As we look at Solomon’s building of the temple and the aspirations that accompanied his work, we will discover God’s purposes for His temple. These purposes reflect more than just His desire for a building or structure; they show His eternal purposes for His people that are ultimately revealed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

POINT 1

THE TEMPLE HOSTS GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE (1 KINGS 8:10-13).

NOTES

10 And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, **11** so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. **12** Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. **13** I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever."

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **1 Kings 8:10-13** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 10-11** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

After the completion of the temple, a cloud filled the temple, a visible manifestation of God's **presence** and **glory** with His people.

DISCUSS: When have you felt God's presence in your life? (wait for a group member to respond first; only share your response as a conclusion to the discussion)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 12-13** commentary to explain the meaning of Solomon's words about the cloud in the temple, and connect this to the doctrine of believers and the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

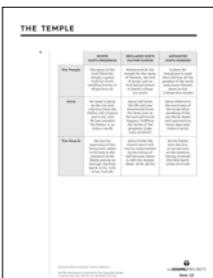
ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #81: *Temple of the Holy Spirit:* The Holy Spirit **indwells** the church, both individually and corporately (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 12:13). As the temple of the Holy Spirit, we live our lives differently than before, bearing the virtuous **fruit** that comes only by the indwelling work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This indwelling work of the Spirit also **equips** individual members of the church with gifts for the work of the **ministry** (1 Cor. 12:11).

DISCUSS: Pass out copies of **PACK ITEM 12: THE TEMPLE**, then ask: **What similarities and differences do you see between Solomon's temple and the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit?** (the temple is a building limited to one location; the Spirit indwells the church as a gathered body and as individuals; God dwelled in a dark cloud in Solomon's temple; the Holy Spirit makes believers in Jesus to be a light to the world so others can see God's glory in Jesus; God desires to be with and among His people)

TRANSITION: God's glorious filling of the temple reveals to us the gracious presence of God with His people, which we still experience today in Jesus through the Holy Spirit. The temple's completion also signaled something important to Israel about God's character.

THE HOLY PLACE

Solomon's temple in Jerusalem consisted of three parts: the outer courts, the holy place, and the most holy place. Only priests were allowed to enter the holy place to carry out their duties. The holy place inside the temple contained the table for the Bread of the Presence, ten lampstands, and the altar of incense (1 Kings 7:48-49).



COMMENTARY

VERSES 10-11 / Solomon took power as king, grew in fame and renown, and began to advance his agenda for the nation, including the hallmark project of his entire reign—the building of the temple. First Kings 6–7 gives insight into the size and material of the building projects of both the temple facility and Solomon’s own palace in Jerusalem.

With the completion of the temple, Solomon assembled all the elders and tribal leaders of Israel at Jerusalem, and eventually the whole congregation of the men of Israel. It was at this gathering that the ark of the covenant was moved by priests from the smaller and less secure tabernacle structure set up by David (see 2 Sam. 6:12-17) into the new and more expansive temple facility built by Solomon. The stage was now set for the dedication of the temple.

The design of the temple was a mirror copy of the tabernacle from the exodus almost five hundred years prior (1 Kings 6:1). The ark of the covenant was placed by the priests in the innermost section of the temple, the holy of holies. The symbol of God’s presence with His people was finally in a permanent home (1 Kings 8:1-9).

After placing the ark in its resting spot behind the temple veil, the priests came out of the most holy place and exited the temple through the holy place. Then it happened—a **“cloud”** filled the Lord’s temple. The cloud here was the visible manifestation of God’s presence with His people. Just as God had led Israel in the exodus event by a cloud (Ex. 13:21-22; 16:10; 19:9) and manifested His presence and glory by a cloud at the tabernacle (Ex. 33:9-10; 40:34-35), so here God confirmed His presence with and for His people in the same sign. And just as Moses was unable to enter the tent of meeting for a time to minister because of the presence of God, so the priests here were hindered in their ministry temporarily because of the same appearance of **“the glory of the LORD”** (see Ex. 40:35).

VERSES 12-13 / Solomon, being aware of the significance of God’s presence in the cloud coming down on the temple, made a statement to identify what had happened. His goal was to clarify what all of Israel was seeing in the cloud—namely, the presence and glory of God—and to recognize the temple as the location where God’s manifest presence would be located in Israel.

Solomon began by recalling God’s own statement that He would **“dwell in thick darkness.”** Solomon could have been referring back to Exodus 19:9, where the Lord spoke of coming to meet with Moses in a “thick cloud” so the people of Israel would hear the Lord speak with Moses and always believe His chosen leader. The cloud that descended on Sinai is described in Exodus 20:21 with the same Hebrew word for “darkness” that Solomon used. God was present in the same way with Solomon as He was with Moses at Mount Sinai. Such darkness was simultaneously a revealing and a shrouding, displaying the weight of God’s glory but hiding His appearance for the people’s protection.

Solomon then turned to describe his own actions in relation to God’s presence. Solomon had fulfilled the aspiration David had, namely, to build a house for God (see 2 Sam. 7:2,5,13), and God had kept His promise to David in Solomon’s building of the temple. Solomon described it as an **“exalted house”** to indicate that this place was “designed to symbolize not merely heaven but the entire cosmos.”¹ The temple in Jerusalem would be the place where God had chosen to manifest His infinite presence, a place to call home on earth (Ps. 132). The theological implication was that heaven had come to dwell on earth, and this was experienced at the temple in Jerusalem.

The Lord still dwells on earth, though there is no temple and no ark. Rather, He has made His home through the Holy Spirit in believers in Christ and in His church. We are filled with the glory of the Lord to display His glory in Christ to the world.

POINT 2

THE TEMPLE DECLARES GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PEOPLE (1 KINGS 8:14-21).

NOTES

14 Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. **15** And he said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying, **16** 'Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there. But I chose David to be over my people Israel.'

17 Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. **18** But the LORD said to David my father, 'Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart. **19** Nevertheless, you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.' **20** Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. **21** And there I have provided a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt."

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **1 Kings 8:14-21** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 14-19** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Solomon blessed the people and blessed God, recounting God's **faithfulness** to His people in making and keeping His **promise**.

DISCUSS: Why was retelling the story of God's covenant with David **important?** (it reminded Israel of their history with God; it created a milestone marker of God's faithfulness; it reminded the Israelites that God's words are faithful and true)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 20-21** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Although Solomon often referred to himself at the conclusion of this blessing, he rightly saw his place on the **throne** and his part in the building of the **temple** as the Lord's fulfillment of His promise.

TRANSITION: The completion of the temple was a reminder to Israel that God always keeps His promises. But the temple was also another gracious sign of God's willingness to forgive His people.

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Knowing that God always does what he says is very reassuring. He will remain faithful even when we are no longer on earth and unable to witness the accomplishments of his promises. Just as God is faithful, he expects us to be faithful . . . Let us be faithful in serving God, giving to his work, witnessing to and loving others, and proclaiming his faithfulness."²

-Africa Study Bible

COMMENTARY

VERSES 14-19 / After his initial statement, directed to the Lord in the people's hearing, Solomon turned around from facing the temple building to address the people of Israel. He **"blessed"** the Israelites by leading them to join with him in blessing **"the LORD, the God of Israel"** for His faithfulness to fulfill a promise.

The Lord had made this promise to King David some decades earlier (see 2 Sam. 7), and Solomon saw in himself and in the temple behind him the fulfillment of that promise. Yet the context of what God had done was larger than mere decades. Bookending the blessing that runs from verses 15-21 is the recollection that God had brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt around five centuries earlier. In light of the Israelites' many years of wilderness wandering and even the lengthy period of settling in the promised land, Solomon saw the temple as a sign of permanency. There was no more need for wandering, tents, or tabernacles. The temple building had brought to a glorious conclusion the exodus of Israel.

In all the while since the exodus, the Lord had not yet chosen, or identified, a city as a permanent dwelling for His name. But He had chosen a king to rule in His name. This king, David, Solomon's father, had decided that he wanted to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem. This could seem like the act of a prideful or self-serving heart—Who could choose where to settle the Lord of all the earth?—but the Lord who sees the heart knew better. God judged David's plan to honor the Lord with a permanent house to be a good desire, but He also determined that David was not the one to build His temple. David, as a man of war, had participated in much bloodshed, so the responsibility and privilege of building the temple would go to David's son Solomon, who would be a man of peace and rest (see 2 Sam. 7:1-16; 1 Chron. 22:7-10). So the Lord's promise to David included a dynasty, a son after him on his throne who would fulfill David's desire and build the temple.

VERSES 20-21 / Having reiterated the promise, Solomon returned to the fulfillment. At this point, it seems as if Solomon's ego took over in the call to bless God. At the beginning of verse 20, he affirmed the primary agency of **"the LORD"** in bringing this promise to pass, but the rest of verses 20-21 is focused on his own deeds in a way that could seem like Solomon was trying to outshine God's faithfulness.

In four straightforward lines, Solomon made himself a primary character. The emphasis was on his succession, his ascension to the throne (putting all rivals under his feet), his initiative and direction to build the temple for God, and his provision of a place for the ark to dwell. Perhaps Solomon saw himself not only as the fulfillment of the promise made to David but as a prophet like Moses whom God would raise up (Deut. 18:15). Or perhaps the pride of Solomon, which would be his downfall, was already rising to the surface.

In either case, Solomon understood the historical and theological significance of the moment in light of God's promises to Israel. After being rescued from Pharaoh's hand at the Red Sea, Moses led Israel in a song of praise and prophecy about the greatness of God. That song concluded with this: "You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established" (Ex. 15:17). Now five centuries later, Solomon proclaimed that prophecy and God's promise to David had been fulfilled and he had made it happen.

The completed temple was a marker for Israel that God is faithful to His word. God carried out all of His promises to Abraham, Moses, Israel, and now David. Solomon was correct in calling Israel to worship and bless God. The temple was a standing monument of God's faithfulness to His covenant promises.

POINT 3

THE TEMPLE DEPICTS GOD'S FORGIVENESS FOR HIS PEOPLE (1 KINGS 8:33-43).

NOTES

33 “When your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and if they turn again to you and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house, **34** then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them again to the land that you gave to their fathers. **35** When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them, **36** then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk, and grant rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance. **37** If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemy besieges them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, **38** whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house, **39** then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind), **40** that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers. **41** Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name’s sake **42** (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, **43** hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **1 Kings 8:33-43** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 33-43** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

In dedicating the temple, Solomon asked God to **hear** the prayers of His people in and toward the temple and to **forgive** Israel’s sins. He further prayed for **foreigners** who would come to the temple to find God’s grace and mercy so that all the world would **glorify** God.

DISCUSS: How should Solomon’s prayer help instruct our prayers? (we should pray for forgiveness; we should pray for restoration; we should pray for the forgiveness of other believers; we should pray for the forgiveness of our enemies; we should pray for God’s glory among the nations)

COMMENTARY

VERSES 33-40 / In his prayer of dedication for the temple (1 Kings 8:22-53), Solomon acted in the role of a mediator by praying to God on behalf of the people of Israel. Solomon moved from adoration for God (8:22-24) to petition based on God's nature and promises to hear and respond to His people's prayers (8:25-30). Solomon saw the purpose of the temple as a place where Israel could come and offer prayers to God. He also saw it as the place to facilitate repentance and atonement when Israel came seeking forgiveness for their sins.

What follows in verses 31-53 is a seven-fold petition to the Lord for how people would seek out and interact with the temple that Solomon had built. Many of the petitions identify different scenarios that might befall the community due to their sin and violations of the covenant made with God.

In the second of Solomon's petitions, verses 33-34, Solomon first acknowledged a plight that would require prayer—in this case, when Israel was **“defeated before the enemy.”** Solomon attributed such a defeat to Israel's rebellion against the Lord. The Lord had promised this would occur as a judgment if Israel rejected God and His ways (see Lev. 26:14-17). For those who would be foolish, discipline has no effect, or drives them deeper into their sin (see Prov. 15:5). But Solomon was hopeful that this affliction would result in Israel's wisdom and a return to God as they prayed for His mercy in the temple. If this would indeed be the case, then Solomon prayed that God would **“forgive”** His people and restore His promises and gifts to them.

In the third and fourth petitions, Solomon prayed regarding the circumstances surrounding divinely inflicted natural disasters. With severe droughts, crippling famine, and oppressive plagues in mind, Solomon saw natural disasters as a result of personal and corporate sin because God also had promised these calamities would come upon Israel when they violated their covenant relationship with Him (see Lev. 26;

Deut. 28–30 for the tools of God's promised discipline). Therefore, Solomon identified the droughts and plagues as God's discipline in the form of affliction. Again, the expectation was that Israel would repent and God would hear their cries toward the temple and forgive them.

VERSES 41-43 / Throughout his prayer, Solomon was careful to emphasize that God did not “live” in the temple because no place physical or spiritual can contain God's presence (1 Kings 8:27). God's “dwelling place” is “in heaven,” and yet, He had chosen to commune with His people in and through the temple Solomon built (8:29-30). The temple was a place for prayer for Israel, whether in person or directed toward that place, and God was to hear these prayers and respond. But the God of the whole world is not limited in His attention to one people group.

Therefore, Solomon's fifth petition invited those outside of ethnic Israel—the **“foreigner”**—to come and seek the Lord at the temple as well. The temple was not merely a place for Israel to pray and seek God; it was to be an attractive beacon of God's glory, strength, and grace to all the nations. Solomon expected people from distant lands to hear of the greatness of God's name and His powerful acts, His supreme holiness, and His gracious kindness toward Israel. He further believed they would have the sense that God's mercy was also available to them. So Solomon prayed that these foreigners' prayers would be heard and that God would answer them. Such abounding grace and mercy for those outside the covenant would resound throughout the nations to the glory of God everywhere.

God desired for the temple bearing His name to be a place of worship and prayer for both the Israelite and the foreigner. Jesus Himself echoed this desire in Mark 11:17, quoting Isaiah 56:6-7, when He said: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations.”

MY RESPONSE

Because we know that God dwells with us in Jesus Christ, we live in devotion and obedience to God so that the original purpose of the temple can be fulfilled: the people of the earth will know our God is King.

NOTES

HEAD:

The presence of God filling the temple with His glory powerfully reminds us of God's purposes to dwell with His people. Instead of God being estranged, aloof, or detached, He draws near to His people in grace. The completion of the temple by Solomon created yet another milestone of God's faithfulness to keep His promises and gives great hope that all His promises made to us in Christ will be kept.

How does the presence of God with Israel at the temple give you hope for your future with God?

HEART:

Because of God's nearness with His people and faithfulness to His promises, we can draw near to Him when we sin and find forgiveness in Christ. The temple building and dedication displayed in 1 Kings 8 grounds us in the very heart of God for us and gives us joy that we can draw near to Him in full confidence of His love for us in Christ Jesus (Heb. 10:19-23).

What are some ways you can grow stronger in your belief in and understanding of God's great love for you?

HANDS:

The temple was a place of prayer and worship not just for God's people Israel; it was to be a beacon of grace to all nations and peoples. The nature and works of God were to resound from the temple and God's people to compel people far from God to come near. In the same way, as people indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are to display the greatness and grace of God to all our neighbors.

How will you live as "a temple of the living God" before those who don't know Jesus? How might non-Christians see and experience the grace and mercy of Jesus by the way you live?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"The mark of the true church is an expanding witness to the presence of God: first to our families, then to others in the church, then to our neighborhood, then to our city, then the country, and ultimately the whole earth. May God give us grace to go out into the world as his extending temple and spread God's presence by reflecting it until it finally fills the entire earth."³

-G. K. Beale

POINT 1: THE TEMPLE HOSTS GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE (1 KINGS 8:10-13).

+ COMMENTARY

“Solomon recognized the glory cloud for what it was and saw in it God’s approval and promised presence. His reference to God’s dwelling in a dark cloud was based on Exodus 19:9, which speaks of the inapproachability and unknowability of God on the one hand, and on the other hand of God’s gracious manifestation of himself in a form that would not bring about the instant destruction of the people (Ex. 20:21; Deut. 5:22; see also Lev. 16:2). Solomon’s response to this gracious manifestation is that he has built a ‘magnificent [lit., “princely”] temple’ for the Lord so that he might sit enthroned in regal splendor as befits his majesty. It is clear from vv. 27-28 that Solomon is under no illusions, as though God needs the temple for his own sake. But just as God is enthroned in heaven, so he sees fit to use Solomon’s temple as his throne on earth.”⁴

+ ILLUSTRATION

Visiting ancient structures can often evoke a sense of being present among the kings and rulers who built or owned the places. If you have the opportunity to visit somewhere with deep history, such as Jerusalem or Rome, you will see buildings and structures that are hundreds, if not thousands, of years old. There is a transcendent feeling that accompanies standing in one of these deeply ancient structures. You don’t feel as if you are alone. For instance, visiting the Pantheon in Rome makes you feel as if you could be in the presence of Caesar Augustus. The Pantheon was originally built as a temple “to all the gods” during his reign, and it would be easy to imagine him standing there or walking through the doorway. An inscription across the top of the massive granite Corinthian columns attributes the original building to Marcus Agrippa, started sometime around 27 BC, and the central dome with its open oculus to the sun causes you to imagine how the Roman gods would have been worshiped. Caesar himself probably would have been worshiped by some of the Romans in the same room as he was considered to be like a god. Yet, though standing in the Pantheon may evoke the feeling of a ruler’s presence, when the temple in Jerusalem was built, God’s manifest presence was clear and overwhelming. And today, as we believers are seen as the temple of God, God is present in us. Unlike the Pantheon, where we can assume Caesar was there, we can clearly know that God was present in the temple and remains in us.

EXTRA

POINT 2: THE TEMPLE DECLARES GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PEOPLE (1 KINGS 8:14-21).

+ COMMENTARY

"In this section we see Solomon praising Yahweh. We cannot help but note that the prevailing issue throughout many of the preexilic passages of the Hebrew Bible is not so much how to worship, but whom to worship. Yahweh, and Yahweh alone, must be our first priority—no other gods before him! Where and how to worship him are important issues (especially by the time of King Josiah in the late seventh century BC), but the main concern must be Yahweh and Yahweh alone. To Yahweh must our prayers be directed, wherever we find ourselves—whether or not we are near this Temple or any possible successor. (With respect to the second Temple, Jesus said, 'The Scriptures [Isa 56:7] declare, "My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations"' [Mark 11:17]). It is Yahweh's 'promise' and the fulfillment of that promise which is properly the focus of chapter 8. Whatever Solomon had accomplished . . . it really represented Yahweh's accomplishment of his gracious promises." ⁵

+ COMMENTARY

"The king turns to the assembly of dignitaries and commoners, and against the spectacular backdrop of a building engulfed in glory, he opens his address with a blessing (8:14). The introduction recalls the historical background leading up to this splendid moment. The story begins with God's choice of a people, Israel (8:15). That choice is demonstrated in his bringing them out of Egypt. Next, God chooses a person, David, to rule his people. Through David's son Solomon, God fills the gap of not having chosen a city . . . to have a temple built (8:16-20). He also chooses a place, Zion, allowing Solomon to have provided a place there for the ark (8:21). It is significant that Solomon continuously emphasises [sic] that the temple is the place where, not God, but the Name of God rests. This introduces the paradox of the nearness and distance of God. Can an eternal and omnipresent God be confined to time and space? The paradox is specifically treated in the prayer of dedication that follows." ⁶

+ ILLUSTRATION

To help illustrate how the temple was a declaration of God's faithfulness, think about how buildings and monuments around the world have specific identities or stories attached to them. In your group, have a set of 5-10 pictures of notable buildings to show your group and ask them to share a word or two that declare what each building symbolizes. (Here are some examples: The Statue of Liberty, The Eiffel Tower, The Colosseum, The Great Pyramids, The United States Capitol Building, Big Ben/Parliament Building, The Golden Gate Bridge, The Washington Monument, Willis Tower, The Great Wall of China, The Parthenon, Fenway Park, The Alamo.)

POINT 3: THE TEMPLE DEPICTS GOD'S FORGIVENESS FOR HIS PEOPLE (1 KINGS 8:33-43).

+ COMMENTARY

“What is striking about these seven petitions is how different they are in atmosphere from the first part of the prayer in verses 23-26. There the stress was upon the necessity of obedience. Here, however, human disobedience is simply presupposed (esp. in v. 46: there is no one who does not sin), and the prayer moves beyond God’s judgment to dependence upon divine forgiveness and grace. It does so hinting that it is God’s choices, and not Israel’s, that are the crucial element in the God-Israel relationship. The land is the land given to the fathers (i.e., the patriarchs, vv. 34,40), the land given as an inheritance (v. 36; cf. Deut. 4:37-38)—statements that remind us, like the case of the foreign worshiper in verses 41-43, of the divine promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-8. The people . . . brought out of Egypt are Abraham’s descendants, delivered from oppression not because of their ability to keep the law but simply because of the promise.”⁷

+ ILLUSTRATION

The 1993 film *The Sandlot* reminds us of the fear that can accompany confessing our sin. Scotty Smalls had made a huge mistake. In an act of naiveté, he had taken his stepfather’s prized Babe Ruth autographed baseball out to the ballpark. He was just trying to fit in with the boys in his new neighborhood and “not be a doofus.” Since a player had hit the previous ball right out of its seams, they were without a ball to play with as a team. Small’s “borrowing” of his stepfather’s ball was a way to keep the game going. However, very quickly the autographed and valuable baseball was launched over the fence into Mr. Mertle’s yard, never to be recovered, so they feared. Scotty’s doom was sure. The story bends its way through the antics of young juvenile boys trying to recover the baseball from the backyard and the clutches of Mr. Mertle’s massive dog, The Beast. The pinnacle moment comes when Scotty’s friend Benny decides to retrieve the ball from the backyard in a race against The Beast that spans the entire town and back again. They return to the fenced ballpark where the fence collapses on The Beast. In an act of compassion, Scotty gets his friend to lift the fence and save the dog, but they must own up to why the fence has collapsed and what happened to the Babe Ruth autographed ball. Scotty must confess the fallen fence and stolen baseball to the mysterious and perceivably mean Mr. Mertle as well as to his stepfather. Instead of being severely punished, Mr. Mertle gives Scotty an even better autographed baseball than the one he lost, and his stepfather forgives Scotty and their relationship grows. Grace wins out when confession occurs.

References

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3. G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 401.
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