

Introduction

1. Benediction Definition: a benediction is the bestowing of a blessing and is generally done at the end of a service or ceremony

Benediction at end of service in Warsaw (Numbers 6:24-26): **“May the LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace. Amen”**

2. Solomon does something similar at the end of the dedication ceremony for the temple:
 - a. Chapter 8 describes the massive ceremony and celebration Solomon held for the temple dedication
 - b. After moving the Ark of the Covenant and the Altar into the temple, the LORD came down upon the temple in a massive cloud, so thick that the priests could no longer perform their duties and had to vacate the temple
 - c. Solomon then knelt before the LORD, with his arms stretched out toward the heavens, and prayed a somber and sobering prayer to the LORD
 - d. With the prayer now complete, Solomon turns to the people of Israel and offers up a benediction
 - 1) He begins the benediction with a reminder of the LORD’s faithfulness (8:54-56)
 - 2) He blessed Israel with three desires (8:57-61)
 - 3) He concludes the benediction with sacrifices (8:62-66)

A. Solomon began his benediction with a reminder of the LORD’s faithfulness (READ 8:54-56)

1. The LORD’s faithfulness had been demonstrated by the fact that He fulfilled His promises to Israel:
 - a. He had given them rest which is a reference to finally being settled in the land in peace and prosperity:
 - 1) Nearly 500 years earlier, the LORD promised Israel through Moses that He would settle them in the land and give them rest from their enemies (READ Deuteronomy 12:10-13)
 - 2) He accomplished the first part under Joshua during the conquest, and the second part under King David
 - 3) So, Israel was finally at rest, living in the land in peace and prosperity just as the LORD had promised (READ 1 Kings 4:20-25)
 - 4) As Solomon said, **“not one word has failed of all His good promises, which He promised through Moses His servant”** (8:56)
 - b. Do you remember last week how Solomon’s prayer was influenced by His familiarity with a handful of Old Testament passages? We see the same thing here:
 - 1) Last week we saw his how prayer reflected the themes and language of passages like Deuteronomy 7, 28, & 30 and Leviticus 26
 - 2) Here, his words are nearly identical to what we find in Joshua 21 and 23 at the end of the conquest:
 - a) READ Joshua 21:43-45

b) READ Joshua 23:14

3) This is another area in which I believe we see the wisdom of Solomon; both when he prayed, and when he blessed Israel, his thoughts and words reflected the themes and even the language of the Scriptures

2. Takeaways: I believe there are two takeaways for us here:

a. The first is one we've seen multiples times here in 1 Kings: I don't want to beat a dead horse, but God is faithful and fulfills His promises...every one of them

1) He has fulfilled, and WILL fulfill, all of His promised to Israel

2) And, He fulfills, and WILL fulfill, all of His promises to us

b. The second is that like Solomon, what we pray, think, and speak should be influenced by the Scriptures:

1) Far too often it seems that for many professing Christians, these things are influenced by secular forces far more than a sound understanding of God's Word—research by Barna, Lifeway Research, and Arizona Christian University all indicate that most professing Christians do not hold a Biblical world view

2) But, it shouldn't be this way for us as Christians; listen to what Paul wrote in Colossians 3:16: **"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."**

3) When Solomon prayed to God, and when he blessed Israel, he used not only the themes but the very language of the Scriptures

4) Shouldn't it be the same when it comes to what we think, how we pray, and what we say to others?

B. Solomon blessed Israel with three desires (8:57-61)
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1. Solomon's first desire was for the LORD's presence to remain among Israel (READ 8:57-58):

a. When Solomon first began to build the temple, the LORD came to Him with a promise (READ 6:11-13)

b. As Solomon reflected on that promise now that the temple was complete, he no doubt was keenly aware of Israel past struggle with idolatry and remaining faithful to the LORD—in fact, he just spent nearly all of his prayer calling on God to forgive Israel WHEN, not IF, they sin against Him (8:31-53)

c. His desire was that the LORD would be with Israel just as He had been with Israel's fathers—people like Abraham, Issacs, Jacob, Moses, and even Joshua

d. But, he also knew that it would require, as he said in v. 58, that God would incline their hearts toward him and toward obedience so that they would walk in His commandments

e. This is the second time we've seen this plea for the LORD to incline one's heart toward Himself for the sake of obedience; Solomon prayed it for himself (3:9) and now prays it here for Israel

f. Takeaway: Do we not also desire the LORD's presence in our lives, and recognize the importance of obedience in maintaining a close relationship with Him? (READ John 15:4-11)

2. Solomon’s second desire was for the LORD to vindicate Israel whenever the need would arise (READ 8:59-60):
 - a. Solomon has referred to the LORD “**maintaining the cause of Israel**” three different times in this chapter; the first two are in 1 Kings 8:44-49 (READ)
 - b. The NET translation renders this phrase “**maintaining the cause**” using the word vindication which I believe is the intended meaning here
 - c. To vindicate someone means to show or prove them to be right

You may or may not remember the name John Paul Mac Isaac—he was the computer repair shop owner in Wilmington, Delaware, who claimed that a laptop he had in his possession was dropped off by Hunter Biden. When the story broke almost three years ago almost every major news organization claimed it was fake, disinformation, a Russian hoax. Mr. Isaac’s reputation was destroyed, he faced death threats, lost his shop and now faces bankruptcy. Well, as those who have been paying attention know, the FBI and many of those same news outlets have finally admitted that the laptop was real and indeed belonged to Hunter Biden. Mr. Isaac has been vindicated—shown to be right.

- d. When Solomon referred to the LORD vindicating himself and Israel, he was referring to the LORD showing or proving that their faith and trust in Yahweh, the One True God, was right
 - e. Look at v. 60 again—by doing this, all the nations of the earth would know that the “**LORD is God; there is no one else.**”
 - f. Takeaway:
 - 1) Do we not also cherish our own vindication by the LORD? Don’t we long for Him to prove that we are right to place our faith and trust in Jesus?
 - 2) You know, every time we lead someone to Christ, we’re vindicated—not for our own sake but so that the world might know that the LORD is the One True God who saves
 - 3) Every time we preach the Word of God and see its impact on the lives of people, we’re vindicated—again, not for our own sake but so that the world might see the truth of God’s Word
 - 4) Every time we’re persecuted because of our faith in Jesus, we’re vindicated because we share in His suffering
 - 5) Our ultimate vindication, however, will come when Jesus returns and we stand beside Him when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that He is Lord
3. Solomon’s third desire was that Israel’s heart would remain completely devoted to the LORD (READ 8:61):
 - a. At this time in Israel’s history, they were experiencing peace and prosperity to a degree they had never known before (4:20-25)
 - b. Life was good; they were at peace not just with all the nations around them but with the LORD, and they were experiencing His blessings
 - c. The reason for this was that their hearts at this time were completely devoted to the LORD and Solomon’s desire was that their hearts would remain that way:
 - 1) You may remember my comment from a few weeks ago that most scholars believe that idolatry was extremely rare, probably non-existent, during David’s reign and didn’t resurface until the later years of Solomon’s reign (this is one of the reasons why the reference to Israel “**still sacrificing on the high places**” in 3:2 should be interpreted not as idolatry but worshipping God at regional high places dedicated to Him)

- 2) Notice that at the end of v. 61 Solomon says, “**as at this day**”—that’s a clear indication that Israel’s heart was currently “**wholly devoted to the LORD**” and they were walking in His commandments
 - 3) Solomon’s desire was for that to remain the case with Israel so that they might continue to experience not just the current peace but the first two desires—God’s perpetual presence among them and that He would maintain their cause (vindicate them) so that the whole world would know that the LORD is God and there is no one else
- d. Takeaway: The LORD has always expected whole-hearted devotion from His people:
- 1) When He gave the Ten Commandments to Israel, He began with “**Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."**
 - 2) When Jesus Pharisee asked Jesus what the greatest commandment is, He replied, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength**” (Mark 12:30)
 - 3) The Bible is also clear about how we demonstrate this whole-hearted devotion: by keeping His commandments:
 - a) Jesus said, “**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments**” (John 14:15)
 - b) READ 1 John 2:3-6; 3:24; 5:1-3
 - 4) The best measure of whether or not someone loves the LORD is not what they say, but whether or not they demonstrate that love through obedience

C. Solomon concludes the temple dedication with a peace offering (8:62-66)
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1. If you remember when we started chapter 8 two weeks ago, we discovered that Solomon waited until the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) to dedicate the temple
2. It was one of three feasts where all the men of Israel were required to come together and bring their sacrifices to the LORD
3. This was not a normal Feast of Tabernacles, however—it was twice as long and much more massive in scope
4. The parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 7:1-11 gives us a much more detailed picture of the events that transpired so I am simply going to read that as our close (READ)