

## **A Chronicle of Redemption**

Chapter 21: Extravagant Worship

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## **CHAPTER 21: EXTRAVAGANT WORSHIP** **1 Kings 8**

Psalm 145:1 says, *"I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised..."* Al Mohler said, "We were created by God to worship God forever and ever. Every glimpse of heaven we have in Scripture indicates that worship will be our eternal occupation." Read that again, "Every glimpse of heaven we have Scripture indicates that worship will be our eternal occupation, and it is for that purpose that we are being prepared even in the present."

This morning, we're going to talk about that eternal occupation of worship. You think about in this room, we have dozens, perhaps hundreds, of occupations represented. We have business owners. We have store clerks. We have people that work in restaurants. We have stay-at-home moms. We have doctors, lawyers, mechanics. We have all kinds of occupations represented in this room, but really, there is one central occupation that represents every single believer, and that is all of us are created to worship.

That's what Isaiah 43:7 indicates that He says, "I have redeemed you. I have created you for my own glory." God created us in order that we might bless Him, praise Him, honor Him, glorify Him forever and ever. So, that's what we're going to come to this morning in our text in 1 Kings 8.

### **The Picture of Worship in Redemptive History...**

In 1 Kings 8, there is a picture of worship that I want us to see, and what I want us to do. As we come to this text in Old Testament history, I want us to begin by looking at really another picture. First of all, the picture of worship in redemptive history, and then as we sort of focus in, I want us to look at the picture that we see here in 1 Kings 8 of worship, and then I want us to bring that across into our own lives and our own families and the life of this church and to examine worship in the church.

#### **The reign of Solomon signals the climax of Old Testament history.**

I want us to begin with the picture of worship in redemptive history, and we'll start in 1 Kings 8. The reign of Solomon signals, really, the climax of Old Testament history. David indicated that last week. When we were going through the Proverbs, David did a really great job of situating the Proverbs in the life and the reign of Solomon. That Solomon was endowed with wisdom.

You remember the story where he decides with the baby; the two mothers that are there fighting over this child, and he has the wisdom. He displays it, and it's at that moment that it mentions that Solomon knew all sorts...over 3,000 proverbs. So, we see that Solomon is

sort of the representative of the high point of the Old Testament in the narrative that we looked at thus far, and we see that really also in the story of Abraham.

You remember in Genesis 12 where God comes to a pagan Abraham, Abram at the time, and He promises him certain things. He says, in Genesis 12:1-3, "If you will go..." He says, "I want you to go to the land that I will show you." So, He promises Abram that, one day, he is going to have land. He says, "Not only will I give you land. I'm going to make you a great nation, and I'm going to make you such that those that curse you are cursed, and those that bless, they will be blessed as well."

He said, "I'm going to make you the channel of the blessing of God." So, in Genesis 12, a foundational test. God promises Abraham three things: that He will give him land, that He will give him descendants and that He will make him a blessing. A few chapters later, in Genesis 17, we read another promise that God adds to the covenant that He's already established with Abraham. He says, "I'm going to make great nations come from you. Not just one nation, multiple nations, and I will bring kings from you."

So, when you put all that together, 1,000 years before the reign of Solomon, God is already promising to His people that He will give them land. He will give the descendants. He will make them a blessing. He will make kings come from them.

So, when we come now to 1 Kings 8...and this is really broader than 1 Kings 8, just the whole beginning of this book of 1 Kings. When we come to this text, we see now that all of these promises that God made 1,000 years before are coming to fulfillment in the life and reign of Solomon. God promised him land, and now they have land, more than they ever had. God promised them descendants, and so God has multiplied the nation. We see that in 1 Kings 8:1-3. God promises them that He will give them kings, that people will reign from the line of Abraham, and so Solomon now reigns and rules in Jerusalem. God promises them that He will...promises Abraham He will make them a blessing to the nations, and I want you to see this.

Looking back...you're at 1 Kings 8. Just look back a couple of chapters in 1 Kings 4. I want you to see how all of these promises of God are now coming to fulfillment in the life and reign of Solomon. Look at 4:34. We actually read this passage last week. It says, "*And the people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.*" You see it? All the nations of the earth are now being blessed in and through this line of Abraham.

You can look in our passage in 1 Kings 8, but now flip over just past it to 1 Kings 10, and you see the same idea that Israel is now in place, in a situation where they are blessing the nations. People are coming to them. They're coming to the temple. They are coming to the reign and the rule of God, and they are going away with wisdom.

Look at 10:23. "*Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And the whole earth...*" note that. "*And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.*" One writer put it this way, "You have God's people in God's place under God's rule and in God's blessing." That's what God has promised to Abraham. That's what we saw in the garden, what God promises to Abraham, and that's what we now see fulfilled in the life and reign of Solomon.

God's people in God's place under God's rule and God's blessing, and what I want us to take note of is that now we have come really to the high point because, from here, it's bad. Now that we have come to the high point of the Old Testament, the climax of the Old Testament,

what I want you to notice is that, at the very heart of this reign is the worship of God. At the very heart of the reign and the rule of Solomon, the climax of the Old Testament is the worship of God. It's all that we've been driving for, all that it's been pushing forward to this point.

When we finally come to it, what do we find? We find in 1 Kings 8 the worship of God. You know this makes sense. Throughout redemptive history, worship is central. It's not just in 1 Kings 8; it's all of the Bible. We see that worship occupies a central place in the plan of religion. We see, for example, in the garden that worship is evident. That worship is evident in the garden.

You remember in Genesis 3:8, that they were called there to reflect an image and glorify God, and it was...there was such communion, such closeness in the garden that God, as it were, walked in the garden in the cool of the day. They experienced an intimacy with God, and so, out of that intimacy, they were to reflect and radiate an image, the glory of God. However, that is broken in the garden, and so what we find, in Genesis 3, after the Fall, after the image is damaged, after the reflection is not as bright, all the rest of Scripture is really an attempt, or it's a plan to reclaim what we had in the garden through Christ.

So, for example, we see that worship was evident in the garden. Worship is also prominent in the law, and so worship doesn't fade away after the image of God is broken, after it is damaged, that worship is prominent in the law. There are a lot of Scriptures that we can look at here, but just one for you that you might jot down, Exodus 15:1 and following. God redeems the people from Egypt, and so they sing this song, *"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he is thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him."* So, all throughout the law, we see that worship is prominent.

Joshua, in Joshua 5, bows down before the Lord. Gideon, in Judges 7, worships God. Hannah, in her prayer in 1 Samuel 2, she worships God. David acts like a fool before the ark of the covenant worshipping and glorifying God. So, worship is prominent in the law, but it's also, then, anticipated in the prophets. After the temple is filled and after the worship of God is established in a firm and stable way, eventually, they go in to see Him. So, they go into exile, and what is the hope? What is the glory that is put before the people? What is given to them as hope? It is things like Isaiah 2...note that Isaiah 2:2-3, *"It shall come to pass in the latter days..."* Isaiah says. *"...that the mountain of the house of the LORD..."* in other words, Zion...that Zion *"shall be established as the highest of mountains..."*

You can imagine a mountain range, and what Isaiah sees in this mountain range is one mountain that dominates the rest, and that is the mountain of the house of the Lord that all that nations then will stream to the house of the Lord. They will learn the ways of God, and God's people will teach the nations. We see it's evident in the garden, prominent in the law, anticipated in the prophets. It's elevated in the New Testament.

You remember Romans 12? Paul walks the church at Rome all through the glorious plan of salvation through justification, through salvation, through glorification. He paints this great picture of salvation, and then he says, in Romans 12, *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God..."* In other words, knowing what God has done, *"present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."* In other words, "In the Old Testament, you brought things. Now, you are the thing."

Worship is elevated in the New Testament, and then, finally, worship is unhindered in the end. Revelation 22. I want you to listen to Revelation 22. Through the final vision that John receives, "*The angel showed me the river of the water of life.*" You see all throughout this passage, by the way, references to the Garden of Eden. That things are back in Christ the way they ought to be. "*The angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street in the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life [we see that again] with twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.*" No more frustration. No more curse. The ground is yielding forth its fruit. "*The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*" Then, listen to 22:3, "*No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.*"

So, what are we going to do in heaven? Do you ever ask that question? You ever have anyone ask you that question? What is it that we say? What are we going to do in heaven? You know, we don't have a lot of descriptions in the Bible regarding what we're going to do in heaven. We just don't. I have a feeling that a lot of the things that we do, we will do in heaven, but we don't really have any of those in the Bible spelled out except for one. We will worship forever and ever and ever and ever. We will worship.

Why? Because forever and ever and ever and ever, we will know, in our hearts, that God is worthy of that kind of worship. We will worship forever. That's the picture that we see in redemptive history from cover to cover, from the beginning to the end, from the law to the gospel, from the front to the end, from the beginning to the end, we see worship.

**The implication is clear: if worship is central in the Bible, it must be central in our lives.**

I want to draw out the implication of that, and I think it's clear to all of us. That's simply this: If worship is central in the Bible, it must be central in our lives. If worship occupies a central place in the story of redemption then worship must occupy a central place in the story of our lives, and that begs the question, brothers and sisters, "Are we worshipping? Are we giving all of our heart, all of our souls, all of our mind, all of our strength, everything that we are? Are we worshipping God in that way?" I don't just mean, "Are we singing the songs?" Although that's part of it, but you know, we can sing the songs and, in our hearts, be far away from God. You know, isn't that what Jesus says? He says to the Pharisees, "Well, did Isaiah prophesy of you? 'With your lips, you are near, but with your hearts, you are far away and in vain do you worship me.'"

Now, that's a challenging...that's a frightening verse even. You think about in that day, if you were a mother or father, you would have desire for your son or your daughter...your son in particular...you would have desire for him to grow up and be like one of those men, to know the law, to know the Word, to be able to teach the Word of God, and Jesus said of them, "With their lips, they say they are near but their hearts are far from me." I'm not talking about just singing the songs, although that's a part of it. What I'm talking about is what I think we see in the story of the Bible and what we see in 1 Kings 8. Are our affections...are our...is our attention, are the things we desire most, is it God or is it something else? Do we sing out of the overflow of a heart that is enraptured with God? Are we in love with Christ and, out of that, obey Him, worship Him, out of that have right lives, right attitudes, or is there a coldness in our hearts? I'm not talking about just the outward manifestation. Is there an indifference toward God? Is there, God forbid, an apathy toward Him?

## The Picture of Worship in 1 Kings 8...

It's with those questions in mind that I want us to move from the picture of worship in redemptive history to the picture of worship that we see in 1 Kings 8 because it's the picture of extravagant worship. It's the picture of extravagant worship for an extravagant God.

### Extravagant worship ...

The background of 1 Kings 8 is really 1 Kings 5 through 7 where we see the building of the temple. You read all this long narrative, and the details that are included as God instructs Solomon as they build the temple for the worship of God. We see in that extravagant worship, namely, no expense was spared in the construction of the temple. If you read these chapters, you'll see, for example, that the best builders were assembled. Solomon goes, and he brings in this man, Hiram of Tyre, who's an expert in bronze and craftsmanship. So, he brings in the very best in order to orchestrate and to be an architect for the building of the temple of God.

We see also that the best materials were employed. Gold and precious metals, panels of cedar, posts of olive wood, doors of cypress, on and on it goes. Enormous columns of stone overlaid with bronze. You can imagine the glory. In fact, that was a common phrase, "The glory of Solomon's temple," or "Solomon in all of his glory." Jesus even uses that phrase. It was a great, a grand display of the glory of God.

Just for reference, it's roughly 50 yards in length, about ten yards in width and about, at some points, three stories high. So, you can think almost like the end zone of a football field, three stories high. For them, coming out of the tabernacle where they had worshiped for years and decades and for a millennia even. So, out of that experience...which a tabernacle with goat hair on the outside, not nearly the splendor, not nearly the majesty...now, they come with a majestic temple.

We see that no expense was spared. We see also that no energy was reserved in the dedication of the temple. All the people were present. If you would, look in 1 Kings 8. We're not going to read, certainly, the whole passage. It's 66 verses, but look in verse 1. "*Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel.*" Verse 2, "*And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the feast...*" Verse 3, "*And all the elders of Israel came, and the priest took up the ark.*" You see, over and over, the author emphasizes, reminds us that all other people...again, all the leadership and then, certainly, all of their families as well to find that there is a feast unto God.

So, all of the people are assembled, and also, we see that all the sacrifices are offered. It's an extravagant display. All the sacrifices. Look in verse 5 if you would. Look in verse 5 of 1 Kings 8. The beginning is to lead up to the dedication of the temple. It's been built over a period of seven years, and now, they are transitioning from that tabernacle setting into the setting of the temple, and so they're bring the ark of the covenant. It's a high point of the ceremony. They're bringing in the ark of the covenant with tablets and the testimony of God. They're bringing them into the Holy of Holies. It says in verse 5, "*And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark...*" Notice what it says: They were "*sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered.*"

Slip on down, if you would, in verse 62. These kind of mirror one another. So, there's worship that goes on before Solomon's prayer of dedication of the temple, and then there's

worship that goes on afterward. Notice, in verse 62, *"Then the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD. Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep."* That's a lot of animals. That's a lot.

In fact, some have calculated that out. If you're doing that over seven day period, which is what the feast was...if you're doing that over a seven day period, if you just had one priest...and, of course, they had multiple priests...but if you just had one, that's a sacrifice every four seconds. You can just imagine even the sound of it. Think about that. Think of the sound of the animals and the blood that is flowing. I mean it is an extravagant, over the top and excessive celebration toward God.

The best builders, the best materials, all the people and all the sacrifices...you know it raises the question, at least in my mind, particularly as we're in a New Testament context, it's so different than a temple context, but it raises the question, "Isn't this a little bit much?" I mean think about all this gold and all of the bronze and all of the precious metals and the woods and all the craftsmanship and all the labor that has gone into this, all of the time that the people have taken to come in to Jerusalem to celebrate this feast, all of the animals that are sacrifices, all the resources that go into that. Couldn't we have just been more simple? Shouldn't they have been more simple and just had maybe a smaller feast and then taken that money and given to the poor?

It's a similar situation. Remember in the New Testament, Jesus is about to go to the cross, and His disciples are gathered around Him. A woman breaks into their fellowship, and she anoints Jesus with oil, with perfume, and the disciples wonder about that, and they say, "Well, this is expensive perfume. Why would we waste that? Why would she do that? Couldn't that have been sold and the money then given to the poor?" You remember what Jesus said? Jesus says, "The poor you will always have with you but not so with me." Now, that statement strikes us as a little bit strange, a little bit "un-Jesus-like." I mean doesn't Jesus care about the poor? The fact is Jesus isn't giving any commentary on the importance of the poor. Jesus is simply illustrating the importance of Himself that He is worthy of all praise, all glory, all expense, even, that extravagant worship is not wasted so long as it is focused on an extravagant God.

It's the same thing we see here in 1 Kings 8. They pulled out all the stops. They built the best temple that they could build, got the best builders, best materials. They celebrated, and then they went home. It says in verse 66, *"With joyful and glad hearts at all the goodness that the LORD had shown them."* They did not go home thinking, "What a waste. Couldn't we have done more with our time and with our money?" No. They went home, even after the feast, with glad hearts and all the goodness that God had shown to them.

### **For an extravagant God.**

I want to point you to the very heart of the passage. The heart of the passage is not a temple. The heart of the passage is a God, the God of mercy and grace and of glory. They conducted extravagant worship because they had an extravagant God, and we see that in a number of ways. Notice, first, that God shows extravagant grace by dwelling with His people. We see, in this passage, that God shows extravagant grace by dwelling with His people. Look there in verses 6 and following. As they're bringing the ark of the Lord, it's a great celebration all the way up into the Holy of Holies. So, they go through the outer court, through the inner court, and finally, they rest the ark of the covenant beneath the cherubim, and the priests back their way out.

Notice what it says in verse 10, *"And when the priests came out of the Holy Place [look at what happens] a cloud filled the house of the LORD, 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.*" I want you to notice this. I think, intentionally, there's no indication that they prayed for the presence of the Lord, although they may have. There's no indication that they sang for the presence of the Lord. The text just tells us that the priests went out, and the glory came down. In other words, it was the sovereign grace of God that determined, "I will dwell among this people."

Can you imagine? Can you imagine what's going on in Solomon's heart? I mean the pressure that he feels. I mean just the angst as he spent seven years having this temple built. He's assembled all the people of God, and he's hoping, down deep, I guarantee you he's hoping, "Man, I hope God shows up. It's going to be really awkward if nothing happens."

I contrast that in my mind with the tower of Babel. You remember in Genesis 11 how they determined that they will build a house unto God. They will build a tower, a temple as it were unto God. "We will make," they say, "a name for ourselves and we will build a temple that reaches into the heavens lest we be dispersed over the face of the earth." The arrogance and the pride contrasted here with the grace of God determining that He will dwell among His people. That's why Solomon, in verse 14, praises God. Verse 15, "*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel...*" Do you feel that? It's so hard to read a prayer and to appreciate it, to read a prayer and get the sense of it.

However, just imagine all that Solomon has seen, all that he has witnessed in the glory of God coming down in the temple. "*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David, my father...*" It is a reminder of Solomon, and it is a reminder for us that we enjoy the presence of God, not because anything that we have done but because of God's sovereign grace in our lives, and that demands praise unto God.

We also see that God shows extravagant faithfulness by fulfilling His Word, that God shows extravagant grace by dwelling with His people, but He shows extravagant faithfulness by fulfilling His Word. Read with me, if you would, in verse 23. Look at...or listen to how Solomon prays in verse 23, "*Oh LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you...*"

Just for a moment, just stop right there and think about all the ways that we can fill that in. "God there is no god like you." "No God like you in faithfulness."; "no God like you in grace..."; "no God like you in mercy..."; "no God like you in love..."; Notice how Solomon fills it in, "*...in heaven above or earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart; you have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth...*" Notice that phrase. Underline it. It appears twice in this text. "*You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day.*" What impresses Solomon is simply this that what God says, God will do. That what God promises, God will fulfill.

You think about, for a moment, just all that is welling up in Solomon's heart. Think about all the promises that have been made a thousand years even before. God promised them a nation, and now they are one. God promised them a land, and now they inhabit it. God promised the presence of God, and now they see it. God promised a throne for David's son, and now Solomon sits upon it. God promised a temple, and now they worship in it. No wonder he says, over in verse 56, "*Not one word has failed of all his good promise...*" I love that line. "Not..." did you hear that? "Not one word..." Not just one sentence or not one phrase, but not one word.

You think about all the promises that you and I make daily, all the things that we resolve to do, all the things that we promise our spouse, we promise our family, we promise our employer, we promise our church even. Think about all the ways that we promise, and all the ways that we fail. No doubt in my own life, I can think of promise after promise that I have made years ago or maybe promises that I made a week ago that I no longer keep, but it is not so with God. Everything that God promises with His mouth, He will do with His hand.

They praise God for the grace He had shown in dwelling among them, praise God for His faithfulness by fulfilling His Word, and notice, they also praise God because God shows extravagant mercy by forgiving their sins. God shows extravagant mercy by forgiving their sins.

This text is arranged in what's called a chiasm, and David explained that on a number of occasions, I know. That really, structurally, the beginning matches up with the end. So, for example, particularly, if you have an ESV Bible...other Bibles I'm sure do it as well...but if you look at the headings, you'll see, for example, that verses 1 and following all the way down to verse 11 includes the lead up to it, the sacrifices that you see. Well, then there's kind of a parallel to that. In verse 62, if you flip to the end of the chapter where it says, "*Solomon sacrifices...*" in my Bible, those sections parallel one another. There's celebration. There's feasting. There are sacrifices, and so the beginning and the end mirror one another.

Well then, actually, if you go into parts two and parts four, the next parts, they mirror one another as well. If you look in verse 12 down through verse 21 where it says, "*Solomon blesses the LORD...*" you have the prayer of Solomon as he blesses the Lord and blesses the people. Then, you have a parallel to that in verses 54 through 61, and so you see parts one and five match up then parts two and four match up. Then, that just leaves us with the last passage which indicates that, really, this is the heart of it all.

That the heart of the passage is found in verses 22 all the way down through verse 53. The essence of the prayer, the dedication prayer of Solomon on behalf of the people of Israel, is found in verse 30. Look what it says. Solomon prays, asking God that His eyes and ears now be open to the house of Israel...to the house of the Lord. Verse 30, "*And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel [Listen to the plea], when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear [underline this], forgive.*" It's easy to miss this, I think, in a passage this large. 66 verses. It's easy to miss the very heart when you see all the activity, all the hustle and bustle, all the sacrifices, all the things that accompany this text; it's easy to miss that the heart of this passage is not a temple, but it is God. It's not a temple where they can worship. It's a place where they can find reconciliation and redemption before God.

See, if you look down in verse 34, actually, look at the number of times. I'm not going to read the whole passage but just notice how many times you see this phrase. Verse 34, "*Then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your people...*" Verse 36, "*Then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants.*" Again, down in verse 39, "*Then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive...*" Then, again, as we read all the way down through verse 46 all the way down through verse 50, "*And forgive...*" or 49 actually, "*Then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.*"

Just think through the progression. Solomon has praised God for His grace in dwelling among them. So, God has been good to dwell among them. He's praised God for His faithfulness in doing everything that His mouth has promised and is fulfilling it with His

hands. So, he's praised God for grace and for faithfulness, and so it is as if, in a moment of boldness, he says, "Well, let me just go ahead and say it's not going to go so well for us, and whereas you have been gracious, and you have been faithful, God, you know..." because verse 46 says we all sin. "You know that we're not going to be...we're not going to respond in kind. In fact, where you have been faithful, we will be faithless."

I don't know about you, but that's an encouraging word for me. That God's faithfulness is not dependent on my faithfulness. The faithfulness of God is rooted simply in His character expressed freely in Jesus Christ. So, we read, for example, in 1 John 1:9 that, "*If we confess our sins he is...*" what? "*...faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteous.*" Why does He do that? "Well, because we're such a likable lot of people. We have so much to commend ourselves to God. Why wouldn't God like me?" That's not at all what the text indicates.

Verse 53 is the reason. Look at what Solomon says, "Why should God hear? Why should God forgive?" Over and over God is faithful; they are faithless. God is faithful; they are faithless over and over to the point that they are removed from the Promised Land, but hear in heaven and forgive. Why? "*For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage, as you declared through Moses your servant, when you brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD.*" God would look down from heaven. That's what he says, "And see me not in the light of my sin but in the light of His grace. It is all your grace. All for the mercy of God."

So, what we see on the bookends of this passage, extravagant worship. All the people assembled, all offering sacrifices so much that they could not count what was being offered. It was entirely reasonable. Why? Because God was gracious, and God was faithful, and God had been and would be merciful to them.

## **The Picture of Worship in the Church...**

That's the picture of worship that we see in 1 Kings 8. They pulled out all the stops for a God who pulls out all the stops for us. Now, I want you to take that, and now, let's move into the picture of worship that we see in the church for just a moment. The truth is, if we see that kind of worship in the Old Testament, if we see that kind of extravagant worship in the Old Testament, and they knew but shadows of what we see as flesh and blood, if we see that kind of extravagant worship in the Old Testament, what kind of worship should we see in the New Testament? What kind of worship should we see in the church? What kind of worship should we see in our lives?

### **An extravagant Savior ...**

Remember what the author of Hebrews says. He said that Jesus is the exact imprint of the glory of God. He is the radiance of the glory of God. He's the exact imprint of His nature. In other words, everything that was revealed of God in the Old Testament and what we just saw...the grace of God, the faithfulness of God, the mercy of God...everything that was revealed of God in the Old Testament is embodied in Jesus in the New Testament.

So, if we see grace and we see faithfulness and we see mercy in the Old Testament, we see it supremely in Jesus Christ. We see, for example, that Jesus is the embodiment of God's extravagant grace. That Jesus is the embodiment of God's extravagant grace. John 1:14, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt...*" The word there is "tabernacled." Dwelt among us. Lived among us. The same word would have been used for tabernacle and temple. "*And we*

*have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" In other words, Jesus was the substance of which Solomon's temple was about to shine on.

Here's the beauty of it. The glory of God tabernacling among us, being present among us, is not composed or not fulfilled just in God walking around the Sea of Galilee, but by virtue of His resurrection...Peter says in Acts 2...by virtue of His resurrection from the dead, Jesus has the right and the privilege to pour out His Spirit upon His people such that we now enjoy individually and as a church the very presence of God. It is as if we are little Solomon's temples walking around. The glory of God dwells in us.

Now, if we're casual about that, we don't understand the glory of God. If we just say, "Yeah, Jesus is in me," and you move on, we don't understand what it means for the God of the universe, full of grace and truth, to not kill us but rather to indwell us. It is all grace, extravagant grace in Christ. We also see extravagant faithfulness in Christ. Jesus is the embodiment of God's extravagant faithfulness.

Think through, if you will, the story of God redeeming His people in the garden in Genesis 3:15. In the midst of the curse of Adam and Eve and the serpent, there is this promise that is given. Simply this, it says, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; and he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* So, God does that in Jesus. We see, for example, that God promises to bless the nations through Abraham, through his seed, and He does it in Jesus. We see, for example, that God promises Moses in Deuteronomy 18, He says, *"I will raise up from among your brothers a prophet who will speak the words of God, and you will listen to him."* God has raised up that prophet in Jesus.

God promised David, "You will never lack for a son to sit upon your throne," and God has given us a king in Jesus to sit upon David's throne. He has promised, for example, in the book of Isaiah, "You will have a Messiah, and He will take away the sins from the people." So, when we open up the New Testament, and we open up the gospel of John, we hear John the Baptist saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

God has promised a temple in the Old Testament. He promised Ezekiel a place where reconciliation and redemption could take place, and we find it where? In Jesus. That's why Paul would say all of the promises of God are "Yes" and "Amen" in Him. It's as if all these promises that we find in Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, all the prophets, all these promises are sort of just loose ends all the way out through the Old Testament, and it ends. Then, Jesus comes in the gospel, and He pulls all of them into Himself. So, Paul would say, for example, that Jesus is our wisdom. He is our justification. He is our sanctification. He is our redemption, or when Jesus, who is your life, shall appear, or that all the treasures of wisdom, all the treasures of heaven even are found in Christ.

Everything we have, everything we need is found in a faithful Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the embodiment of the grace of God, of God's extravagant grace. He is the embodiment of God's extravagant faithfulness, and last, He is the embodiment of God's extravagant mercy, the heart of the temple. The heart of the temple was not a building. It was a place where, as we see at the heart of the passage, where God would hear and God would forgive.

So, Paul says, in Romans 5, "We now have peace with God. We are reconciled to God," he says, "Through our Lord, Jesus Christ." Listen to what he says, *"Through him we have obtained access by faith into the grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God that we have now."* Brothers and sisters, God does not regard us any longer as rebels. God regards us as sons and daughters, joint heirs with Jesus. So, now we have

unhindered access. In fact, we are invited to come boldly into the throne of grace. How do we have this? We do not have it by silver or by gold. We have it by shed blood on a cross, that Jesus took our sin. He took our guilt. He bore the wrath of God that was due my sin, and He bore it on the cross so that we now have access unto God. What extravagant grace, faithfulness and mercy we see in Jesus Christ, and if that is the case, and they would worship in that temple in that way where faithfulness, grace and mercy and we see, in the New Testament, a greater display of it on our behalf, how much more should we worship the extravagant Savior that we know as Jesus?

### **Demands an extravagant response.**

Extravagant Savior demands, then, an extravagant response. Extravagant Savior demands an extravagant response, and we see it, I think, outlined...at least typified in Solomon's prayer in verses 54 down through 61. How do we respond to a God like this? How do we...how do you respond to extravagant grace, extravagant faithfulness, extravagant mercy at the cost of the blood of God's own Son? How do we respond? First of all, with heartfelt praise for God's faithfulness. Look at verse 56, "*Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel...*" If they found rest, how much more have we found rest? He says, "*Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant.*" The reality is this: God is worthy of our praise for His faithfulness. God is worthy of all of our praise collectively and as an individual.

I love Mark Dever, a pastor in Washington DC. I listened to him speak a month or two ago, and they were asking, "Mark, how do you continually preach the gospel to yourself? How do you remind yourself? How do you stir up in your own heart's affections toward God, His grace and His mercy?" He said, "Well, one of the simple ways that I do that is the way that I respond to a greeting." He said, "People, obviously, just like we experience, ask me, 'Mark, how are you doing?'" He said, "I make it a habit, as much as I can, as much as I remember, to always respond to that in this way, 'Better than I deserve.'" He said, "I'm not trying to be funny. I'm not trying to be different." He said, "It's just a subtle way for me to remind myself that everything that I have is attributed to the grace and mercy of Christ." So, that then begs the question, are we proclaiming God's faithfulness on a regular basis?

Let me ask you a question: do you regularly rehearse the goodness and mercy and grace of God to your own soul? Do you oftentimes take time, meditate upon God's goodness towards you supremely seen in Christ? We ought to do that, first, in our own soul, and then as that rises up in our hearts, then we proclaim it to the world on a regular basis.

You remember Peter and the disciples in Acts 4? They [the Jewish leaders] said, "Well, you can't speak about this Messiah anymore. It's causing too much trouble." So, they [Peter and John] respond to the leadership, the Jewish leadership there, and they say, "Well, whether it's right for us to speak, whether it's right for us to obey you or God, well, you'll have to judge for yourselves, but as for us, we cannot help but speak of what we have seen and what we have heard." I would ask the same question for us. What has God done for you? Given me a home, given me water, given me food. Praise the Lord for His goodness towards us, but above all, He has saved our souls from an eternal hell. How can we be silent about that?

Part of our worship is what we see here. Solomon blessed the Lord and not a generic, "Oh, bless God. Bless Him for all that He has done supremely in Christ." Heartfelt praise for God's faithfulness. Number two, wholehearted devotion to God's Word. Look at verse 61, "*Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.*"

The reality is this: God is worthy of our obedience. Not partial obedience, not a lot of obedience, our total obedience; every thought, every action, every word, every deed, every day, every hour. How do we respond to a God who has been so good to us? One of the ways that we are taught to respond here is we obey God. So, the question is, "Are we obeying God's Word in every respect?" Are we obeying God's Word in every respect? Verses 57 and 58, listen to what Solomon prays, "*May he not leave us or forsake us, that he may incline our hearts to him...*" Do you hear that? Even our obedience, we need to pray for that. It's not, "Oh, God has saved me. Now, I'll obey Him." It is, "God has saved me. God, would you help me obey you?"

So, we ask the question, "Are we praying for right hearts? Are we praying for right hearts?" Then, it's not just, "Oh, well, I prayed. You know? I just kept doing that." No. Are we pursuing righteous lives? There is the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man side by side.

Finally, continual dependence upon the mercies of God. How do we respond? What does an extravagant response look like? It looks like heartfelt praise to God. It looks like wholehearted devotion to God's Word, and last, it looks like continual dependence upon the mercies of God. Look at Verses 59-60 as we close. He [Solomon] said, "*Let these words of mine, which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the calls of his people Israel...*" You hear that? Pleading for the mercies of God. Why? Verse 60, "*That all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other.*"

The reality is we are continually in need of God's mercy. We are continually in need of God's mercy. The worst response...hear me brothers and sisters...the worst response to God's past mercies is to act as if we don't need God's present mercies. We always need the mercies of God. I was saved, and I still need to be saved. Delivered further and further and further from the power of sin, from the power of idolatry, more conformed into Christ, more compassion, less pride, more love, less self-sufficiency.

The beauty of it is, when God changes us and conforms us more into the image of Christ, that is how all the peoples know that the Lord is God. This church, by God's grace, wants all the nations to know that the Lord is God, and that there is no other.

So, let us then pray to the God of heaven that He would so transform our lives, that people would say, "Surely, God is at work." The question is, "Are we pleading for God's saving work in our lives?" For such a transformation that all the world will know. That's the picture of extravagant worship that we see in the Bible, in this high point in the Old Testament and then in the church.

So, as the worship team comes out, I want to give us an opportunity to respond to God's Word. As they're coming out, I would like to ask you a very simple question. So, if we could just hang on for just a moment, just one question: are you worshipping God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength and all of your mind? John Piper said, "Worship is a way of gladly reflecting back to God the radiance of His worth." He said, "The engagement of the heart in worship is the coming alive to the feeling and emotions and affections of the heart." Listen to this line, "Where feelings for God are dead, worship is dead. Where feelings for God are dead, worship is dead."

So, I would ask you, "What about your affections for God this morning?" Are they being crowded out by other affections? For all that the world would put before us...pride for

arrogance and for money and for fame and for success and for comfort and for stability, all that...the table that the world sets before us, are our affections there, or are they on God?

So, this morning, it's my prayer in my heart, in my life, my family and in this church that we would have affections, true affections for God deeply rooted in God's faithfulness, God's grace toward us, God's mercy, to express supremely in Christ that our affections would run down so deep in that direction that it would then be the natural response that we will give extravagant worship unto God.

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