



Standard School Lessons

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Study Notes

January 1st, 2023: God Promises to Hear and Forgive- II Chronicles 7:12-22

For 350 years, the tabernacle was carried by the nation of Israel through the wilderness while they wandered in rebellion, into battle when they, at last, entered the promised land, and then from territory to territory during the time of the Judges. The tabernacle could be carried with poles by the priests. Its coverings were made of skins, and the treasures all symbolized the coming Savior, Jesus Christ.

The instructions for its construction and use were given directly by God to Moses. When David, the second king of Israel, desired to build a permanent temple for God, he was corrected. He was reminded that God was far too great to be contained in any man-made dwelling. Also, David would not be allowed to build the temple because of the blood that was on his hands. God would allow Solomon, David's son, to build the temple, a meeting place between the priests and God on behalf of his chosen people.

12 And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.

It took Solomon seven years to build the temple. When it was completed, all of Israel gathered together in Jerusalem to celebrate. Countless sacrifices were made in dedication, the priests worked tirelessly to keep up. Each family was given food by the king, and the nation rejoiced. The presence of God filled the temple, and fire from God consumed the sacrifices. Yet, it was in the stillness that God came to Solomon. He asserted that the prayer Solomon had offered on the behalf of his people had been heard. God would be present in the temple and He would accept their sacrifices.

Solomon knew that despite the excitement on the day of dedication, the people would not always have a heart for the temple and the things of God. He asked God to make a covenant with him regarding the temple. He would use the position of the temple as a focus for the people and a place to turn when they had sinned, when they had wandered away, and when they had broken all their promises to God. God respected Solomon's request. He chose to honor the temple which He had allowed Solomon to build, and He would accept the sacrifices made there and hear the prayers of His people offered within its walls.

13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;

14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

When sin enters, consequences inevitably follow. God will bring judgment on those who walk contrary to His word. We can't expect his blessings without respecting his authority.

God promised Moses and then Joshua that the people could expect protection, provision, and the presence of God when they heard and obeyed his words. They were instructed to remember where He had brought them from, to remember how He had miraculously saved them time and time again, and to remember that He was holy and righteous and that He deserved their respect and reverence.

God also promised that if they turned away and worshiped other Gods, He would not help them. Their sin would turn their blessings into curses. They could expect to be defeated, to be oppressed, and suffer at the hands of cruel enemies if they placed their trust in themselves and rebelled against His authority.

So, if God withheld the rain, if He allowed locusts to devour their crops or pestilence (disease) to affect their health, it was in response to Sin. It was God's mercy to draw them back to Himself. It was God's grace that He corrected them and forgave them time and time again. His promise is that if you turn to me, repent of your sin, and seek me, I will be found. The temple represented a touchstone. A place where a person would humble themselves and acknowledge their dependence on God, and He would forgive. Everything in the temple, and the tabernacle before it, represents Christ. Christ is who we turn to when we've strayed far from the word of God. It's through Christ that we return to a right relationship with God the Father.

Terms need to be defined to understand the conditions which are to be met in order to claim these precious promises of God made to King Solomon.

My People: In the context of this passage, God's people are specifically the descendants of Israel. However, the New Testament lets us know that all that receive salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ are inheritors of the promises of God.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Peter 2:9

Called by My Name: The temple did not become a good luck charm. It isn't a wishing stone. It is for those who find their identity in God. No matter who their fathers were, if they were not the people of God, identified with His name, they had no right to this promise.

Humble Themselves: It is not to be presumed that God will obey the commands of those who ask favors of him. That is the way idols were viewed and used. God's people needed to confess their sin, repent, and come humbly to God in order to receive help from Him, because He is a living and sovereign God.

15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.

16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

In what way had God's eyes been shut? God is everywhere, and He knows and sees everything. But, he turns away from those who rebel against Him. He refuses to hear those who walk according to their own will in sin and disobedience. This passage reassures us that if they would turn toward the temple, even when they had done wrong, God would see and hear, or respond to, their cries for help. He would do this not because they were Holy, but because His house was holy.

In the same way, we do not receive salvation because we have earned it. We have a Savior, who is sanctified. Sanctified means set apart for the purposes of God and made Holy. Jesus Christ is the chosen one of God. It is the love and respect God the Father has for God the Son that allows us to receive mercy for His sake.

17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments;

18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel.

Then in his infinite mercy, He spoke specifically to Solomon, offering a relationship with Himself, in the same way He offered it to David, his father. In response to being given the presence of God in the temple, Solomon would necessarily have to trust in the truth of God and to live for God according to His word. He promised to give his descendants a permanent kingdom. This is a prophecy of the Messiah to come. If Solomon would trust God, he would have the privilege of being in the line of Christ.

19 But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them;

20 Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations.

21 And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and unto this house?

22 And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

Just as surely as they could expect blessing to be the natural consequence of obedience to the word of God, they could expect devastation to follow rebellion and disobedience. God cared far too much about them to allow them to continue in their sin without a wake-up call.

The power was never in the temple, the temple was a building and God does not dwell in buildings made with hands. The promise was in the Shekinah Glory of God, or the presence of God that chose to dwell within the temple.

There came a time when the people did turn away to worship idols, and they committed abominations that caused God to bring judgment upon them from their enemies. God sent prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah to warn them, but they didn't hear His word. Many said, "God will never judge Jerusalem, because the temple is here." They put their trust in the building instead of their builder. It was a terrible miscalculation. They went into captivity in Babylon. They suffered terribly and the temple was torn down and burned. The horrors of those events are recorded in the Bible and also by historians, because the consequences were world-altering.

However, God remained faithful to His word. For those who put their trust in Him, even during those unimaginable days, He was present. The Messiah did come through Solomon's line, and Salvation was offered to the whole world.

Thank you for studying with us! God bless you!