

2 Chronicles 6:1-13

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[0 : 00] Amen. If you remember, we actually want to pick it up there at the end of chapter 5 so that we can get it in proper context. Because really, the very first two verses of the 6th chapter of 2 Chronicles is directly connected to what takes place at the end of the 5th chapter.

So I want you to see this evening the dedication of the temple. Now we know that this dedication of the temple is combined with the prayer for the temple. And we're not really focusing on the prayer this evening.

We will reserve that until a latter day. I want you just to focus on the dedication and really what's going on there. Let's pick up in verse 11 of the 5th chapter.

I know we've already preached through that, but it bears repeating. It says,

That's just one run-on sentence there. It's one continuous sentence that really says, Everybody's gathered together. They're praising the Lord.

[1 : 59] They're lifting up their voices in unison. The instruments are playing in unison. They're declaring the worthiness of the Lord God. And then the cloud falls upon the temple.

And the priests couldn't do their job. There's nothing that could be done. For the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. And then we get right to the dedication. Then Solomon said, The Lord has said that he would dwell in the thick cloud.

I have built you a lofty house and a place for your dwelling forever. Then the king faced about and blessed all the assembly of Israel. While all the assembly of Israel was standing.

He said, Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel.

But the Lord said to my father David, Because it was in your heart to build a house for my name, You did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless, you shall not build the house, But your son, who will be born to you, He shall build the house for my name.

[3 : 27] Now the Lord has fulfilled his word which he spoke. For I have risen in the place of my father David, And sit on the throne of Israel as the Lord promised, And have built the house for the name of the Lord, The God of Israel.

There I have set the ark, In which is the covenant of the Lord, Which he made with the sons of Israel. Then he stood before the altar of the Lord, In the presence of all the assembly of Israel, And spread out his hands.

Now Solomon had made a bronze platform, Five cubits long, Five cubits wide, And three cubits high. And he set it in the midst of the court, And he stood on it, Knelt on his knees, In the presence of all the assembly of Israel, And spread out his hands towards heaven.

Now we know what follows is Solomon's prayer, His prayer of dedication, But I want you to see this evening, Just the dedication of the temple. Just four things I want you to see.

Number one, We notice the priority of his presence. The priority of his presence. The fifth chapter reminds us, That though everyone is gathered together, And they desire to come and to praise, And they are singing in unison, The musicians are there, They are all consecrated, And prepared to be of service, They have all made ample preparations in advance, To do their work in a holy manner before the Lord.

[4 : 55] All work is ceased, All praise is stopped, All musical instruments are silenced, When the presence of God manifests itself, With the coming of the cloud.

And Solomon declares, Then Solomon said, The Lord has said that he would dwell in the thick cloud. Now that goes all the way back to the book of Exodus, And go to Exodus 19, Where God declares to Moses, To tell the people to prepare themselves, To consecrate themselves, To set themselves apart, For I would descend upon Mount Sinai in the thick cloud, And I would speak to them, And it is the beginning of the covenant relationship.

It is there when covenant God is entering into a covenant with his people, After they have come out of Egypt, And God had made this declaration, That he would come in a similar manner.

It is in that similar manner that the tabernacle was filled, And now it is in this manner in which the temple is filled. And this filling reminds us, That it is the manifestation of the presence of God.

It is not just the darkness of the cloud, But rather it is the presence of the Lord God among them, Which matters. It is not their effort, It is not their labor, It is not even their preparation, Though those matters are essential.

[6 : 13] It is not the fact that they were singing the right songs, It is not the fact that the musical instruments were being played in the right manner. Really what is priority is that the presence of God is there.

And he says, I have built a lofty house, A place for your dwelling forever. So he says, I've done exactly what you've commanded me to do. We'll get to that in just a moment. But he realizes and recognizes that without the manifested presence of God, That what is before them is in actuality just a grand building of man.

And as grand as it may be, As magnificent and splendid as it is with all of the gold, With all of the ornate carvings and engravings, With all of the bowls and the lavers and the wash pans and the candelabras and the showbread and the table, No longer are we concerned about what's in the house, Rather we're concerned about who's filling the house.

These things all point to the one who is coming. And while they are important, And we know that each and every symbol, And each and every thing represented within the tabernacle and later in the temple, Finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

We can take our time and go through every article, And we can see that each one of them points to Christ. It is the presence of God among them that is priority.

[7 : 42] Because without that presence, This house has no purpose. Without that presence, This house is just a building.

It is a building just like every other nation has. It is a building just like every other people group has. It is a building that is well constructed, sure. But it is the priority of his presence that sets it apart.

And that's why as they dedicate the temple, The very first thing that Solomon acknowledges, Is that God is among them. Today when we gather together as the living temple of the Lord God Almighty, Stone built upon stone, As Peter reminds us, The thing that matters most, Is the presence of God.

Where he declares, Jesus says, We're two or more gathered together, I am there as well. The priority of the temple, Is the presence that inhabits it.

It is not just the construction. Too often I think we get caught up in trying to build it, Rather than focusing on the one who fills it. But we stand amazed here, At the priority of his presence.

[8 : 59] The next thing that we notice, Is the blessing of his people. It says in verse 3, Then the king faced about, And blessed all the assembly of Israel.

While all the assembly of Israel was standing. To bless means to pronounce a blessing over, Or to speak words of divine favor towards.

He is declaring the divine favor that rests upon the people. Now that favor is connected to the presence that is manifesting itself among them.

And he reminds them how blessed they are. Because of the presence of the Lord.

It is to bless not just financially and physically, But to remind them of their blessed condition. That they are a people indeed highly favored and highly blessed.

[10 : 07] Because of the relationship that they enjoy. With the one who is displaying his glory by filling the house which has been built. He reminds them.

He says, Blessed be the Lord, The God of Israel who spoke with his mouth. So he reminds them of the blessing of being a people that the Lord God Almighty.

Declares his word to. He reminds them of the blessing of being the people whom God has chosen and redeemed and called to himself.

He reminds them of the blessing of being the people who are in a covenant relationship. Too often I think that we fail to realize that just the blessed state of existence we have.

Because we enjoy a covenant relationship with the God who is holy, holy, holy.

[11 : 04] He reminds them by using varying names of God that this is Elohim, God creator. This is Adonai, the Lord God Almighty. And this is also Yahweh, the God of covenant relationship.

The manifested manner in which God declared his presence, that is the thick cloud, reminds them, as I've already said, of the event in Exodus 19.

Which was the beginning of the covenant relationship. And then he tells them in verse 11. There I have set the ark, which is the covenant of the Lord, which he made with the sons of Israel.

It is declaring the blessing upon the people of the reality that they live in relationship with this God whose presence stops all work.

He is reminding them of the blessing which they have because they are in a true relationship with the God who heaven cannot hold and the highest heavens cannot contain.

[12 : 09] We see the blessing of his people. It's an astounding blessing. It's an astounding blessing that no other nation enjoys up until this time that the nations are drawn to because the nation of Israel is experiencing it.

But it is the blessing that now we have been grafted into in Jesus Christ. It is the blessing of being able, as we looked at last night, being able to cry out, Abba, Father, to Elohim who spoke it all into existence.

How magnificent it is to be a people of such divine favor. Because the reality is, just as those who were standing before Solomon, so too we, none of us, deserve that favor.

But we are given that favor by the relationship we enjoy through covenant commitment.

It is the blessing of his people. Third, we see the fulfillment of his promise. And we'll be quick tonight, so we'll have some time to pray together in just a moment.

[13 : 30] We see the fulfillment of his promises. Over and over again, we are reminded, in particular in the Old Testament, and it benefits us as we prepare to move into the New Testament, that God is a God of promise keeping.

God keeps his word. Solomon says, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who spoke with his mouth to my father David, and has fulfilled it with his hands.

He reminds us that it is not God who just speaks the word of promise, but it is also God who takes the initiative with his hands, so to say, to fulfill the promise.

So he who declares the word is also he who ensures that the word will be fulfilled. It's telling because in this promise, Solomon makes the emphatic statement that there is no other people whom God has chosen to do this.

Up until this time, God has never chosen a city in which his name may dwell among his people. Yet now, he has chosen Jerusalem. We know he chose it intentionally.

[14 : 40] We know he chose it by causing the angel of the Lord to stand above the threshing floor of Ornan or Arunah, the Jebusite. We know all of that, right? And he says here that God had not chosen a man up until this time when he chose David.

So that ought to tell us something about Saul. For the word of God is not contradictory. David is God's choice of king.

Remember when we were looking at the writings in Samuel that Saul was man's choice. God permitted Saul to be king. But it was David whom God chose to be king.

And David is the one that God chose to bless the nations through. Because again, it is keeping with the word of God.

It goes all the way back to the book of Genesis. And it goes all the way back to the blessing of Israel upon his sons. That it would be Judah who would be a blessing. We understand the realities that God not only declares the word of promise.

[15 : 47] But by his hands he fulfills the promise. And it says again that the Lord keeps his promise. In verse 10, Now the Lord has fulfilled his word which he spoke.

We are reminded of the fulfillment of his promises. Now the temple behind them is the assurance that God keeps his word. Now for those reading this at its first writing.

That is coming out of Babylonian captivity. There are so many promises that extend beyond Babylonian captivity. Go and read the book of Daniel. And you begin to see any number of them. And Daniel's vision is there.

And he's seeing things that are in the future. We read the book of Ezra. Read the book of Nehemiah. We read the prophets that arise at that time. There are promises that God is declaring to his people.

Yet in the midst of life. I'm sure they're looking around thinking we are but a remnant. A small number. Because a multitude of the nation of Israel did not respond to the decree of Cyrus.

[16 : 49] And leave Babylonian captivity. Rather they stayed behind in the comforts of the Persian Empire. And decided that they enjoyed where they were at. Rather than wanting to risk it.

And move to rebuild what was in ruins and destroyed. Yet there are promises attached to those who do come back. Jeremiah declares those promises.

As Jeremiah is present in the midst of the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah is also declaring promises that will happen after the Babylonian captivity.

That God will dwell among his people. That he will give them a new heart. That he will replace their heart of stone. That no man will have to ask his neighbor to declare the word of the Lord to me. For God will put the word of God within their hearts.

These are promises that the people of God in this time are looking back. Wanting to know will God keep his word. What Solomon is declaring is again this reinforcement that God indeed keeps his promises.

[17 : 48] He doesn't just say it and leave it to chance. He declares it and then by his hand he fulfills it. That's comforting because the promises of God are not dependent upon the efforts or the abilities of man.

Solomon says this temple behind me is not here because I committed to build it. It is not even because David made preparations for it.

It's not because Hiram of Tyre gave timber for its construction. He says it's here because God promised it would be. Here is the comfort that we have in the church age that Jesus will build his church.

It's not because of our efforts or our abilities. It does not excuse us from doing the work. Right? We still have responsibilities just as God said he would build the temple.

There were people who still had to do the physical labor. It does not excuse us but the confidence we have in the church does not rest in the abilities of man.

[18 : 56] Rather it rests in the promises of God. Now that's telling because man fails us and man at times causes us to doubt what God has declared.

But what he has declared with his mouth he will by his hand bring about. We see that he is a God who fulfills his promises.

And fourth and finally now we could take enough time to get into the prayer but I didn't want to cut that part short. We are reminded here at the dedication of the temple of the superiority of his position.

We are reminded of the priority of his presence. The blessing of his people. The fulfillment of his promises.

And the superiority of his position. It says then he that's Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all of the assembly of Israel spread out his hands.

[19 : 55] So we get the picture here that Solomon is here. He is before the altar of the Lord. He is standing before all of Israel. Now Solomon had made a bronze platform.

Five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high. So he was raised up among the presence of people. And he set it in the midst of the court and he stood on it.

So here we see that the greatest man among them is standing above them. He is on public display. He is the king over the nation of Israel at the most prosperous time in the nation.

He is before his people. He is the greatest one among them with wisdom. Remember, he is not a novice at this time. While he is still young, he is also in the fourth year of his reign.

Matter of fact, by the time this is done, he is a few years later into his reign. He is in the seventh year of his reign. So his wisdom has already been displayed.

[20 : 59] His might has already been established. He has a firm grip. He is a king of peace. That is, there is no threat from the outside. There is no threat from the inside.

All of that has already been dealt with. And here is the king of the people standing before his people. He is even standing just a little bit above his people.

And we have nothing wrong with that because he is the king. But what we see in this next statement, it says, Very, very seldom will we see kings kneel before others.

And yet here it is, the king of the land publicly kneeling. Now I know Solomon does not end well. We know that.

But here for a moment, we see Solomon publicly kneeling, acknowledging the superiority of the position of the Lord God Almighty over him and everyone else.

[22 : 24] He kneels as he is above the people and he spreads out his hands and surrender and says that greater is he who we stand before than he who stands before you.

What follows is a lengthy prayer. We will take time to read through it again. I know we've already done it when we were looking through the book of 1 Kings, but it is telling again just to see the specific nature of the prayer and how God answers all that in the seventh chapter.

But before we can get to the prayer, we need to understand that the boldness to praise such matters comes from the willingness to publicly declare that the one I'm about to cry out to is so much greater than me.

For it is not how we stand before men, but rather how we kneel before God. And we see here that Solomon, the wisest and richest and greatest of them all, has no reservations kneeling before the one who holds the superior position.

This is how he dedicates the temple. He reminds them that the greatest thing is that God is among them in his presence.

[23 : 54] He reminds them that the blessing that rests upon them is because they are his people. He reminds them that the reason the temple exists is because God keeps his promise.

And then he displays to them that the position the Lord God holds is greater than anyone else among them. We as his temple, we dedicate ourselves and we commit ourselves to him and we want to go afresh each and every day and we say, Lord, here I am.

May I be the temple of the Lord. We need to have this reality that, Lord, the greatest thing that can happen today would be your presence among me. That the greatest blessing that could ever come my way is that I would be called your child.

That the only way these things will come is if you keep your word and you maintain your promises and, Lord, in all of this, greater are you than any of us because it is so easy to be distracted by others until we realize we are a temple dedicated to something so much greater than what is inhabiting and leading this world.