



God's Story, Our Mission Week 6: Worship for Mission Part 1

Facilitator's Guide

In this guide you will find:

- Objectives for study – after watching the video, use this to bridge the video content and the discussion questions
- Discussion questions for each part of this week's study
- Related scripture references for reflection

Part 1:

Objectives: The aim of part 1 is that we come to a fuller understanding of how worship in the temple built by Solomon is central to mission. Yahweh's covenant with Israel, the messiah, and temple worship are all pieces that form a whole for God's story and mission. We cannot have the full biblical picture of mission as God's people if we are not people in worship.

Welcome back for week 6 of God's Story Our Mission. Last week we saw how God established the anointed king, the messiah over Israel first in the person of Saul but then in David. This first seemed ambiguous in God's story and mission since we learned it was the disobedient and stiff necked Israel that first demanded a king so they could be like all the other nations. Even though this seem to be an affront to God's mission to safeguard Israel as a holy covenant people who were utterly unique from the nations around them, ultimately Yahweh made the provision for kingship in Israel and made it part of His plan for the world. In 2nd Samuel 7, Yahweh made a covenant with David that through his kingship and his dynasty God would fulfill his promises to Abraham. The king was to be the leader of the people to lead Israel to victory against their enemies but the King was also to model and exemplify what a covenant relationship with Yahweh looked like. This holy kingship is given its ultimate

expression in Jesus, God's son who is our messiah and who is victorious over sin, death, and the devil and who leads us in the new covenant relationship of his kingdom.

This week, as we move forward in God's story and mission we see how the king of Israel has another important role in how he leads the people and shows a central facet of the our Mission as God's people in how Solomon takes charge to build the temple at Jerusalem. In God's dealing with Solomon, David's son, we can see just how important the worship life of God's people is for God's mission in the world among the nations. That's why for the next two weeks we are going to focus on this theme of worship for mission in God's story. This week we focus on how the temple focuses us on worship for mission. Next week we will look at the book of Psalms as a whole for how we join our voices with voices of God's story in worship and sing our mission.

Returning to David in the Old Testament, we saw in 2nd Samuel 7 that David desired to build for Yahweh a permanent house in Jerusalem. For all of the twists and turns of David's own life where he fell into sins and bad decision he was still the one who put his trust in Yahweh whom he declared to be his very shepherd. In 1st Chronicles 23-24 we see how David made sure that there were priest in service in the tabernacle after the prescriptions of the covenant that God had given through Moses. The Messiah's main responsibility in addition to ensuring military victory for God's people was to make sure that God's people were faithful to their covenant obligations. Worship was central in the covenant relationship. Indeed, that was exactly why Yahweh made his name known to Israel in the exodus by acting as Israel's Go'el—so they would serve God in worship. It was not, however part of Yahweh's plan that David should build a permanent temple for Yahweh. Rather, that was going to be the job of David's son.

*It would seem to all the parties involved that that meant Solomon, David's son by Bathsheba. The story of how Solomon becomes king after his father David is recounted in the opening chapters of 1st Kings. It strikes an ambiguous tone in that it presents a very human and violent picture of how politics worked in the ancient world and perhaps still. Almost like the closing scene to the movie *The Godfather*, we see Solomon taking vengeance on his political enemies and those who proved to be antagonistic to his father David's reign. We even see Solomon who puts to death his older half-brother Adonijah who had asked to marry Abishag the Shunammite. Evidently, Solomon had interpreted this request as his brother's desire to be king. Solomon is obviously very shrewd at the beginning of his reign, though admittedly this is a very different type of wisdom than what he becomes famous for later in the story when God blesses him with true wisdom for kingship. This violent beginning rings bitter when we see that just before this, David had reminded Solomon, "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, that the Lord may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'*

In spite of this ruthless beginning, we see that Solomon takes his anointed role as king very seriously and takes the promise which God made to his father even more seriously. Solomon takes it upon himself that he is the son spoken of in Yahweh's covenant with his Father David, who will build

God's temple. 1st Kings 5-9 centers around Solomon's temple building project and includes all the minute details of the temple's design and construction. In large measure the temple is very similar to the design of the tabernacle which Yahweh had revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It essentially has three designated areas which correspond to the varying degrees of Yahweh's holy presence. The inner most room which is called the holy of holies represents the most holy space of Yahweh's presence where no one except the high priest was permitted to enter, and then only once a year on the day of atonement. In the holy of holies was placed the Ark of the Covenant which connected the worship in the temple to the covenant relationship Yahweh had established through the Exodus. The main priestly activity mentioned through the covenant was that of the sacrificial system. The tabernacle and the temple like it was the place that God's priests and God's people would offer sacrifices, both to be cleansed of their sin and uncleanness, should they have a disease or come in contact with a dead body, etc but also to offer their free will and thanksgiving sacrifices which are offered in faith to maintain close communion with God even if sin hasn't been committed. Israel's worship was all about enjoyed and being refreshed and sanctified by the very holy presence of Yahweh among his people. Without this worship, the lifeline to Israel's identity would have been cut off and would run dry. Without worship, the lifeline of mission is cut off.

Solomon, in his prayer of dedication over the completed temple brings out this missional aspect of worship in the temple for God's people. In 1st Kings 8, Solomon prays, "'O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on 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, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day. Now therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' Now therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father.

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Lord my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive...Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake (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, 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."

Solomon's prayer acknowledges God's mission through his promise to his father David, which as we saw last week involves God's mission to the nations. Solomon also acknowledges that though God cannot be contained by the whole cosmos let alone a human made building, his name will dwell there.

God will be present in the character expressed by his name Yahweh which is as the redeemer of Israel who is a champion for his people Israel and who keeps his covenant with them. In the temple, in worship, Yahweh's name abides as the God of gospel action in the world. Another part of Solomon's pray of dedication is the acknowledgement that worship in the temple provides the time and place to receive forgiveness from Yahweh. When Israel sins, they are to repent and turn to Yahweh in prayer, and after asking for forgiveness they are to find it in their worship. And in this special relationship where Yahweh's people receive forgiveness and have a present God who gives ear to their prayers, even foreigners will be drawn to offer prayers to Yahweh. And what is even more amazing is that Solomon asks God to answer them! He prays that God answers even the foreigners prayer so that all the peoples of the may know who Yahweh is as Israel does!

This should rightfully give us pause so that we can reflect on how our understanding of worship is foundational for mission in the world. We might be tempted to think that mission is all about what we say to others outside of our worship, outside of our time of gathering together to receive God's gifts of grace. Or we might think that mission includes how we behave when we are out in the world, to show others who Yahweh is by our way of life. These elements of mission are all there in the bible's understanding of mission as we have seen in past weeks. But Solomon's prayer, which is accepted by God, shows us how central worship is in our missional living. First, the central activity of worship shows us that as God's people, we aren't better than others even as we are called to be holy and unique according to God's plan. The entire story of God that we have seen so far is filled with the failures of God's people, even more than they successes to live out their vocation for the sake of God's mission. As God's people, we need to be fueled with God's forgiveness if we are to live out any semblance of holiness in the world. In fact, this forgiveness from Yahweh which we receive in worship is the very thing that marks us out as holy and different. In worship, we come before God with empty hands and contrite hearts which God fills and heals and in this encounter the world is to see and know the heart of God. Another important missional aspect to worship which Solomon's prayer highlights is that God's story of mission is always to be saturated by prayer. Worship is a time of praise and prayer to God. Through prayer, God's people call up Him to accomplish in and through us and for us (and the world) what He has promised to do.

In our own day, prayer is typically deemed the antithesis to Christians actually living out their faith by rising to act. The phrase, "thoughts and prayers" is a scandal to those outside of God's people much of the time because it can be heard as an empty platitude. Solomon's temple prayer, however, shows that for God's people to be truly faithful to God's mission, they must be people of fervent and constant prayer. In our vocation of people of worship and prayer, we as God's people teach others how Yahweh is the God who hears us and involves himself in our lives by how he answers us when we call on him. In our worship, we can teach others not only that God hears prayers but we can also teach other what that life of prayer looks like.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does God's messiah take responsibility for the worship of God's people? How is it part of God's plan that worship and kingship go together for God's mission? Think about Yahweh's covenant mission for his people.

2. Solomon constructs the temple in Jerusalem for God's name to dwell so that Yahweh would be present to his people in a very special way. How is encountering God's presence in worship different from how we might recognize God's presence in the world at other times?

3. What would you hope people would see in how God's people gather together in worship? How is what happens in corporate worship part of mission and witness to who God is? How can we continue to better communicate that in our corporate worship?

Part 2

Objectives: Our aim is to see how in spite of Solomon's failure as Old Testament king and the people's abuse of the temple, God does not abandon His plan for the temple. Rather, in Jesus we see the ultimately fulfillment of God's plan and promise for the temple. We are to see the missional aspects of the temple transposed to our worship in Jesus in whom we encounter God with all his gospel fullness!

This is what the temple was supposed to be in Israel. By being the designated place of worship, it promised to be the sign post and life line for Israel's identity and mission by having true access to Yahweh. But it also came with a warning. In 1st Kings Chapter 9, Yahweh says to Solomon in response to his prayer over the temple: "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will become a heap of ruins." As worship is central to the covenant relationship with Yahweh, it comes with responsibility of obeying Yahweh.

Temple worship, Covenant identity, and Messiah all go together for the sake of God's mission for the world. Like in a game of Jenga, taking away one of these pieces likely means that the whole structure, as it were, is likely to topple over. And sure enough, the Old Testament story shows how this is exactly what happens. Solomon, for as fervent and earnest as he is in his faith at the beginning of his reign still can't shake off that very worldly way of doing politics and obtaining power. By the end of his reign, he gains so many wives in different political alliances which really means accommodating for

the idolatrous practices of those nations that eventually he himself is swept away from being faithful to Yahweh and breaks the covenant. This results in the kingdom of Israel which was brought together by David being torn apart by civil war. The aftermath is two kingdoms. On the one hand, there is northern kingdom where the temple at Jerusalem and the dynasty of David's line are rejected and all sort of alternative worship practices and idols flood in cutting the people off from their promise of God's presence. On the other hand, there is the southern kingdom of Judah that keeps the Davidic dynasty and temple worship but is nevertheless plagued by generations of unfaithful kings who are more than happy to bring in false and hypocritical worship and myriads of injustices that break the covenant obligations. The result can only be God's judgment on those who break the covenant.

The temple, instead of being the heart of worship and mission became nothing more than a totem pole, a marker of the people's pride and religious hypocrisy. In the prophets like in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we see Yahweh judging his people for their presumptuous attitudes toward the temple while they abandon all semblance of their faith and faithfulness toward God. In Jeremiah 7, Yahweh says through the prophet, "Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'" The gift of worship in the temple was a gift where God would meet his repentant people to forgive them and maintain their holiness as gift through his presence. If they didn't actually want forgiveness by virtue of the fact that they showed no intention to repent of their injustices and idolatry then God was willing to take away his presence from them for a time. By sending his people into exile, Yahweh demonstrated that he refuses to be trapped by human arrogance and presumption. In Ezekiel 10, the prophet has a vision of God's glorious presence actually departing from the temple, which is how God's people could be taken into exile since his presence had withdrawn from his sinful people. The rest of the Old Testament story tells of the temple, so important to God's story and mission for his people being abandoned by God and destroyed by the Babylonians. Though there is a second temple that is built when God brings his people back to Jerusalem from their 70 years of exile it is obvious to everyone that this new temple is not as glorious as the first. Yet we hear God's promise through the prophet Haggai, "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts."

Coming to the New Testament, the worship of God's people is no less important and the promise of God's temple dwelling returns in full force but perhaps not quite where we expect. Instead of the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem fulfilling the promised role of how God will personally encounter his people with grace and forgiveness we see this promise actually fulfilled in the messiah Jesus who is the word made flesh. John writes in his Gospel prologue, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God...he goes on to say of this word, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." The word that John uses for the word dwelling among us, literally means to tabernacle among us. John is telling us that in Jesus, the incarnate word of God, we have the true temple experience with God. This is confirmed later in John's gospel when in chapter 2, after he overturns the tables in the temple, Jesus says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John makes perfectly clear that Jesus was referring to his own body which was to be crucified and raised from the dead.

This also helps us to appreciate Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan women at the well of Jacob, in John chapter 4. He tells her, in a debate where true worship will take place, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." Because Jesus, full of grace and truth, is the true temple where God himself encounters us, we are not bound to a geographical location. Rather worship occurs in Jesus, who himself is the truth and is the one who gives the Spirit.

In Jesus we see the three major pieces of covenant, true holy kingship, and the fulfillment of the temple all come together. Jesus is the faithful messiah who takes full responsibility for the temple in his reign as God's Son. But he is also the new and greater temple himself where God encounters His people. Jesus is both. He is as the word made flesh is messiah and temple at the same time. As such, in Him, we have the fullness of our worship with God where Solomon's temple prayer finds its ultimate fulfillment. In Jesus our mission and identity is fueled by the grace and forgiveness provided by his sacrificial death. In Jesus our prayers are always heard since Jesus and his very Spirit are our advocates before the Father. If our mission is to truly be characterized by Solomon's prayer in the Old Testament, then we must see our God present for us and the whole world in Jesus. Next time we will explore more this life of worship and prayer through the Old Testament's very prayer book, The Psalms. This book as it shaped the life of God's people in worship and prayer should also shape us for our mission. God bless!

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Looking at Solomon's temple prayer in 1st Kings 8, what elements of worship in the Old Testament temple do you see in Christian worship? What are the differences?**
- 2. How have you seen prayer (individually and corporately) be essential to how we participate in God's mission? Would you consider yourself someone who prays often? How can we continue to add more prayer in our faith community as God's people? What resources do you/we have for becoming more mature as people of prayer?**
- 3. In Romans 12, Saint Paul tells us that because of what God has done in Jesus, we are to present our whole bodies as living sacrifices. This is our spiritual worship. If our whole lives are now dedicated to God in worship because of Jesus, what makes gathering together for worship so important for God's people? How do we understand our mission both in Individual worship but also in corporate worship?**
- 4. The temple is where God's name dwells and is accessible to the world. In the incarnation of Jesus and by his death and resurrection we have the ultimate gospel encounter with God who dwells with us as a human being. This means**

we don't have to be tied to a geographical location for worship but it does mean we have to be tied to Jesus' presence. What "incarnational" elements of Jesus' presence do we have in worship where we experience God's temple dwelling in Jesus? What "Spiritual" (Holy Spirit) elements of Jesus presence do we have in worship? Where do you see that worship we God in Spirit and in truth?

For Next Time:

For next time, skim through as much of the book of psalms as you have time for. Consider the questions, who is speaking in the Psalms? How do the psalms invite me to join my heart and voice to the prayers of God's people?