Worshipping in God’s Temple
2 Chronicles 7:1-9
SS Lesson for 03/18/2018

Devotional Scripture: Ps 138:1-8

OUTLINE

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Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary
Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

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From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews the significance of God’s response to Solomon’s prayer at the dedication and Worshipping in God’s Temple. The study’s aim is to see that God may also respond to our worship, although in a smaller and less dramatic manner when we obey Him in worship. The study’s application is to worship God, expecting Him to respond in a way that honors Him and blesses His people.

Key Verse: 2 Chron 7:3

When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying: “For He is good, For His mercy endures forever.”

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

7:1-3. As though to dramatize His answer to Solomon’s prayer visually, the LORD sent down fire to consume the sacrifices that had been prepared (cf. Lev. 9:24; 1 Chron. 21:26), and the cloud of His glory... filled the temple once again (cf. 2 Chron. 5:13-14). So overwhelmed were the people by God’s theophanic presence that they fell to their faces and acclaimed His covenant faithfulness (love, hesed, “loyal love”; cf. 5:13, 6:14; 7:6; 20:21).

7:4-7. Then the assembled worshipers offered more sacrifices—with Solomon alone offering 22,000... cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats. In praise the priests and Levites played their musical instruments (v. 6). So numerous were the sacrifices that Solomon instructed that they be made in a specially constructed and dedicated area in the courtyard before the temple.

7:8-10. For seven days the festivities went on with the people of the LORD gathered from Lebo Hamath (Israel’s northern boundary toward the Euphrates River) to the Wadi of Egypt (modern Wadi el-Arish, south of Gaza). Finally, on the eighth day, which followed the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:36), the people assembled once more just before returning to their homes. In all, the temple celebration lasted 15 days, for having begun in the seventh month (2 Chron. 5:3) and probably on the 15th day (cf. Lev. 23:39), the Feast of Tabernacles extended through the 22nd day. The festival mentioned in 2 Chronicles 7:9b is certainly the Tabernacles feast, so the dedication of the altar (v. 9a), which also lasted seven days, preceded the Tabernacles festival and began on the eighth day of that month.

7:11-12. Included in every covenant text in the ancient Near East as well as in many of those in the Old Testament was a section containing blessings and curses. The blessings would become effective if the subservient party would stay loyal to the great king while the curses would be expected to fall on the disobedient (cf. Deut. 27-28). In line with God’s covenant with David and Solomon such a section now follows. The LORD appeared to Solomon and assured him that his work on the temple and its dedication pleased Him (2 Chron. 7:11-12). (Interestingly, chap. 7 has only a passing reference to Solomon’s building...
of the royal palace, no doubt because of the chronicler’s planned emphasis on the temple. In 1 Kings 7:1-12 details are given on Solomon’s palace construction.)

7:13-22. God then encouraged Solomon by the promise that if His judgment (by drought, locusts, or a plague) should fall on the nation for their sin, they need only turn to the Lord in earnest humility and repentance and they would find forgiveness and restoration (vv. 13-15). This promise, in answer to Solomon’s prayer (6:26-31), was given because God’s presence among His people Israel is eternal, focused particularly on the temple (7:16). The covenant theme comes through clearly in the Lord’s declaration that if Solomon would obey Him (v. 17) he could be assured of God’s reciprocal blessing in the perpetuation of his dynastic rule (v. 18; cf. 1 Chron. 17:11-14). Conversely, if Solomon and the nation should fall away from the Lord and serve other gods they would be exiled and their magnificent temple destroyed (2 Chron. 7:19-20). This does not suggest that the Davidic Covenant is conditional from God’s standpoint. He had said it would be forever (2 Sam. 7:13, 15-16). But Solomon’s (or any king’s) enjoyment of it would depend on his obedience to God. Later Solomon did worship other gods (1 Kings 11:4-8), as did many of his successors, so the nation was exiled (2 Chron. 6:36; 36:17-18, 20) to Babylon and the temple destroyed (36:19). Everyone who would witness the desolation of the land and the temple would know that it was a mark of God’s judgment on His people because of their sin (7:21-22).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Last week, we looked at part of Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple. We read in 2 Chronicles 7:1 that when he finished praying, fire came down from heaven, consuming the sacrifices on the altar, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Verse 2 tells us that the priests could not even enter the structure because of the glory of God. Imagine that happening in your church! The glory of God that was manifested here probably involved a supernatural light of intense brilliance and power. It would have been nearly (if not totally) impossible to look at. The New Testament reminds us that God dwells in light that "no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16). The Hebrew word for "glory" in our text, however, relates to weight or heaviness. So there may have been a sense of incredible weight or presence that the priests simply could not stand up under. When we truly experience God's glory, we will be flattened with awe (yet made whole rather than harmed). The multitude of ordinary Israelites who were assembled outside reacted to this event with completely appropriate behavior. They bowed down and "worshipped, and praised the Lord." The full verse says that they actually put their faces to the ground as they bowed down. They were not following a prescribed ritual in doing this. It was a spontaneous response to the manifestation of God's glory before them. Worship does not require a specific posture, but bowing down or falling flat on one's face is a natural expression of what needs to be in the worshipper's heart. Worship is essentially a recognition of and response to who God is, especially regarding His incomparable greatness, holiness, and power. Worship acknowledges that God matters more than anything else; it is all (rightly) about Him. The opposite of worship, perhaps, is not so much atheism or blasphemy as an attitude that treats God as inconsequential. It is seen in busy lives that try to fit God into a small slot in their schedules. God, however, cannot be contained. It is we who must fit into His schedule and His agenda. Closely tied to worship is praise. In fact, they are like twins. The assembled Israelites praised God, focusing on two of His important attributes: "He is good" and "his mercy endureth forever." For modern readers, it seems almost axiomatic that God should be called good. But this was by no means a given among the peoples of ancient times. Pagan gods were often conceived of as anything but good; they were feared for their arbitrary cruelty and ill will toward humans. Israel learned early on, however, that goodness is one of the Lord's defining characteristics. They also learned of His enduring mercy, both by precept and through experiencing it over and over again. The word the Israelites used is a rich one. It is often translated "lovingkindness" and points to the intimate, loving, and faithful relationship the Lord sought with His people. They often strayed from that relationship, but He never did.
Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

A prominent reminder to God’s people throughout Scripture is to be thankful. The Psalms include many such exhortations (Psalm 95:2; 100:4; 116:17), as does the New Testament (Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 2:7). As Paul told the Thessalonians, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). In today’s lesson we see the important role that giving thanks played in celebrating the dedication of Solomon’s temple. The nation of Israel observed not just a day of thanksgiving (as is commonly done in countries such as the United States and Canada) but a celebration that spanned two weeks (2 Chronicles 7:8-10). The conclusion to Solomon’s eloquent prayer, which immediately precedes today’s lesson text (2 Chronicles 6:41-42), is of such power that its wording is also closely reflected in Psalm 132:8-10.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Worshipping By Praising God (2 Chron 7:1-3)

1 When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.
2 And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.
3 When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever."

Praising God for His glory (1-2)

Praising God’s glory because God is exalted over all (Ps 99:2)
2 Great is the Lord in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations.

Praising God’s glory because God rules over all (Isa 40:22-23)
22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. 23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

Praising God’s glory because it cannot be contained (1 King 8:27)
27 "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!

Praising God’s glory because God is majestic (Ps 8:1)
8 O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Praising God’s glory because it should be revered (Ps 102:15)
15 The nations will fear the name of the Lord, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory.

Praising God’s glory that was there before the world began (John 17:5)
5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Praising God for His goodness (3)

Praising God’s goodness because He is upright (Psalms 25:8)
8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.
Praising God’s goodness because He is a refuge (Nahum 1:7)
   7 The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him,

Praising God’s goodness because only God is good (Matthew 19:17)
   17 "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."

Praising God’s goodness because of His compassion (Ps 145:9)
   9 The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

Praising God’s goodness because our hope is in Him (Lam 3:25)
   25 The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;

Praising God’s goodness because He stores up goodness (Ps 31:19)
   19 How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.

Praising God for His mercy (3)

Praising God’s mercy because He doesn’t always put an end to the wicked (Neh 9:29-31)
   29 "You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. 30 For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples. 31 But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

Praising God’s mercy because it sometimes causes Him to relent (Ps 106:45)
   45 for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.

Praising God’s mercy because it empowers perseverance (James 5:11)
   11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Praising God’s mercy because it makes Christians a people of God (1 Peter 2:10)
   10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Praising God’s mercy because He hears our prayers (Ps 28:6)
   6 Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy.

Praising God’s mercy because it provides rest (1 Peter 2:10)
   10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
Worshipping With Offerings and Music (2 Chron 7:4-7)

4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord.
5 King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.
6 And the priests attended to their services; the Levites also with instruments of the music of the Lord, which King David had made to praise the Lord, saying, "For His mercy endures forever," whenever David offered praise by their ministry. The priests sounded trumpets opposite them, while all Israel stood.
7 Furthermore Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the Lord; for there he offered burnt offerings and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat.

Worship with sacrificial offerings (4-5)

An offering beyond ability (2 Cor 8:3)

3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,

An offering that is all one has (Mark 12:43-44)

43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on."

An offering that is given, even though it is the last (1 Kings 17:8-13)

8 Then the word of the Lord came to him: 9 "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food." 10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" 11 As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." 12 "As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread — only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it — and die." 13 Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son.

An offering of a life of service that is almost to death (Phil 2:29-30)

29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

An offering of whole self to God (Rom 12:1)

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

An offering of praise (Heb 13:15)

15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that confess his name.

Worship with music (6)

Worship with musical thanksgiving (Ps 95:2)

2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

Worship with singing (1 Chron 16:9-10)

9 Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. 10 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
Worship with instruments (2 Chron 5:13)

13 The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud.

Worship abundantly (7)

Abundant work of the Lord (1 Cor 15:58)

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Abundant love (Phil 1:9)

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

Abundant thanksgiving (Col 2:7)

7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Abundant pleasing to God (1 Thess 4:1)

4 Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

Abundant faith (2 Thess 1:3)

3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

Worshipping By Assembling (2 Chron 7:8-9)

8 At that time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt.
9 And on the eighth day they held a sacred assembly, for they observed the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.

Assembling at a set time (8)

Realize that there is a time for everything (Eccl 3:1)

3 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

Realize God only does things at the proper time (Eccl 8:6)

6 For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him.

Realize that God acts when it is His time of favor (Isa 49:8)

8 This is what the Lord says: "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances,

Realize that at the right time God will provide (Rom 5:6)

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Realize that we are to do all things at the appointed time (1 Cor 4:5)

5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.
Realize that our timing is not like God's (2 Peter 3:8)

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

Assembly that is sacred (9)

Assemblies should be sacred if they are done as to God (Rom 14:6)

6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Assemblies should be sacred because they are to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31)

31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Assemblies that are done with a pure heart should be sacred (Titus 1:15)

15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

Assemblies should be sacred because the Holy Spirit is indwelling believers attending (1 Cor 3:16-17)

16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from L. M. Grant

GOD'S GLORIOUS ANSWER (vv.1-3)

God wonderfully demonstrated His approval of the temple and of Solomon's prayer by sending fire from heaven to consume the burnt offering and the sacrifices (spoken of in ch.5:6), and filled the temple with His glory (vv.1-2). When the children of Israel saw this, they were prostrated in lowly worship, praising the Lord, and particularly emphasising "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever" (v.3). This was a wonderful beginning of a new era in Israel's history, though it is sorrowful that the freshness of joy in the Lord very soon wore off, so that both Solomon and Israel departed far from their early condition.

THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE (vv.4-11)

The Lord had accepted the offerings without number (ch.5:6;7:1) by sending fire to consume them, and now in order to dedicate the temple Solomon and the people offered 22,000 bulls and 20,000 sheep. The priests would have abundant work to do with these offerings, and the Levites accompanied this by playing musical instruments that David had introduced when offering praise to the Lord (v.6).

Since the copper altar was not large enough to accommodate all the offerings, Solomon consecrated the middle of the court in front of the temple, to offer the burnt offerings (v.7).

Keeping the feast for a full week, they ended this with a special assembly on the eighth day before Solomon sent the people to their homes on the 23rd day of the seventh month (v.16). This feast therefore (the Feast of Tabernacles) pictured the coming glory of the millennial blessing of Israel, though the joy at that time, great as it was, did not last long compared to the joy of the Lord's reign in the millennium.

Though they were long in building, both the temple and the house of Solomon were eventually finished (v.11). The work was not in vain, as is sometimes the case with those who have not before counted the cost, but what God builds is always perfectly finished. The temple pictures the Father's house in glory, while Solomon's house is a picture of the Church in her condition and circumstances on earth, where God's order is to be maintained among His saints.
THE LORD’S SECOND APPEARANCE TO SOLOMON (vv.12-22)

The Lord had first appeared to Solomon (ch.1:7) to offer him what he might ask. Now He appears to assure him that He has heard his prayer and to encourage him to put God first in the rule of his kingdom. This was the same night after the dedication, and the Lord sought to impress on Solomon the importance of single hearted obedience to His Word. He had chosen the temple for Himself as a house of sacrifice and He would have special consideration for those who looked toward the temple.

The Lord then spoke of specifically answering Solomon’s prayer in regard to His governmental chastening of Israel by His withholding rain or sending locusts or pestilence. If Israel would humble themselves and pray, seeking God's face, turning from the evil of their ways, then God would indeed hear from heaven, forgive them and heal their land (vv.13-14).

God affirms again that He had both chosen and sanctified the temple, that is, He had set it apart for Himself, that His name might be there forever, His eyes and His heart there perpetually (v.16). Yet after this the temple was destroyed and there has been no temple in Jerusalem for centuries! Why is this? Because Israel was guilty of themselves desecrating the temple. Though it was rebuilt in the days of Ezra, then destroyed again and rebuilt by Herod, the Lord Jesus declared before His crucifixion, when His disciples showed him the buildings of the temple, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:1-2). This was fulfilled before long, and Israel has been without any temple for nearly 2000 years!

But God anticipated all this even in 2 Chronicles 7:1-22, for he speaks conditionally to Solomon in verse 17 and the verses following. "As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, and do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom, as I covenanted with David. But if Solomon turned away, forsaking the commandments of the Lord and serving and worshipping other gods, he could expect God's serious judgment in uprooting Israel from the land, casting the temple out of His sight, making it a proverb and byword among all the nations.

Was such a warning necessary for Solomon? Absolutely so! For he very soon fell into the trap of marrying many women of foreign nations and adopting the false worship of their various idols (1 Kings 11:1-8). Eventually the judgment of God fell on Israel for this: their land became desolate, their temple was destroyed and the people taken captive by the Babylonians. Then indeed everyone who observed the ruin of the land and the temple were astonished and questioned why the Lord had done this after expressing His approval of the house and greatly blessing Israel (v.21).

Solomon was warned then that the answer would be, "Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this calamity upon them" (v.22). Yet Second Chronicles does not speak of Solomon’s shameful failure in turning from the Lord as does 1 Kings, for Chronicles emphasises the grace of God rather than His government as in the books of Kings.

(Adapted from URL:https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/2-chronicles-7.html)
Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Many will recognize the words Semper Fidelis as the motto of the United States Marine Corps. The phrase means “always faithful” and highlights the unwavering devotion to duty and country that those in the Marines have exhibited consistently throughout their history. In thinking about the theme of today’s lesson, perhaps the phrase Semper Gratus, meaning “always grateful,” is appropriate. This is a motto for Christians to live by in recognition of God’s love. Of that love we can say, as the worshippers at the temple dedication proclaimed, it “endures forever.” It doesn’t hurt to note again Paul’s exhortation to “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). We should keep in mind that those words came from someone whose surroundings were often less than comfortable or carefree. Earlier in that same epistle, Paul referred to the suffering and shameful treatment that he and his companions had experienced while preaching the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:1, 2). He even writes of Christians being “destined” for such treatment (3:3). Yet Paul did not allow such situations to shake his spirit or cloud his view of the Lord’s love for him. His motto could have been Semper Gratus. May it be ours as well.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. True worship ushers the glory of the Lord into the congregation (2 Chron. 7:1)
2. When God is moving, we should be still, in reverence of Him (vss. 2-3)
3. Good spiritual leaders set an example of worship for the congregation (vss. 4-5)
4. God deserves praise for His everlasting mercy (vs. 6)
5. We should reverence our church building as a place set aside for worship (vs. 7)
6. It is good to set aside time to celebrate our blessings from God (vss. 8-9)