

Seeking His Face

2 Chronicles 7:12-22
SS Lesson for 03/25/2018

Devotional Scripture: Ps 27:1-14

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Key Verse: 2 Chron 7:14

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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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson leads to the understanding of God's statement about **Seeking His Face**. The **study's aim** is to seek God's face as we should, so we will be blessed. The **study's application** is to make it a daily practice to seek God's face.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: 2 Chron 7:14

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land

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 Solomon's prayer in dedicating the newly built temple to the Lord, a prayer that contained many requests for forgiveness and restoration from anticipated future lapses into sin. This week we look at God's reply to Solomon, an answer that came to him during the night. Solomon had been concerned that his people would repeatedly stray from obedience to the Lord and sought assurance that they would not be cast aside or destroyed. God's reply in 2 Chronicles 7:14 contains an assurance of restoration and the way to obtain that restoration. It is both a promise and an invitation. The first element of reassurance is that no matter what lapses or transgressions may lie in Israel's future, God still considers them "my people," the people who "are called by my name." Israel indeed committed the most atrocious breaches of faithfulness over their history, but God never abandoned them in favor of a different people. He would severely discipline them, but He never wrote them off. They remained His even when they walked far from Him. When people realize they have fallen out of divine fellowship, they often think in terms of elaborate works or rituals they might perform to regain it. Israel was no exception, often assuming that an impressive display of sacrifices was the key to winning God's favor (cf. Mic. 6:6-7). In direct contrast, God looked for a genuine change of heart. This change of heart was seen in four basic actions. Far from carrying out extravagant rituals, the people were simply to "humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways." Humility is the first step in returning to God's favor, for without it there can be no true recognition of having done wrong. Prayer and seeking God's face describe turning to Him and reestablishing the broken relationship. Turning from wickedness is the essential mark of true repentance and the desire to please Him again. What God wanted from His wayward people was far simpler than an extensive program of sacrifice and ritual but at the same time much more difficult. Israel often preferred the complicated sacrificial route, for the simple reason that they did not want to change their hearts. True heart change is inconvenient, disruptive, and hard. In fact, it is impossible without God's work within, and we often would rather substitute an external action that leaves our inward captivity with sin alone. Yet God will accept nothing less than a transformed heart and a desire to be genuinely pleasing to Him. When we recognize that this is truly what we need, He pours out His blessing. He hears our prayers, forgives our sin, and brings healing into our lives. For Israel, this meant healing the land so that it bore fruit in rich harvests. For us, the end of spiritual famine and drought may be more in line with what we can expect. Whatever form the restoration takes, it starts with a recognition of where we have gone off the rails and a sincere desire to turn back.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Today's lesson follows with a solemn warning from the Lord to Solomon that disobedience would result in what we might call a reverse makeover to that structure. The "before and after" contrast would be amazing in a bewildering way. How could something so unthinkable happen? A structure dedicated to God meant nothing if the people themselves were not dedicated to being God's people. What was true in Solomon's time is no less true today.

Between the final verse of last week's lesson treatment and the first verse of this week's is the single verse 2 Chronicles 7:11: "Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace." Yes, Solomon's accomplishment was indeed impressive (see the temple dimensions in chapter 3 and the temple furnishings in chapter 4). Further, the people whom he ruled were "joyful and glad in heart for the good things the Lord had

done for David and Solomon and for his people Israel” (7:10). Perhaps the king was tempted to rest on his laurels at that point, satisfied with his record. But God desired far more from Solomon and from the Israelites than the mere construction of a building. God wanted what he has always wanted from his people, be they kings or commoners: obedience. Not even a temple as magnificent as the one Solomon had just completed could substitute for that.

As today’s text opens, the year would have been sometime after 950 BC. Parallel in content to today’s lesson text is 1 Kings 9:1-9.

Major Theme Analysis

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

Blessing of Seeking God's Face (2 Chron 7:12-18)

12 Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.

13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people,

14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

15 Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.

16 For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

17 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,

18 then I will establish the throne of your kingdom, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man as ruler in Israel.'

Blessing of being in God's presence (12)

In God's presence to learn (Deut 4:9-11)

9 Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. 10 Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children." 11 You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness.

In God's presence to hear His word (Deut 31:10-12)

10 Then Moses commanded them: "At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Feast of Tabernacles, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. 12 Assemble the people — men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns — so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law.

In God's presence to agree with His word (Neh 8:2-6)

2 So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. 3 He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. 4 Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiyah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. 5 Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. 6 Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

In God's presence to bind together in agreement and oath (Neh 10:28-29)

28 "The rest of the people — priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand — 29 all these now join their brothers the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our Lord.

In God's presence for consecration (Joel 2:15-16)

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. 16 Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.

Blessing of being God's people (13)

God's people because once we were not one of God's people (1 Pet 2:10)

10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

God's people because of God's love (Hos 2:23)

23 I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

God's people because of God's call (Rom 9:24-26)

24 even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? 25 As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," 26 and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

God's people because of God revealing Himself to us (Isa 65:1)

65 "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.'

God's people because we are part of His flock and we listen to His voice (John 10:16)

16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Blessing of forgiveness (14)

A forgiveness that results in God not remembering our sins (Heb 8:12)

12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

A forgiveness that sanctifies (Acts 26:17-18)

17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

A forgiveness that rescues us from a dominion of darkness (Col 1:13-14)

13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

A forgiveness through Jesus' blood (Matt 26:28)

28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

A forgiveness in accordance with God's grace (Eph 1:7)

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

Blessing of answered prayer (15)

Answered prayer through asking in the Name of Jesus (John 16:22-24)

22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. 23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

Answered prayer for wisdom (James 1:5)

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Answered prayer through being righteous (James 5:16-18)

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Answered prayer through obedience (1 John 3:21-22)

21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

Answered prayer through asking according to God's will (1 John 5:13-15)

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him.

Blessing of God's kingdom (16-18)

A Kingdom that can never be destroyed (Dan 2:44)

44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

A Kingdom that will be cleansed by God only (Matt 13:24-30)

24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. 27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 28 "'An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 29 "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

A Kingdom that is an inheritance (Col 1:11-14)

11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

A Kingdom that motivates us to be clear minded and self controlled (1 Peter 4:7)

7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

A Kingdom that only the spiritual will inherit (1 Cor 15:44-50)

44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. 50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Consequences of Not Seeking God's Face (2 Chron 7:19-22)

19 "But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them,

20 then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

21 And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and this house?'

22 Then they will answer, '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 on them.' "

Consequence of idolatry (19)

An idolatry that God forbids (Deut 5:7-9)

7 "You shall have no other gods before me. 8 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 9 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

An idolatry that exchanges God's truth for a lie (Rom 1:25)

25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.

An idolatry that must be avoided (1 Cor 10:14)

14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

An idolatry that participates with demons (1 Cor 10:18-22)

18 Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

An idolatry that leads to death (Deut 30:17-20)

17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, 18 I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. 19 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live 20 and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Consequence of loss of resources (20)

Loss because of the rich already receiving their reward (Luke 6:24-25)

24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

Loss because richness will always fade away (James 1:11)

11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

Loss because ungodly gained resources rots and corrodes (James 5:1-3)

1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

Loss because of storing treasures on earth versus being rich toward God (Luke 12:16-21)

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

Loss because no one knows the day or hour this life will end (Matt 25:24-29)

24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' 26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 28 "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

Consequence of loss of fellowship (21-22)

Loss of fellowship because of walking in darkness (1 John 1:6)

6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

Loss of fellowship because the wicked cannot dwell with God (Ps 5:4)

4 You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell.

Loss of fellowship because there is no commonality between God and evil (2 Cor 6:15-16)

15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Loss of fellowship because of the love of evilness and the fear of it being exposed (John 3:19-20)

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

Loss of fellowship because to have fellowship, I must walk as Jesus walks (1 John 2:6)

6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

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.studydrive.org/commentaries/lmg/2-chronicles-7.html>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The words of 2 Chronicles 7:14 include a very special promise from God to Solomon following the completion and dedication of the temple in Jerusalem. The verse reads, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Over the years many Christians, particularly in the United States, have quoted this verse in appealing for nationwide repentance and revival. Critics claim that such a view is taking the verse out of its original context since the term "my people" refers to Old Testament Israel, with which God had a special covenant relationship. No nation today, the critics claim, has the right to quote and apply this verse. Some say that it is a bit arrogant for any nation to claim to be "God's people." While it is true that the words of this verse are addressed specifically to Old Testament Israel, does that mean it's wrong to apply the principle and the promise of the verse to any other nation in history? One of the foundational teachings of Scripture is that God is willing to forgive any individual or nation turning to him in true repentance (compare Luke 24:47; Revelation 21:24; etc.). One of the lessons Jeremiah learned from his visit to the potter's house was that God blesses or disciplines a nation or kingdom (implying any nation or kingdom) because of the choices its people make (Jeremiah 18:1-10). Jonah's experience in Nineveh revealed that non-Israelites would be shown mercy if they demonstrated genuine repentance—and they did. Rather than focus too closely on

trying to identify “my people,” it is probably preferable to focus on bringing as many individuals as possible to the place where they can address the Lord as “my God.” That place is the forgiveness available only in Jesus.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. We should pray that God dwells in our congregation (II Chron. 7:12)
2. God's response to sin and disobedience is inevitable destruction (vs. 13)
3. God responds to earnest prayer and repentance with forgiveness and healing (vs. 14)
4. God will abide in people who are dedicated to Him (vs. 15)
5. God's people are a source of refuge and peace (vs. 16)
6. We bring blessings or destruction upon ourselves, based on whether we obey God or not (vss. 17-22)