“If My People...”

2 Chronicles 7:12-22

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Summary Text: 2 Chronicles 7:12-22

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

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

14) If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.
15) Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction:

Conditions and consequences are something most contracts hold. On the one part, the conditions state what must be done in order for that participant to reap the benefits of whatever the contract states. At the same time, for the one who chooses to step outside of the confines of the contract, there will be consequences to face. It’s all part of the package deal.

Being in a covenant relationship with God holds stipulations as well. For the one who partners with God and walks the road of obedience, that one would experience the blessings laid out for His people. But, for those who choose another path; who choose to go their own way or the way imposed on them through the forces and false ways of this world, that one would relegate themselves to receive cursings and be taken out of the realm of the benefits that said covenant stipulated.

God has always had a blessing attached to obedience. In Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and in Leviticus 26:1-13 there are whole lists devoted to telling of the blessings that come to the obedient. At the same time, both books also carry lists of curses for disobedience (see Leviticus 26:14-39 and Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Full compliance was necessary for not
only a healthy spiritual walk between them and God, but it was also a requirement to receive His blessings.

In answer to Solomon’s prayer, which was covered in previous lessons, God responds. When He responds, He covers what exactly it means to be in a relationship with Him and His expectations for His people. He also covers what will happen with those expectations aren’t meant.

Most of what God covers in His response to Solomon revolves around a statement with a the two-lettered word “If” at its core. “If” poses a powerful question for most. But, “if” is also used as a powerful statement. This lesson gets to the center of “if” in relation to God answering the prayer of King Solomon.

**Lesson Summary:**

As we have already studied the dedication of the temple and the prayer of this king, now we are closing out this section revolving around this time period and this king with a look at how God answered his prayer.

After the grand celebration studied in last week’s lesson, the king sent everyone to their homes (2 Chronicles 7:10) and finished building everything that was in his heart or according to his desire, including the palace (see 1 Kings 9:1 and 2 Chronicles 7:11).
Then we are told some time after that, “The LORD appeared to Solomon by night.” Solomon had the pleasure of an earlier visitation or appearance of God. In 1 Kings 3:5, we are told that the “LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night.” It was during this time when God said to Solomon, “Ask what I shall give thee,” and Solomon’s prayer was for wisdom; for “an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad...” (1 Kings 3:9; compare 2 Chronicles 1:7-13).

After everything that has transpired, God chooses again to come to where His servant, the king, is by night. This time, He was not coming to ask what Solomon may want from Him, but God was coming to tell Solomon what He expected from not only the people but from the king as well.

First, God told him, “I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.” When Solomon prayed, it did not fall on deaf ears. It was heard. How awesome is that? God’s ears were, in fact, open and are always open to the plea and the cries of His servants. God, who is the Creator of the ears of man, allows His own ears to pay careful attention to the earnest one who is seeking Him.

And while Solomon prayed concerning a lot of things, one of the things he specifically prayed for was this “house,” this temple that was dedicated to God. As noted in previous
lessons, Solomon prayed, “Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee: That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place. Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling place, even from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive,” (2 Chronicles 6:19-21). In that, he prayed that God’s holy attention would be drawn to this special place as a place of worship; as a place where His people will earnestly seek His face in this place. “God, keep Your eyes open toward us as we come before You here.”

If anything, God’s people should always want His eyes opened to where they are. Especially when they come to the place where His name is represented to be.

To that, God says that He has, “chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.” God is accepting of this place for He has “chosen” it to be so. Despite how human history has it written, this house was a place ordained as His temple, ordained as a place of worship because He made it so.
So, not only was Solomon’s prayer heard, but everything that was done thus far is accepted by God. But, as Solomon is soon to find out, there are going to be conditions that must be upheld by God’s people for this to continue as is. If those conditions aren’t met, then the blessings Solomon prayed for, the attention he so desires to focused on this place and these people could be revoked.

Therefore, God offers him a look at what could happen in their future regarding sin and what can happen if the people humble themselves, repent, and turn to Him. He uses the words “If I...” three times in verse 13 to present possible scenarios that could be orchestrated by God. The usage of the words “If I” not only tells us the authority of the One who is able to do this and control weather, insects, and disease at His will, but it also leaves no doubt who is responsible for these things occurring when they do come to pass as a result of the people’s sins.

Being the day and the culture, any one of these incidences would have been devastating. As much as we like to attribute the need to not to worry about these things in our time due to modern day advancements, if God chose at any time, during any era, to allow an outbreak of any of these things to occur: “no rain, locusts, pestilence” it would still be devastating without His divine intervention. It would be of His choosing to start or stop any of these from happening. As the Author of all
life and creation, everything happens or moves at His timing and according to His will.

Solomon recognized that when he prayed (read 2 Chronicles 6:26-28 for these specific items of prayer), saying, “Whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows his own burden and his own grief, and spreads out his hands to this temple: then hear from heaven Your dwelling place...” (2 Chronicles 6:29-30, NKJV), and God acknowledged the realness of that bold truth here when He responded to his prayer.

And God let him know, that if the response of the people was right; if they recognized their sin and come before Him in the right way, then He would respond favorably toward them.

He started His response with the phrase, “If my people...” God was in a covenant relationship with His “people.” They are a chosen people called by His “name” (compare Deuteronomy 28:10). They were selected by God, prophesied and came to pass through the patriarchs, to be representatives of a people who were to show the world what being a relationship with God looks like.

They were His covenant people. God has and has had a special relationship with them. He said, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth . . .” (Amos 3:2a). This speaks volumes of the faithfulness of God and of the covenant He entered into
and allowed Himself to be bound by because of the love for His people. They could truly say, “Out of all the people in the world, He chose me.”

Being His special people didn’t stop them from sinning against He whom they were to be committed to. They often fell into the temptation of following idols and ways of those not connected to God in such a special way. But, as God stated, if these people of His realize their mistakes and come to Him in the proper way, seek forgiveness and restored fellowship, He will heal and forgive.

Specifically, God said, if they “humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven.” True repentance, for not only God’s people but for all people, requires the presence of all these attributes. First, there must be humility. Sin is humbling. Sin makes you realize just how far from the grace and glory of God it can drag you. Sin is deadly (for the wages of sin is death) and without a true and humble spirit that is willingly submitting itself to the acknowledgement of the sin of oneself in comparison to the holiness of God, that repentance can’t be true.

Humbled, one goes to the only One who remedies the sin-sick state. They are instructed to “Pray, and seek my face.” Sin is not something any human can take of by his/herself. It must be
through divine intervention which can only come by seeking God. Their response must be to sincerely want Him and the true restoration that only God can provide. “Seek” speaks of diligent activity. God wants diligent hearts that truly are after Him from the inside out; that wants His presence; that want an active relationship with Him. Pray, and seek Him for it!

Then, they must “turn from their wicked ways.” True repentance equals a total about-face in the behaviors and actions that took one away from the true path of the Lord in the first place.

It is so easy to make the appearance of remorse and sorrow show outwardly without any real change inwardly taking place. God says this will not do. There are enough actors in the world. He wants true people that are sold out for Him. He wants people who will leave the way of the world to follow the course He has laid out. He wants people who will “turn from their wicked ways” and don themselves in His righteousness. He wants people’s hearts that are pricked (compare Acts 2:37) when truth stands before them. He wants people to have real and genuine change of hearts when the call to repentance goes forth.

When they do that, God said, “Mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.” When people turn to God, it draws them nearer into
relationship with Him. As they turn to Him, He turns to them and He hears their “prayer.”

“For now,” He says, “Have I chosen and sanctified this house that my name may be there for ever.” Again, God is stating that He is the one that “chose” this special place to bear His name. And as such, He has “sanctified this house” or hallowed it for this divine purpose of being a place where His people can come and seek for Him; being a place of worship.

Of this place God said, “Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.” God’s heart would ever be tied to this place. In the future, there will be a time when God’s glory would leave the temple (Ezekiel 10-11) due to the people’s sin, but that doesn’t mean these people and this place weren’t in His heart.

As for Solomon himself, “And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel.” This was something we discussed in great detail in previous lessons concerning the Davidic Covenant. The idea behind this reiteration of thought was for Solomon to align his heart with God the way David did. David, despite his wrong
choices at times, was still considered man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22) because of his humility and true spirit of repentance before God. Solomon was urged to follow the same path of heart before God.

But, if Solomon or the people chose to walk opposite of God’s ordained ways and “turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments... serve other gods, and worship them; Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which have given them; and this house... will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations” (compare Jeremiah 24:9-10). Their future would indicate this is exactly what happened. There we will see the case when the people would sin, yet believed nothing could happen to them because of the temple in their midst. They began to put more trust in the physical temple instead of the God who allowed His name to dwell in the temple (read Jeremiah 7:4-11).

Their sin would be the cause of the people going into captivity and being exiled to other nations, and God allowed it to be so. Their sin would be the cause of the temple being put into ruins (2 Kings 25:8-9), and God allowed it to be so. Their sin would be the cause of this house becoming an “astonishment to every one that passeth by it,” and God allowed it to be so.

God’s covenants come with the good and the bad. If His ways are followed, good will be reaped. If not, and they break the
commandments He ordained for His people, disaster is on the horizon (as their future would dictate and has been proven).

And when people wonder why God allowed this to happen; why He allowed it to be so, the answer was simple for Him to answer: "Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt; and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them." Their wrong actions would bring about devastating consequences that God would not overlook. All sin must be dealt with. A choice in disobedience DOES matter to God and disobedience brings about consequences.

God still loves His people and He is still wonderful toward them. But, He is also just, righteous, and holy and will follow through with judgment if need be when they step out of the confines of their contract covenant relationship and go after other gods and other ways. The Bible tells us, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,” (Hebrews 12:6; see also Proverbs 3:11, 12). Discipline grabs hold of the unruly side of man and ventures to steer him/her back on the right path.

That’s the reason “he brought all this evil upon them.” As His chosen people, they were disciplined for their disobedience.

I don’t know if this was the answer to prayer that King Solomon was looking for, but this was the answer that God gave. God
will always be faithful to what He has promised to do, but when His people aren’t, He will take the necessary measures to correct their errant behavior.

**Conclusion:**

There is the promise from our lesson coming out of 2 Chronicles 7:14 which declares, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” God wants to spiritually heal people from their sin sick ways. God wants to restore. But, it all starts with, “If my people…”

May we all be a people that will seek Him in the right way for it.