

## **Promise and Place (1 Kings 5:1-5; 8:1-13)**

The Israelites "arrived" when God dwelt among them in the temple. It was a long journey to a promise fulfilled. When and how do we "arrive"? Is it through our own work, peace and prosperity, or with God?

[Status Quo] We have a rugged self-sufficiency that masks a lack of confidence and trust in God. We have a vision of scarcity that says we never have enough, contributing to our "doing for self" because of our lack of certainty and assurance.

- Culturally, we see this expressed by the "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mentality, and the criticism of those who rely on help from others.
- Spiritually, we express this in a number of ways.
  - We pray, but we do not really believe, so we hold back in prayer, hedging our prayers with the request that it be done in "God's will," so that if what we prayed does not come to be, we can rest assured we are still within God's will; or we do not even ask for what we desire, what our hearts yearn for, because we do not believe God will give to us...reconciled relationships; healed family members; growing and vibrant churches.
  - We "worship," but we go through the motions and "acts" rather than give ourselves to God...because if we did, we might not like where God takes us, how God shapes up, how he transforms us.
  - We proclaim "faith," but we go it by works...measuring spiritual growth and vitality, individually and congregationally, by effort given by others, and not by the invisible, transformative work of God.
- In all these things we set ourselves for failure, to do it ourselves, because our trust and confidence in God is lacking. Because we don't have confidence and trust in God, we go it alone...with all the religious entrapments but none of the religious fervor or zeal. But spiritual life, as found in God, is not about us...and it is not about what we do for God...it is about what God does for us!

[Turn] Israel survived, and thrived, when they learned this lesson. They thrived not by their own effort but through God's faithfulness to his own promise, as he carried this promise through Abraham, to David, and ultimately to Solomon. This promise was completely fulfilled when God dwelt among them in the temple that Solomon built. But it was the promise and presence of God in the place of the temple that mattered...what God did for his own people.

Likewise, in the church, we survive and thrive only when we rely on God's promise to us, that we are reconciled to him through his Son, by his death and resurrection and ascension. When we seek to go it alone, to do it our way, we fail, but when we trust God and his promise, the gospel, we find our way forward.

[Bible] We see this idea of promise and fulfillment play out in several ways in our scripture for this morning. It is through this theme of promise and fulfillment that we gain the confidence to trust completely in God.

- [1] Solomon built the temple for God. Of course, this is how it appeared to others. But this was really the long story of God's fulfillment of his promise, given to Abraham, carried through the wilderness on the back of Moses' leadership, into the land with Joshua, anticipated with David, and finally fulfilled with Solomon, as God came to dwell among his people as they were finally at rest from their enemies.
- [2] The promise took time to be fulfilled, but in its fulfillment we see parallels of continuity that show God's working to bring about fulfillment: Just as Moses began the march towards the promised land, so David initiated the building of a temple for the Lord. Yet, just as Moses was not himself able to enter the land, so neither was David able to be the one to build the temple. As Joshua succeeded Moses, so Solomon succeeded David, and as Joshua was told to be strong and courageous as he marched into the land, so Solomon was told to be strong and courageous as he led the people forward. The promise of land was fulfilled with Joshua, and the promise of presence and place (blessing) was fulfilled with Solomon.
- [3] In his dwelling in the Temple, God showed by his own presence that his promise was fulfilled--they were free, all enemies were set to rest, and God dwelt among his people.
- [4] And so we see this promise carry through to the new covenant--God's promise of presence and place. But where is it that God resides?
  - In John 2:19-21, Jesus describes his own body as the new temple;
  - In Acts 2:38-39, Peter reveals the Spirit as the promise that believers were awaiting, and that Spirit comes to them in the gospel, through Jesus Christ.
  - And through that Spirit, the church, the body of Christ, is held together and built together...and the Spirit serves as the guarantee of God's promise that we will be redeemed!

God's promise is that he will be with his people; that he dwell among them; that we are his possession; that he loves us so much that he sent his Son to die for us. The long story of his promise fulfilled gives us confidence, in him and in Christ, to live the life of faith he calls us to live. It is not about what we do for God, but what God does for us. Let us live into this life, growing in confidence and trust, letting God shape and transform us as we live for him, becoming ever-increasing sacrifices through our daily offering of ourselves in service to him.