

Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

1–2 Kings | Responding to the Goodness of God

North Center | November 21, 2021

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!

For His mercy endures forever.¹

~ Psalm 107:1

Every year in this country, on the 4th Thursday of November, we celebrate the national holiday of Thanksgiving. Liberia also celebrates Thanksgiving, but it's on the 1st Thursday of November. As many of you know (*from all the times you have heard the story from Pastor Stan*), in America, Thanksgiving has its roots in the Pilgrims & Puritans who emigrated from England in the early 1600's. It was a celebration of God's protection & provision in their lives. There were numerous thanksgiving services in our country over the next century, until President George Washington proclaimed the first nationwide thanksgiving celebration in American on November 26, 1789 as "*a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favours of Almighty God.*"²

As we look at the story of God's people in 1–2 Kings this morning, we come across a scene in 1 Kings 8 that has a striking resemblance to the way many Christians might celebrate Thanksgiving this coming Thursday.

King Solomon, the son of King David & Bathsheba, has just finished building the Temple of the Lord, and it is breathtaking in its beauty. After the construction was completed, the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant into the inner sanctuary, and when they came out, the glory of Lord filled the Temple like a cloud.

In many ways, this moment was the culmination of a journey that began in Egypt...

And he said: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
who spoke with His mouth to my father David, and with His hand has fulfilled it, saying,
"Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt,
I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house,
that My name might be there;
but I chose David to be over My people Israel.
Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple
for the name of the Lord God of Israel."
~ 1 Kings 8:15–18

Q. Do you remember *why* God rescued His people from Egypt?

A. Ultimately, it was so that His Name might be known throughout the universe.

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:1–2).

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving>

But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up,
that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.³
~ **Exodus 9:16**

487 years after they were rescued from Egypt, Solomon finished building the Temple as a place where the Name of the Lord to dwell.⁴ In many ways, this was like **the final page** of the greatest story the world had ever heard up to that point.

- God's people went from being slaves and nomads to establishing the most stunning kingdom on the planet.
- People from all over the world were traveling to Jerusalem just to see Solomon and his kingdom.⁵
- And now, the glory of the Lord that led them out of Egypt and through the wilderness has filled the Temple in Jerusalem, and there was **a sense of completion** – the final step of a long, hard, painful, beautiful journey.

In fact, when you look carefully at the construction of the Temple, one of the things you notice is all the striking similarities to **the Garden of Eden**.⁶

- Two massive pillars that are decorated to resemble two trees (**7:20–22**)
- There are rows of lampstands that are also decorated to resemble trees in the Temple (**7:49**) – which would have given you the sense that you were walking through a forest.
- There were carvings of animals and flowers and trees and fruit.
- There were carvings of cherubim (**7:29**). The first time we see cherubim in the Bible, they are standing at the east of the garden of Eden, guarding the way to the tree of life.⁷

All of this suggests that Solomon sees this building, not just as a culmination of their journey from Egypt, but as a restoration of what was lost in the Garden of Eden!

This is a massive moment in Israel's history.

In that moment, Solomon responded in a manner that is very similar to how many Christians celebrate Thanksgiving.

- He talks about how significant this moment is (**8:14–21**).
- He leads Israel in a prayer (**8:22–53**).
- He leads Israel in blessing God for His goodness towards them (**8:54–56**).
- He prays that God would give them hearts to respond to His goodness with obedience so “that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God [and that] there is no other” (**8:57–61**).
- And then all of Israel held a feast *for 7 days & then another 7 days* (**8:62–65**).
- And when it was all over, the Bible says that the people went back to the dwelling places “joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the Lord had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people” (**8:66**).

³ See also Exodus 34:5.

⁴ 1 Kings 6:1, 38.

⁵ 1 Kings 4:34; 10:4–9, 23–24, 27.

⁶ There are also parallels to the construction of the Temple and the creation of the world.

⁷ Genesis 3:24.

Though heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain God (8:27), nevertheless, God chose to dwell with His people in this amazing way by filling the Temple with this awesome display of His presence! God's people had many reasons to be thankful that day. And I love way that Solomon leads the people in blessing God. *It's the passage that David read earlier this morning.*

⁵⁴ And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the Lord,
that he arose from before the altar of the Lord,
from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.
⁵⁵ Then he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying:
⁵⁶ "Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel,
according to all that He promised.
There has not failed one word of all His good promise,
which He promised through His servant Moses.
~ 1 Kings 8:54-56

God has made many glorious promises to His people, and Solomon reminds the people that "***not one word has failed.***" Not one word! God had been faithful to His people & to His promises every step of the way. And we've seen that as we have soared over the story at 30,000 feet.

One of the ways to look at **the big picture** of 1-2 Kings is (1) to highlight the goodness of God toward His people & then (2) to look at how His people respond, and then finally (3) to consider the result of their response.

Goodness:

- He redeems David's sin with Bathsheba by setting their son Solomon up as the King of Israel after David died (1-2).
- He blesses Israel with the wisest king who would ever sit on a throne (3).
- He gives Solomon all the resources needed to build the Temple and to lead the nation in peace and prosperity (4-10).

Response:

But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh:
women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—
² from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel,
"You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you.
Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods."
Solomon clung to these in love.
³ And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines;
and his wives turned away his heart.
⁴ For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods;
and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David.
⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians,
and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.
⁶ Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord,
and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David.
~ 1 Kings 11:1-6

At the end of Solomon's life, he ends up looking more like Pharaoh than he does his father David.

- Not only is he sitting on his throne over the strongest & wealthiest kingdom in the world.
- He uses slave labor to build his empire,⁸ and he worshipped all the idols of the world.⁹

The very last act that we read of Solomon's life is him trying to kill the man who God had appointed to be the next king of Israel.¹⁰ *Who does that remind you of?*¹¹

If we were to go back to **Deuteronomy 17:14–20** and look at the commands that God had giving to Israel's kings, we would see that Solomon is breaking every single one of them.

- Don't multiply horses (**17:16**)
 - Solomon has 40,000 stalls of horses (**1 Kings 4:26**)
- Don't get your horses from Egypt (**17:16**)
 - Solomon is importing his horses from Egypt (**10:28**)
- Don't multiply wives (**17:17**)
 - Solomon has 700 wives & 300 concubines (**11:3**)
- Don't greatly multiply silver & gold for yourself (**17:17**)
 - Solomon's kingdom is literally covered in gold (**10**), and silver was as common in Jerusalem as stones (**10:21, 27**).

God had blessed Solomon in ways that are hard for us to comprehend, and how did Solomon respond? He wanted more. And not only did he want more and more, but he spent his life accumulating more of the things to which God had explicitly said "no".

God had poured out His blessings into Solomon's life, and it wasn't enough.

Illustration:

This past week, my beautiful wife made an observation that Solomon and I have similar personalities. And I was like, "Why, because I'm wise?" 😊 And she was like, "Yeah, well... you also have other personality traits that you share in common."

I took a personality test last week called the enneagram, and my results said that I have the core personality traits of a number 7, which is called the Enthusiast. They have a number of personality traits that I think are good:

- Enthusiastic
- People enjoy being around them
- Love life
- Colorful imagination

According to Liz, Solomon and I have these in common.

⁸ 1 Kings 9:15.

⁹ 1 Kings 11:5–8.

¹⁰ 1 Kings 11:40.

¹¹ That was also the legacy of King Saul.

The enneagram also helps you to see the areas of sin that your personality trait might struggle with, and the biggest struggle for most 7's is "**gluttony**" – this desire for more.

If you walk into my office (which is always open on Sundays), you will immediately think to yourself, "**This is the office of a 7.**"

Which means I know what it's like to respond to God's goodness with an unsatisfied heart that says, "*Thank You, but can I have more.*"

Result:

⁹ So the Lord became angry with Solomon,
because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,
¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods;
but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded.
¹¹ Therefore the Lord said to Solomon,
“Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes,
which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you
and give it to your servant.
~ 1 Kings 11:9–11

God promises to tear the kingdom away from Solomon, and that becomes the storyline of the rest of the book.

- Solomon's son (**Rehoboam**) becomes king, but right out of the gate it becomes clear that he is going to be even worse to the people (especially to the laborers) than Solomon was,¹² and so Solomon's servant (**Jeroboam**) revolts against the king,¹³ and the kingdom splits in two rival kingdoms.¹⁴
 - The 10 northern tribes follow Jeroboam, and they set up their kingdom in Samaria in the land of Israel.
 - The 2 southern tribes follow Rehoboam, and they continue to operate out of Jerusalem in the land of Judah.
 - And it's here in Judah that the line of David is going to continue.

The rest of **1–2 Kings** is primarily a history of the kings that reigned in these two kingdoms, and the story is absolutely devastating.

We read about **20 different kings** who reigned in the northern kingdom (Israel), and **all** of them were evil.

- Jeroboam is the first king of the northern tribes, and since this northern kingdom no longer has access to the Temple, the very first thing that Jeroboam does is try to create a replacement for the Temple. *So what does he do?*

¹² 1 Kings 12:1–11.

¹³ 1 Kings 12:12–24.

¹⁴ 1 Kings 12–16.

²⁸ Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people,
“It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.
Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!”
²⁹ And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.
~ 1 Kings 12:28–29

Where have we seen this before?!?!¹⁵ He makes two golden calves and then places them at each end of the nation so that their idolatry would be as convenient as possible.

We know a thing or two about “convenient idolatry” in our world today. I think there are many, many, many believers today who are going to find out that they spent the majority of their lives carrying their idol around in their pocket (**cell phone**).

- Is gold evil? *No*. Are cows evil? *No*. Is a golden cow evil? *I don't think so*.¹⁶ Is it evil to exalt golden cows as the object of your worship? Yes. It's idolatry.
- Are cell phones evil? *I don't think so*. Is it evil when your cell phone brings you more happiness, takes more of your time, consumes more of our thoughts, and influences more of your emotions than God? *Yes*. That's called idolatry.
 - Gold is a gift; just be careful you don't turn it into an idol.
 - Cell phones are a gift; just be careful you don't turn it into an idol.

Jeroboam's reign went from bad to worse, and the Bible says that he did “*more evil than all who were before*” him (14:9).

- And every other king in Israel (the north) ends up having the same biography.
 - They are living in the promised land, surrounded by the goodness of God, and they reject Him. Every single king in Israel rejects God.
 - As a result, God raises up the Assyrian Empire to destroy the northern kingdom – forever.
 - **2 Kings 17** tells the end of their story. “They left all the commandments of the Lord their God” (17:16), and so finally “removed them from His sight” (17:18) – for good (17:23). The Assyrians invade, the cities fall, the people are exiled and scattered – and their place in history of God's story is done.

The southern kingdom of **Judah** isn't much better. The only real difference in their story is that God promises to preserve a remnant because of the covenant He made with David.¹⁷ Their story is also full of idolatrous kings, and so they also experience the destruction of their cities and the exile of their people – but (unlike the northern kingdom) their story doesn't end in exile.

¹⁵ Exodus 32.

¹⁶ See **1 Kings 12:30**, “This thing *became* a sin...”

¹⁷ They were sinners, but their story was safe within the covenant that God made to David. The same is true for us! We are wretched sinners all, but our story is safe within the everlasting covenant that we have with God in Christ.

We read about 20 different kings who reigned in the southern kingdom, and **most** of them were evil.

Rehoboam was their first king, and this is the summary of his life:

**²² Now Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done.
~ 1 Kings 14:22**

And it only went downhill from there. And their rejection eventually leads to the demise of Jerusalem and the exile of God's people into Babylon (**2 Kings 24–25**).

**For because of the anger of the Lord this happened in Jerusalem and Judah,
that He finally cast them out from His presence.
~ 2 Kings 24:20**

That's the big picture, but what you see as you look closer is that even in the midst of their self-destruction, God is constantly showing Himself to be good.¹⁸

- We see Him sending prophets (like Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah) to warn the people.
- We see Him preserving a remnant in Judah.
- We see Him caring for the widow.¹⁹
- We see Him raising dead children back to life.²⁰
- We see Him showing His awesome power by sending fire from heaven to consume the drenched sacrifice on Mount Carmel.²¹
- We see Him answering prayer for rain.²²
- We see Him healing a foreign king of leprosy.²³
- We see Him protect His people from foreign enemies when they come to Him in humility and repentance.²⁴
- We see Him bring reform in Judah through the recovery of His Word.²⁵
- We see Him performing miracle after miracle...
- And at the very end of the story, the author fast-forwards 37 years to a scene in Babylon where the king of Judah is released from prison, given new clothes, and invited to sit at the king's table for the rest of his life (**25:27–30**). Which means we see God giving hope in the midst of total self-destruction.

¹⁸ One of my favorite stories in the entire OT takes place in **2 Kings** where God opens the eyes of Elisha's servant so that he can see the supernatural protection of God (**6:8–17**).

¹⁹ 1 Kings 17:8–16; 2 Kings 4:1–7.

²⁰ 1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:8–37.

²¹ 1 Kings 18:20–40.

²² 1 Kings 18:41–45; cf. James 5:17.

²³ 2 Kings 5:1–15.

²⁴ 2 Kings 18–19.

²⁵ 2 Kings 22:3–23:25

Not only does the story of **1–2 Kings** help us understand the split, the decline, the fall, and the destruction of the two kingdoms in Israel and Judah, but it gives us **a graphic picture** of (1) the goodness of God toward a people who constantly reject Him, and of (2) how God is calling us to respond.

The goodness of God that we see in **1–2 Kings** is just as true for us today. In fact, we have infinitely more reason to be thankful than Solomon (with all his wealth & all his wisdom) could have even imagined.

- The presence of God that dwelled within **the Temple** now dwells inside of **us**.²⁶
- The God who rescued His people from **slavery** has rescued us from **sin**.
- The God who prepared a place for them in **Jerusalem** has prepared a place for us in **Heaven**.
- The divine presence that descended to them in a **cloud** descended to us in **Christ**.
- The God who **passed over their sins** through the slaughter of bulls and goats and sheep and doves has **completely covered** our sins with the blood of His Son.
- While the presence of God eventually left the Temple because of the people's rebellion,²⁷ His indwelling presence will never leave us.
- They heard from God through judges, prophets, and priests...while we hold the very words of God in our hands.

When we finally get to the New Testament book of Hebrews, the message of that book is simply to say that what we have in Christ is **infinitely** better than anything Solomon and his people ever experienced.

- We have a *better* covenant, a *better* High Priest, a *better* sacrifice, *better* promises.
- Therefore, we have *better* reasons to be thankful.

And God is calling us to respond to His goodness in the same way that He called His people in Israel and Judah to respond: with thankful hearts and obedient lives.

⁵⁷ May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.

May He not leave us nor forsake us,

⁵⁸ that He may incline our hearts to Himself,
to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments,
which He commanded our fathers.

...

⁶¹ Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God,
to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day.”

~ 1 Kings 8:57–61

We have 10,000 reasons to be thankful, not just this coming Thursday, but every day of our lives because “*God is good all the time, and all the time, God is good.*”

²⁶ Haggai 2:9.

²⁷ Ezekiel 10:18.

The question for us is: how will we respond to the goodness of God?

- Will we trust Him?
- Will we draw close to Him?
- Will we trade the fleeting pleasures of this world for the everlasting happiness of knowing Christ?
- Will we listen to His Word and obey what He says because we know that He is good and that not one word of all His good promises have ever failed?

Oh God make it so.