

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

## A Midterm Report I Kings 9:1-28

**Intro:** In ch8, Solomon dedicated the temple to God before all of assembled Israel. By all recorded accounts, it was a blow out celebration. But, surprisingly, the author of I Kings apparently thought it was unnecessary to record what I would consider to be the best part of the entire ceremony. II Chron 7:1 tells us that when Solomon had concluded his prayer of dedication, “fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.” This was witnessed by everyone in attendance and, quite naturally, it compelled them all to fall prostrate to the ground and offer heart-felt worship and praise to Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel.

Now, while worship and praise may be a logical response to such an occurrence of divine intervention, this was not the primary purpose for sending the fire and the glory. No, the overwhelming presence of God’s glory in the temple and the reverence-inducing fire from heaven that consumed the sacrifices were positive signs; concrete assurances that Solomon’s prayer of dedication had not only been heard by Yahweh, but had been accepted by Him as well. This was the immediate evidence that God was pleased with what Solomon had accomplished to date. The divine task he had been born to do, the task he had been chosen for and called to was now completed and approved.

But, there would not always be the same splendor of glory filling up the temple precincts and fire would not always fall from heaven to consume every sacrifice that was brought there. So, God will again appear to Solomon to speak to him His Word of promise, assurance and warning. So, while the occurrences of divine intervention may be thrilling and/or a little alarming; while they may drive us to offer honest worship and praise, these events are not permanent. On the other hand, the Word of the Lord endures forever (I Peter 1:25).

**1-9 – Vs1** gives us the time frame of this event but you have to piece it all together. Solomon was about 4 yrs into his reign when he began to build the temple. It took 7 years to complete it then it took an additional 13 years to

build the palace and all the other administrative structures that we saw at the beginning of [ch7](#). Add that all up and this event in our text would be around 24 years into Solomon's reign. The temple and palace work in Jerusalem were finished. Solomon now needs to learn how to deal with life in the aftermath of completing his greatest accomplishment.

Solomon has for 20+ years focused all his efforts and activities, directed his full attention and disciplined his lifestyle to the accomplishment of this singular goal and it has been completed. "Now what do I do?" This is a dangerous time for anyone, but especially for a person with the intellectual acumen and drive of Solomon. This is the hour when the accomplishment of work means the relaxation of effort. This is always a perilous time and the greater the work done, the graver the peril. A life that's been busy with activity, when that activity ends, demands some new interest to focus on and it will find it, be it high or low, noble or ignoble. The mind and body must be kept busy.

I've seen parents with children who are faithful to attend church, constantly exposing the family to the things of God and the activities of church only to turn around, after the children are grown, and find other secular things to occupy their time and their lives. I've seen ministers work and struggle for years to build a up a viable church body only to, when they have achieved their goal, turn it over to others and move on to a quieter life. I realize that people do get older and can't always maintain the same frenetic pace of life or ministry but the calling of God on ones life doesn't expire just because we may be out of date or out of gas. We need to realize that the best reward for a job well done is just more work. When our secular careers are over and we've successfully worked ourselves out of the job of being parents; God still has much for us to do and we need to continue to actively pursue His calling on our lives.

This is the position Solomon is now in and it is at this critical juncture in his life the Yahweh appears to him once again. This is also in important event because this is not something that happened every other Tuesday. Thus, this appearance of Yahweh to Solomon is just as important, just as crucial as His appearance in [ch3](#). God meets with Solomon because He has something to say and Solomon really needs to hear it. The contents of Yahweh's message can be presented in 3 parts: privilege ([3](#)), assurance ([4-5](#)) and warning ([6-9](#)).

In vs3, God informs Solomon of the divine privilege he, and all of Israel, enjoys before Him and because of Him. This privilege is summarized in 2 ways when God says, 1) “I have heard...” and 2) “I have consecrated...” Solomon’s great prayer in ch8 would have meant nothing unless had God heard and accepted it. Of course, God gave an immediate answer of approval on the day of the dedication (glory cloud, fire from heaven) but that was years before. Now He is affirming it to Solomon once again, face to face. He assures the king that He has both heard his prayer and would answer it. His eyes would be on the house that Solomon had built and dedicated and His ears would be attentive to the prayers of His people.

Not only that, but Yahweh also authorized the temple as a means of procuring grace; where Israel will have access to His sovereign and caring presence. Building the temple was Solomon’s work, done in the power and through the inspiration of the Lord. The consecration of the temple was God’s work. Solomon could build a building but only God could hallow it. The king and the people could dedicate this temple to God but only He could sanctify it and make it His own. God’s name was on the temple, His eyes were watching, His ears listening. This was the house of the Lord

This aptly describes the Christian experience. Man builds, God hallows; we serve, God sanctifies. This cooperation between God and His people permeates all areas of our life. We perform the outward, the mechanical; God performs the inward and the spiritual. We do whatever we’re called to do; as we are enabled by the Holy Spirit. God does what only He can do, through the working of the Holy Spirit. We must be careful to do our part with humble reverence and godly fear, realizing that God works in realms we cannot touch, with issues we cannot reach, before our meager efforts will ever bear fruit.

In 4-5, Yahweh assures Solomon that he will enjoy Davidic covenant blessing as long as he lives a Davidic-like life. This divine assurance is conditional, as it should be. If Solomon walked before god in obedience and faithfulness, then he could expect blessing on his reign and the reign of his descendents and the Davidic dynasty would endure forever. God wasn’t demanding perfect obedience from Solomon – David certainly didn’t walk perfectly before the Lord. God wanted Solomon to be a man like his father, a man after God’s own heart, a man of integrity. This expectation was not

out of reach for a man like Solomon. The question wasn't "could he do it" but "would he do it".

V6-9 make up the lion's share of the conversation and it constitutes an ominous warning: if Solomon and/or his successors prove to be faithless, the people will lose their place in the land and this glorious temple will become exhibit A of the disaster. God has answered Solomon's prayer from ch8 but it's not an unqualified promise to bless the temple in any circumstance. God blessed the temple and filled it with the glory of His presence but He will cast it out of His sight if the kings of Israel forsake following the Lord. With such a glorious temple, Israel would be tempted to forsake the God of the temple and make an idol of the temple of God. God is putting them on notice right here that He could never bless that or any other theological error.

So, Yahweh's second meeting with Solomon is a bit sobering. The majority of it is a warning. After all the time, effort and money Solomon has spent erecting the temple, God wants to impress upon him the high cost of apostasy. Unfaithfulness will bring the loss of turf, temple and throne. The 1<sup>st</sup> involves loss of the land, it would be an eclipse of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 15). The 2<sup>nd</sup> involves the loss of the temple, the visible means of acquiring grace. The 3<sup>rd</sup> is implied and involves the loss of the dynasty, an eclipse of the Davidic covenant (II Sam 7). Only a fool would flirt with faithlessness. A positive promise followed by a negative: God promised to correct a disobedient Israel.

It's often said that you don't always know what you have until you lose it. But Solomon knew what he had, because God graciously told him what the price-tag of infidelity would be. This is nothing but the kindness and grace of God. He spells it all out, He clearly warns us so we will understand the urgent need for faithfulness. And know this, God hasn't changed! God didn't just do this for a typically rebellious and disobedient Israel. He has done it for the church as well. There's an entire NT book in which God calculates for us, over and over again, the high cost of apostasy. He starts in Heb 2:1-3 and continues throughout the epistle (3:12-13, 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:25-29). These verses also seem pretty ominous and rightly so, they're intended to scare the devil out of us and if they do, it'll all be to the praise of His grace and the safety of His people.

One last point: the Living Bible has a vivid translation of **v7**. It says, “Israel will become a joke to the nations and an example and proverb of sudden destruction.” Now, your regular Israelite on the street would be properly incensed at even the suggestion of this but, what Israel failed to consider (for the entirety of their history) is that under the Old Covenant, Yahweh had promised to exalt Himself among the nations *one way or another*. If Israel obeyed, He would bless them so much that other nations couldn’t help but recognize the hand of God upon their nation. On the other hand, if Israel disobeyed, He would chastise them so severely that the nations would be astonished at the severity of His work among His disobedient people and they would know that the Lord had brought this calamity upon them.

The first 9 verses of **ch9** make up a coherent piece of text that clearly and succinctly lays out Solomon’s urgent need for faithfulness. But, the rest of **ch9** is a mixed bag of news clips and anecdotes that run the gamut from miffed kings to adventures on the high seas. While this may look like a random collection of stories, it’s actually very descriptive of the ongoing business of being a king. Solomon’s greatest task was now complete but building the temple wasn’t his only task. He was still responsible to rule over and lead God’s people. The rest of the **ch9** is loaded with the stuff of kingship and it breaks down into 4 primary sections dealing with politics, defense, religion and commerce.

**10-14** – It’s heart-warming to see that not everything was roses and clover in this diplomatic relationship between Solomon and Hiram. Not everyone came out smiling; that’s real life! Hiram had furnished Solomon with construction materials and plenty of gold – about 4 tons of it! Apparently, Solomon had run up more debt than he could pay for with foodstuffs so he ceded 20 border towns (settlements) to Hiram from the territory of Asher near the border with Tyre. When Hiram went to check them out, he was less than impressed. In fact, he names them Kabul (good for nothing). There wasn’t much he could do about it but object. But Hiram is no one fool. He’s not about to be so upset that he misses out in joining Solomon in a very lucrative sea trade deal (26-28). Solomon would later scrape up the funds to redeem those 20 settlements back from Hiram and restore them to the inheritance of the tribe of Asher.

**15-24** – here we have a document concerning the forced labor Solomon used. He needed to raise a massive labor force to finish up some massive

building projects, most of which were for defense of the nation and the city of Jerusalem. The Millo is thought to be the name of a prominent fortress that was near the temple and the palace. The 3 cities mentioned were also heavily fortified by Solomon. Hazor was a strategic city in the north that protected the juncture of 2 major trade routes from the north and served as Israel's primary defense against northern invaders. Megiddo was the great fortress that controlled the major passes from the Plain of Sharon on the coast through the Jezreel Valley in the Carmel range. Gezer was a powerful Canaanite city on the road from Joppa to Jerusalem. It wasn't occupied by Israel until the time of Solomon when Pharaoh gave it to him as a wedding gift.

But, Solomon didn't press Israelites into indentured servitude to complete these projects. No, he only used those who were permanent slaves of Israel, those from the Canaanite tribes that were left in the land, subjected people.

**25** – Orthodoxy seemed to thrive under Solomon's reign. Apparently, he insisted on it and saw to it that the 3 annual festivals were regularly and properly celebrated. Some commentators seem to believe that this implies another transgression by Solomon; that he took upon himself the exclusive duties of a priest, offering burnt sacrifices and incense. I don't think that is the case because there will be another king that will presume to do this, a good and godly king (Uzziah) but he will instantly regret his decision. He breaks out in leprosy while he still has the censor of incense in his hand and is cut off from Israel and the house of the Lord until the day of his death. We don't see any negative connotations like that with Solomon's actions here. It's more likely that this refers to Solomon initiating these sacrifices and ceremonies properly through the ministry of the priesthood. The point is Solomon saw to it that the worship of Yahweh was observed regularly and correctly in Israel.

**26-28** – Here we are given a glimpse of shipping and commerce on the Red Sea and beyond. The boats would sail South out of the Gulf of Aqaba and go wheeling and dealing all the way to Ophir, where ever that may be! Hiram's merchant mariners provided the sailing expertise and both Israel and Tyre raked in the profits. As far as commerce goes, Solomon's kingdom sat atop most, if not all of the major trade crossroads of the Near East. Anything moving around the Mediterranean Sea, or to and from it had to go

through Israel. Those 3 fortified cities controlled and collected duty on all the materials that moved on those major overland trade routes. The partnership between Solomon and Hiram king of Tyre guaranteed an abundant financial harvest for both nations.

What a wonderful snapshot of Solomon's kingly activity. We see him engaging in politics but unable to keep Hiram smiling; we see him continuing to pursue his love for building projects – this time mostly for defense. We also see Solomon insisting on and maintaining orthodoxy in Israel's worship and service of her covenantal God and his venturing into and profiting from trading in the world economy. Not much of this sounds very theological but on the whole, these are the legitimate concerns of a king. This is simply what kings do.

Maybe they seem a little too “secular” to some but isn't that the case with most of our dialing callings? Don't we often find ourselves doing what filter techs do, or A/R clerks, shrimpers, IT specialists or even what students do? None of these things are particularly theological and yet our days and weeks are filled with this work. But, these activities are still proper and right for us to do. We've each been put in these various positions by God to do this work and it should never be viewed as being beneath our divine calling – it's actually part of it!

Still, we must never forget that the divine warning of **v6-9** stands over and above everything we do in this life. As a Christian, you may be enjoying a thoroughly successful career (blue collar, white collar, no collar), you may be experiencing God's blessing on all of your secular endeavors today and still end in utter ruin. If we allow the blessing God has granted us in our careers to become our God, then God may very well remove his blessing until he can regain our undivided attention. God's blessing is only assured if we take the obedience of the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment as our very highest calling. No matter what we do for a living – we must put God first because He won't accept any other position in the life of His people. 😊