

Want to Meet with God? Go to the Temple

The Story of Israel, Episode 6 of 10

1 Kings 8: 1-30

*The story of Israel is (true) history, it is sacred history, and it is our family history. We are telling this story in ten episodes: Promise, Salvation, Law, Land, Covenant, **Temple**, Division, Prophets, Exile, and Restoration. Today is episode #6, as Solomon constructs the **temple**, the place where Israel meets with God.*

Can I meet with God?

What did Israel learn about the possibility of meeting with God? Four truths:

(1) Meeting with God is dangerous business.

- The first problem is *seeing* God... and somehow not dying (Exodus 33:20)
 - God is like the sun in the sky
- The second problem is being *near* God—also potentially fatal (Exodus 33:5)

(2) To meet with God, go to the temple.

- Why *here*? Because this is the place where God dwells on earth, where He has put his Name (Deut 12:5; 1 Kgs 8:13).
- The temple, built by Solomon, son of David (1 Kings 8)
 - In the heart of the temple: the ark of the covenant (1 Kings 8:1-11)
 - Meeting here with God looks different depending on who you are
 - Priests (8:11; Lev 16), Israelites (Deut 12:6-7)... and what about Gentiles?

(3) The temple was real but also symbolic.

- Solomon: “This house can’t contain you!” (1 Kings 8:27; see also Is 66:1-2, Acts 7:45-50, 17:24)
 - No paganism-- God’s ultimate dwelling place is heaven (1 Kings 8:30).
- How to pray, according to Solomon: face the temple (1 Kings 8:30, 31, 33, 35, 37, etc.)
 - If you want to meet with God, you will pray.
 - Solomon’s emphasis: face the temple, pray for forgiveness and help
- *If the temple was symbolic... did it point to something greater? Something in the future?*

(4) Meeting with God will one day become ordinary.

- “But Jesus was speaking of the temple of his body.” (John 2:21)
 - Go to the temple! Face the temple and pray for forgiveness and help!
- The end of the story: No temple, no sun, just God dwelling with His people.

Questions for Reflection and Application

1. How do you feel about the possibility of meeting with God? Excited, fearful, despairing...?
2. Read 1 Kings 8:1-53. What did meeting with God look like when Solomon’s temple was standing? What activities were performed there? What did Solomon emphasize?
3. How do we pray “facing the temple” today? Consider John 2:21.
4. Read Revelation 21. Prayer is not mentioned at the end of Revelation, and we could say prayer will not be needed anymore—depending on how you define prayer! Explain why prayer won’t be needed anymore, although if defined differently, prayer continues.