

Solomon's Worship

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening. It is good to be together, even if it is a bit damp, and we're all feeling a little bit moist this evening. As Pete mentioned, this is the second in our series on Solomon.

We've had last week and this week. Next week, Sunday evening, we have a break. The following two weeks, John will continue in Solomon's story. Those of you who were here last week, remember we talked about Solomon's slide with the overarching theme of these four evenings on Solomon. How does the wisest of Israel's kings, so favored by God, seemingly start so well and yet finish so badly? Thinking about last night and tonight, there's no surprise ending. We know the story, and it's not a sort of cliffhanger. There's no spoiler alert. You know things are going to end wrong. It feels a little bit awkward constructing a sermon where we hold up a picture and the pictures are negative. That's for those of you who remember a thing called film. It was the inverse of what you wanted to see, and when the photograph was developed, you saw the positive picture. Well, we're holding up in some ways negatives in these four evenings, but I hope tonight as well, by the time we're finished, we'll see some positives too. Well, let's just pause as we come to God's Word and seek His help again in prayer. Ponder anew what the Almighty can do. Lord, we want to take that invitation this evening seriously as we look again into your Word. So we ask that you would incline our hearts to your testimony and away from selfish gain. And so do your work in our hearts for your glory's sake. It's in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Well, last week as we began this series, we started with Solomon's wisdom, and this evening we look at Solomon's worship. And last week we saw that his wisdom was compromised from the start and remained so, and so maybe the slide wasn't as steeply sloped as we might have thought. In fact, it started at a fairly low level already.

Well, like last week, this week we'll be moving around in Solomon's story in 1 Kings, but we'll camp out a little bit in 1 Kings chapter 8. So I'd invite you to turn to 1 Kings chapter 8, and then keep your Bibles open in front of you.

Those who were here this morning, we had quite a long prayer which focused on Israel's sin, and those of you who know 1 Kings chapter 8 will know that it's a long prayer that focuses on Israel's sin.

[3 : 17] But we won't be looking at the whole of the passage, and our focus is Solomon's worship.

We saw last week already that Solomon was a keen worshiper. He was an enthusiast. And so this week as we explore his worship, we want to see how someone so eager to be in God's presence could end up by experiencing God's absence.

So 1 Kings chapter 8 is the story of the dedication of the temple that Solomon built, or that was built under Solomon's direction.

And we'll just read the first 13 verses to start to explore Solomon at worship. So this is 1 Kings 8 verse 1.

1 Kings 8 verse 1.

[4 : 43] And they brought up the ark of the Lord and the tent of meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The priests and the Levites carried them up. And King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle they could not be recorded or counted.

The priests then brought the ark of the Lord's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the most holy place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim.

The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its carrying poles. These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the holy place.

And they're still there today. There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

When the priests withdrew from the holy place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.

[6 : 03] Then Solomon said, The Lord has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud. I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell.

Forever. And so we see Solomon at worship. Now, we could spend weeks looking at the theme of worship.

It's a very rich theme to dig into. Already in the things that Pete's put together for us to our singing and in our prayers and in our reading, we'll have seen lots of pointers to true worship and what it's about and so on.

But we'll be looking at four moments in Solomon's life where we see Solomon at worship. And it would help to have some definition of what worship is.

And worship can mean different things. It means different things in different contexts. But my working definition for us this evening runs this way. Worship is the recognition and respect offered to God in public and private life, by which we enjoy communion with him.

[7 : 20] And that captures quite a bit, perhaps not everything, but quite a bit of what worship is about. The recognition and respect offered to God in our public and private life, by which we enjoy communion with him.

So everything isn't worship, but a lot of things are worship. What we do here together is worship, but what we do on our own is worship. The four moments that we'll press into in Solomon's life have a little slide of their own.

There's four of them. Well, they go down and down and down. And then we get a nice little flip up at the end. At least that's the hope. We'll see that Solomon's worship involves him in expensive building, in exuberant sacrifices, in expansive spirituality, but also brings up emphatic obedience. And as we move through his building work, his sacrificing, his spirituality and his note of obedience, we'll see that Solomon's external and visible actions, what he did, held at best an uncertain relationship to his internal and actual standing before God.

The old adage, you can't tell a book by its cover. What Solomon's doing externally in worship bears an uncertain relationship. To what's going on internally between him and God.

[9 : 02] And of course, the overarching question as we look at Solomon at worship is, is this also true for us, for me? Well, we start then with Solomon's expensive building.

And the passage we read at the beginning of 1 Kings 8 comes towards the culmination of Solomon's temple building project. It's a project he inherited from his father.

You might remember that when David intended to build a temple, initially the prophet Nathan came to him and said, right, on you go. All that is in your heart, it's good to do, do it.

And the prophet went away and the Lord said to Nathan, no, that's not my plan. Go back to David and tell him that he won't be the one to build a house for me.

And so this task of building a temple for the Lord is inherited, in a sense, by Solomon. And it dominates Solomon's story in 1 Kings 1 to 11.

[10 : 04] That's where Solomon's story runs. And actually, it's the whole central section. It amounts to almost half of Solomon's story. It's the story from chapter 5 to chapter 8 of Solomon preparing to build the temple, setting people up out to build the temple, getting, moving into the temple, and dedicating the temple.

Almost half of Solomon's story. Like we saw with kingship last week, the temple is quite late coming to Israel. Everybody had temples.

Every good king has a temple. And with the late coming of kingship to Israel, so we have a late coming to Israel of a temple.

Now, it's not to say that the temple, nor to say that the king was a bad thing in coming to Israel. And you'll have seen in the reading that we had that the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

So, this is the place that God has chosen to mark his presence with his people. But we know its late coming. There's a couple of things to note about the timing of its coming to Israel that help us to see the place it has in Solomon's life of worship.

[11 : 22] Take us into that, at any case. Turn back a couple of pages to 1 Kings chapter 6. So, chapter 5 is all preparations for temple building.

In chapter 6, they get started. So, chapter 6, verse 1. In the 480th year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord.

Well, I note this not because we just like all the technical details. You know, it's like getting a car or a computer or a new appliance.

And we just love reading the manual and the specifications. That's not quite it. It's because our historian puts this timing here for a reason.

As far as this historian is concerned, the temple comes at the precise midpoint of God's national life with his people Israel.

[12 : 30] It's a very significant moment. 480 years after the Israelites came out of Egypt. Well, what had happened in this chronology 480 years earlier?

Well, it's the exodus from Egypt, but it's also the dedication of the tabernacle. And some of you might have heard an echo of the end of exodus in our passage from 1 Kings 8.

This is what happens when the tabernacle is dedicated. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses couldn't enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

That's the exodus event. 480 years, we're at Solomon in the temple, and the glory of the Lord fills the temple. And 480 years on this reckoning later, we'll get Ezra founding the second temple.

And we have these markers of Israel's worship life with God. And here we have Solomon's temple right at the fulcrum, the center point of that history of this God and this people.

[13 : 46] So it shows us something of the importance accorded to the temple. But what kind of importance did it have for Solomon? Well, clearly it was important.

But if we go to the end of chapter 6, we can start to qualify that. So the end of chapter 6, we'll pick it up in verse 37, which repeats verse 1, basically.

The foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv. That's what we read in verse 1. Solomon's fourth year, he starts building. In the eleventh year, the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details, according to its specifications.

To save us from doing the maths, he had spent seven years building it. That's a pretty substantial building project on any reckoning. But we keep reading across the chapter division.

Let's continue into chapter 7. It took Solomon 13 years, however, to complete the construction of his palace. And its construction then is briefly told.

[15 : 02] Well, it's a joint building project then. And Solomon's building for a long time. Seven years on the temple, 13 years on the palace complex.

Three observations about this. First, as I've noted already, our interest this evening isn't on the fact of the temple.

It's the place of the Lord's choosing to mark his presence with his people. But it's on Solomon's building as an act of worship. And if we have that in mind, and if worship is that offering of recognition and respect given to God, and by which we enjoy communion with him, then for all its grandeur, Solomon's building of this temple seems at best partial.

Maybe we're not intended to think that it's half as important to him as the building of his own palace. But it invites us to at least raise that question. Solomon's building as an act of worship towards God seems at best partial.

Well, beyond this is the observation that repeatedly through chapter 8, as the temple is dedicated, five times in all, we read that this is the house that Solomon built.

[16 : 29] And we know that because Solomon is the one telling us that this is the house that Solomon built. I mean, we saw the first of these in verse 13 as we finish that passage. Solomon said, the Lord, Solomon said, the Lord has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud.

I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever. And four more times as chapter 8 unfolds, the house that I have built, the house that I have built, do this in the house that I have built.

Well, it's worth recalling a Psalm of Solomon. There's two Psalms of Solomon in the 150 in the Psalms. Last week we looked briefly at Psalm 72.

The other one is Psalm 127. Do you remember how that one begins? Some of you will. Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.

Solomon loved building. He built all kinds of things. As we see the end of the dedication of the temple in chapter 9, when Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord and the royal palace and had built all he had desired to build, on it goes.

[17:50] And later on in chapter 9, it gives us a further account of Solomon's building activities. This is verse 17. Although it starts before that, Solomon rebuilt Gezer.

He built lower Bet-Horon, Balat, and Tadmor in the desert within his land. He built all his store cities and the towns for his chariots and his horses.

Whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and throughout all the territory he ruled. He was a bit of a compulsive builder, in fact.

It's like a kid with a Lego set. He just kept on building, giving me more Lego, more buildings. And that was Solomon. Again, we put this beside his insistence, this is the house that I've built.

It starts to qualify how we see the place of temple building in Solomon's life of worship. And just to finish this one off, recall that promise to David I mentioned a moment ago.

[18:55] When David purposed to build a house, eventually Nathan came to him and said, the Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will build a house for you.

And David replied to Nathan the prophet, Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servants, saying, I will build a house for you.

It's worth bearing in mind that when God builds a house, he builds it with people. He builds it of people. It's perhaps an irony that the word for worship occurs quite infrequently in Solomon's story, just two places, in fact.

And one of the places is in the end of chapter 11, when the prophet comes to Jeroboam and says that the people's worship has turned away from the true God.

Solomon was very much concerned with his bricks and mortar. He wasn't concerned about the house building that goes on with the people of God. For me, it very much shunts my thoughts forward towards what we read in 1 Peter, that when we come into the kingdom of God, when there is a new king who comes to build.

[20:15] We read in 1 Peter 2, as you come to him, to the living stone, that is Christ, rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

So Solomon, expensive building, but perhaps not the right kind of building to reflect worship to the true and living God.

But we've just heard of offering sacrifices, and that's the second thing we want to look at, not just, not only expensive building, but exuberant sacrifice.

We've seen this already in our reading, but a reminder again for those of you who were here last week, in 1 Kings chapter 3, that's the dream at Gibeon. Solomon goes to Gibeon, has the dream, and that's where God gifts him wisdom.

And as that chapter begins, verse 4, still setting the scene in 1 Kings chapter 3, at verse 4 we read, the king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place.

[21:40] Kings got to go to the most important high place. And Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. And after the dream, he returns to Jerusalem, verse 15, stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant, sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.

So he's an enthusiastic sacrificer, which on the face of it seems a good thing. Seems a good thing. Let's look a little further. So we've seen already, as we read in 1 Kings 8, that they start off with this unimaginable sacrificing.

1 Kings 8, 5, King Solomon, the entire assembly of Israel gathered about him, were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle, they could not be recorded or counted.

The dedication takes place, and at the end of chapter 8, they've found enough accountants to manage the job. So at 1 Kings 8, start at verse 62, then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the Lord.

[23:02] Solomon offered a sacrifice of fellowship offerings to the Lord, 22,000 cattle, and 120,000 sheep and goats. So the king and all the Israelites dedicated the temple of the Lord.

Well, this is sacrifice on a grand scale. Commentators have interesting discussions about these numbers, as you could well imagine.

I'm not great with numbers, but we know that the festival of dedication took two weeks. So, 140, what's that?

See, I'm not good with numbers. 143,000 offerings, sacrifices. That comes out to roughly, I've written it down, 10,143 sacrifices a day, or if you imagine this is just during waking hours, 845 an hour.

It's pretty good going. It's extravagant. And I think at one level we think, wow, I wish I could sacrifice like that.

[24 : 14] But his father again said something interesting. When he acquired the place on which the temple was to be built, he was offered some cattle and some wood to sacrifice on the spot.

And David said, no, I will not offer to the Lord sacrifices that cost me nothing. And we start to think, well, what do these sacrifices mean, in fact?

And I got a bit of help thinking about this from Jonathan Edwards. Now, Jonathan Edwards was a pastor philosopher in New England in the 18th century, something like 1700 something, 1758 roughly, his life.

He was the preacher in one of the New England churches in 1734 when there was a dramatic revival, such a dramatic revival, there was international interest in it.

15 or so years later, there was another sort of echo of that revival. And as often happens in times of revival, there's controversy.

[25 : 31] And Edwards looked back on the 1734 revival in which he was deeply involved. His family affected deeply, his own wife, experiencing quite amazing things during that period.

And he wrote a book called A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, which still bears reading today. You can download it on the internet. The PDF's 304 pages.

But he thinks about, in this context, controversy over revival. What's a true sign of God at work? Those crazy people down the street, is God at work in them?

What's a true sign of revival? And much of the work is taken up with discerning and discussing biblically what are true signs and what are no true signs, or at least uncertain signs.

And the first thing he starts off with in the middle section of the book, which bears the title, this is part two, showing what are no certain signs that religious affections are gracious.

[26 : 43] These are not certain signs. And the very first of these is that it is no sign one way or the other that religious affections are very great or raised very high.

He says, after considering that it's important that we have affection in worship, he writes this, it's no evidence that religious affections are of a spiritual and gracious nature because they are great.

It is very manifest by the Holy Scripture, our sure and infallible rule to judge of things of this nature, that there are religious affections which are very high, which are not spiritual or saving.

some are, he says, some aren't. So here we have no true sign. And as we reflect in this way on Solomon's story, we recall that the Old Testament has no requirements for sacrifice on this scale that Solomon's offering.

In fact, there's something like the opposite. Now, it comes from a later time, but in Micah, chapter 6, we have a reflection on exactly this dynamic.

[28 : 01] I'll read it for you. It's Micah, chapter 6, verse 6, to verse 8. And the prophet asks, with what shall I come before the Lord?

And that's our question. How shall I come before the Lord? And bow down before the exalted God. Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves, a year old?

It's a good starting point. Or will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with 10,000 rivers of oil? We're getting into Solomon territory now.

Or shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression? Maybe now I'm going too far. The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul.

What's the ultimate sacrifice I can make? And the response comes. He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

[29 : 08] And what does the Lord require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

not the extravagant sacrifices. So again, we put a question mark over that and say with, perhaps, Jonathan Edwards, no true sign.

Well, we have expensive building. We have exuberant sacrifice. A third place we see Solomon at worship is in what I've called expansive spirituality. And we need to turn over a couple of pages to get our best glimpse of this, although, again, we've seen it already in what we've been reading this evening. So to look at 1 Kings chapter 11. When we were back at Gibeon in chapter 3, Solomon's there. It's a high place.

[30 : 07] It's the most important high place, and you get the sense that Solomon's a bit of a spiritual tourist. He'll go where he needs to go to get to the best high place. And that kind of openness to spiritual experience grows to alarming proportions later in life.

My hunch is this is possibly a passage that John will be looking at later for other reasons, but let's read 1 Kings 11. We'll start at verse 4.

Read just a few verses. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord, his God, as the heart of David, his father, had been. He followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He did not follow the Lord completely as David, his father, had done.

On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites.

[31 : 19] He did the same for all his foreign wives. He burned incense and offered sacrifices to their god. The Lord became angry with Solomon.

This is not a good thing. So Solomon's kind of inclusiveness in worship starts welcoming in these foreign cults into his own palace, and he even makes a home for them in Jerusalem.

It's quite sobering to observe that Solomon's pagan sanctuaries persisted in Jerusalem for 300 years.

Right towards the end of the history of Judah, before the Babylonian exile, of which we've been thinking in our morning services, there was a great reforming king named Josiah.

And 2 Kings 23, the other end of the story of Israel, we read about Josiah's reforms, and among them we read this. It's 2 Kings 23, 13.

[32 : 26] The king, in this case, it's Josiah. The king also desecrated the high places that were east of Jerusalem on the south of the hill of corruption, the ones Solomon, king of Israel, had built for Ashtoret, the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh, the vile god of Moab, and for Molech, the detestable god of the people of Ammon.

So for 300 years, Solomon's mix-and-match worship had been there as a snare and temptation for the people of Judah in Jerusalem.

And as I pondered this circumstance, I couldn't help but ask myself my own question, what illicit shrines do I build in harbor in my life?

What illicit shrines have been built generations ago that might still be sullyng, polluting the spiritual inheritance that we have in our families?

And it came to mind again a program that aired last Christmas, just before last Christmas on Radio 4. Chrismica and other cultural mash-ups.

[33 : 47] Sounds a bit Solomonic. This is our religious and cultural context. Here's a part of the program description. As the number of interfaith marriages in Britain increases, we uncover a growing phenomenon, the cultural mash-up.

Families who are getting creative as they combine different religious and cultural traditions to create their own unique festivals. Well, there was a review of the program in the Radio Times.

The viewer loved it. This program, all about pluralism and integration, provides the right kind of balance this holiday season. The reviewer noted, we hear, for example, of a Muslim Easter egg hunt.

It's wrong on quite a number of levels. And he finishes, truly, a glimmer of light in the darkness, echoing, knowingly or not, John 1 at Advent season.

This is our cultural milieu. And this is the temptation that we'll be facing in our generation, as this kind of thing is approved. But there are other shrines, other forms of illicit spirituality we build into our lives, and that have the potential to pollute across generations.

[35 : 12] I remember a good Christian friend who said how hard it was for her to break away from her devotion to horoscopes.

Tarot, down the center of Edinburgh. Many families, I think, feeling the effects of Masonic involvement, going on through generations.

What other forms of illicit spirituality do we domesticate in our homes? I know it's controversial, but what about Harry Potter and many other forms of supernatural, illicit supernatural powers that we just make a space for and enjoy in our homes?

Are we doing what Solomon was doing when we make a place for these shrines that do not honor the true and living God? Well, one commentator on these passages put it this way.

Ultimately, even a faithful king, he was referring to Josiah, ultimately, even a faithful king will not be able to undo the idolatries of generations.

[36 : 30] Josiah's reform flickered briefly and then snuffed out as the Babylonian exile came. amidst the cries of the people that we worship the queen of heaven.

It will take a king of an entirely different order of fidelity to deal decisively with his people's sin. So, expensive building, exuberant, sacrificing, expansive spirituality, and finally, finally, emphatic obedience.

It's that little ramp at the end of the slide. Solomon seemed to have learned something from his father. And you'll recall that after David's adultery with Bathsheba, he repented, and we have the prayer of repentance in Psalm 51.

As part of that, David prayed this, you do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. O God, you will not despise. And what does God desire? It's in Psalm 51. 6. You desired faithfulness, even in the womb.

[38 : 00] At some level, Solomon must have learned this lesson. And the closing petition in his lengthy prayer, we saw a closing petition this morning, comes at verse 56 of chapter 8.

1 Kings 8, 56. And we'll just read a couple of passages here as we draw towards an end. Solomon's closing petition, praise be to the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses, echoing the words of Joshua centuries earlier. May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our ancestors. May he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to him, and keep the commands, decrees, and laws he gave our ancestors.

And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the Lord, be near the Lord our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel, according to each day's need, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God, there is no other.

[39 : 21] And may your hearts be fully committed to the Lord, to live by his decrees, and obey his commands, as at this time. It's a good prayer.

It speaks to many of the concerns that we've raised as we've looked at the building, the sacrificing, and the inclusive spirituality. It's a prayer that God heard and answered.

And we know that, because that's what we read of in chapter 9. So I'll just continue in chapter 9. when Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord and the royal palace and had achieved all he had desired to do, the Lord appeared to him a second time as he had appeared to him at Gibeon.

The Lord said to him, I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me. I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my name there forever.

My eyes and my heart will always be there. As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, you shall never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.

[40 : 47] But if you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my name.

Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. This temple will become a heap of rubble. All who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?

People will answer, because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them.

That is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them. As we began, we wanted to see how someone so eager to be in God's presence would end by experiencing God's absence. And this is precisely how. It comes back again to a life of obedience. And it's not an irony that immediately after this great high point of dedicating the temple, the first thing Solomon hears is a warning.

[42 : 10] Much as in his first dream in Gibeon, God's God wants him to be. In a sense, in a sense, warning him by putting before him the man God wants him to be.

And again, here, the Lord warns him to be the man that God wants him to be. The temple was destroyed. It was reduced to rubble. And yet God was faithful to his promise.

Well, expensive building, exuberant sacrifice, expensive spirituality, emphatic obedience.

This gives us a profile of Solomon at worship. But in a sense, it's that negative, isn't it? Even with the little positive kick at the end that came with a warning, it still is a negative.

Well, how do we see this picture as a positive? Just in a few minutes. Jesus perfectly fulfills the worship that Solomon imperfectly signaled.

[43 : 17] Jesus perfectly fulfills the worship that Solomon imperfectly signaled. Jesus is that temple towards which Solomon's temple was pointing.

Remember in John, a few texts from John here, Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days. They replied, it has taken 46 years to build this Herod's temple. You're going to raise it in three days? But the temple he had spoken of was his body. Of course, in Revelation 21, there will be no temple when the Lord's presence is there unmediated.

Jesus is the temple and he's building us, as we read earlier, as living stones into a spiritual temple for him.

Jesus wasn't about exuberant sacrificing. Jesus was the sacrifice. Jesus wasn't about inclusive worship.

[44 : 22] Jesus pointed all mankind to himself. As he said in John 10, I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.

I lay down my life for the sheep. That's the sacrifice. I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them too.

Or as he said a little later to his disciples, when I am lifted up, there's that sacrifice again, I will draw all people to myself. And finally, Jesus' obedience invites a response of obedience.

As he spoke to his disciples in the hours before his sacrifice, he said, greater love has no one than this to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command. Our worship then takes a Christ-like shape as we are transformed by him and have his mind in us.

[45 : 37] Or to finish that allusion to Romans 12, where Paul writes, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

In a sense, Solomon's life is a bit of a counter example to that instruction from the Apostle Paul.

As I'm sure many of you realize, there's one flaw in Paul's request when he calls us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. The problem with a living sacrifice is it always crawls off the altar.

death. And so we want to look to Christ, to find our obedience in his obedience, and to offer worship, to recognize and respect God in our lives so that others see him there too, and we enjoy fellowship and communion with him.

[47 : 00] Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you that you desire to have fellowship with us, and that you want us to enjoy you.

So we're sorry for the many ways in which our thoughts and words and deeds offend you. And we thank you for a Savior and the Redeemer and the Lord Jesus who lived the life we could not live and died the death we should have died so that we might have new life in him.

Help us as we look to him day by day, moment by moment, to live lives that are pleasing to you, offering you the recognition and respect you deserve, and so enjoying communion with you as you enable us by your Spirit.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.