

CHAPTER 7

In this chapter we have God's answer to Solomon's prayer.

I. His public answer by fire from heaven, which consumed the sacrifices (v. 1), with which the priests and people were much affected (v. 2, 3). By that token of God's acceptance they were encouraged to continue the solemnities of the feast for fourteen days, and Solomon was encouraged to pursue all his designs for the honour of God (v. 4-11).

II. His private answer by word of mouth, in a dream or vision of the night (v. 12-22). Most of these things we had before, 1 Kings 8 and 9.

<400>2 CHRONICLES 7:1-11

GOD'S GRACIOUS ANSWER TO SOLOMON

Here is,

I. The gracious answer which God immediately made to Solomon's prayer: *The fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice*, v. 1. In this way God testified his acceptance of Moses (<8024>Leviticus 9:24), of Gideon (<1062>Judges 6:21), of David (<1206>1 Chronicles 21:26), of Elijah (<1188>1 Kings 18:38); and, in general, to accept the burnt-sacrifice is, in the Hebrew phrase, to turn it to ashes, <8018>Psalm 20:3. The fire came down here, not upon the killing of the sacrifices, but the praying of the prayer.

1. This fire intimated that God was,

(1.) Glorious in himself; for *our God is a consuming fire*, terrible even in his holy places. This fire, breaking forth (as it is probable) out of the thick darkness, made it the more terrible, as on Mount Sinai, <1246>Exodus 24:16, 17. *The sinners in Sion* had reason to be *afraid* at that sight, and to say, *Who among us shall dwell near this devouring fire?* <2334>Isaiah 33:14. And yet,

(2.) Gracious to Israel; for this fire, which might justly have consumed them, fastened upon the sacrifice which was offered in their stead, and

consumed that, by which God signified to them that he accepted their offerings and that his anger was turned away from them.

2. Let us apply this,

(1.) To the suffering of Christ. When it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief, in that he showed his good-will to men, having laid on him the iniquity of us all. His death was our life, and he was made sin and a curse that we might inherit righteousness and a blessing. That sacrifice was consumed that we might escape. *Here am I, let these go their way.*

(2.) To the sanctification of the Spirit, who descends like fire, burning up our lusts and corruptions, those beasts that must be sacrificed or we are undone, and kindling in our souls a holy fire of pious and devout affections, always to be kept burning on the altar of the heart. The surest evidence of God's acceptance of our prayers is the descent of the holy fire upon us. *Did not our hearts burn within us?* ~~24:32~~ Luke 24:32. As a further evidence that God accepted Solomon's prayer, still *the glory of the Lord filled the house.* The heart that is thus filled with a holy awe and reverence of the divine glory, the heart to which God manifests himself in his greatness, and (which is no less his glory) in his goodness, is thereby owned as a living temple.

II. The grateful return made to God for this gracious token of his favour.

1. The people *worshipped and praised God*, v. 3. When they saw the fire of God come down from heaven thus they did not run away affrighted, but kept their ground in the courts of the Lord, and took occasion from it,

(1.) With reverence to adore the glory of God: *They bowed their faces to the ground and worshipped*, thus expressing their awful dread of the divine majesty, their cheerful submission to the divine authority, and the sense they had of their unworthiness to come into God's presence and their inability to stand before the power of his wrath.

(2.) With thankfulness to acknowledge the goodness of God; even when the fire of the Lord came down they praised him, saying, *He is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.* This is a song never out of season, and for which our hearts and tongues should be never out of tune. However it be, yet God is good. When he manifests himself as a consuming fire to sinners, his people can rejoice in him as their light. Nay, they had reason to say that in this God was good. *"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not*

consumed, but the sacrifice in our stead, for which we are bound to be very thankful.”

2. The king and all the people offered sacrifices in abundance, v. 4, 5. With these they feasted this holy fire, and bade it welcome to the altar. They had offered sacrifices before, but now they increased them. Note, The tokens of God's favour to us should enlarge our hearts in his service, and make us to abound therein more and more. The king's example stirred up the people. Good work is then likely to go on when the leaders of a people lead in it. The sacrifices were so numerous that the altar could not contain them all; but, rather than any of them should be turned back (though we may suppose the blood of them all was sprinkled upon the altar), the flesh of the burnt-offerings and the fat of the peace-offerings were burnt *in the midst of the court* (v. 7), which Solomon either hallowed for that service or hallowed by it. In case of necessity the pavement might be an altar.

3. The priests did their part; they waited on their offices, and the singers and musicians on theirs (v. 6), with the instruments that David made, and the *hymn that David had put into their hand*, as some think it may be read (meaning that ^{<13107>}1 Chronicles 16:7), or, as we read it, *when David praised by their ministry*. He employed, directed, and encouraged them in this work of praising God; and therefore their performances were accepted as his act, and he is said *to praise by their ministry*.

4. The whole congregation expressed the greatest joy and satisfaction imaginable. They kept the feast of the dedication of the altar seven days, from the second to the ninth; the tenth day was the day of atonement, when they were to afflict their souls for sin, and that was not unseasonable in the midst of their rejoicings; on the fifteenth day began the feast of tabernacles, which continued to the twenty-second, and they did not separate till the twenty-third. We must never grudge the time that we spend in the worship of God and communion with him, nor think it long, or grow weary of it.

5. Solomon went on in his work, and prosperously effected all he designed for the adorning both of God's house and his own, v. 11. Those that begin with the service of God are likely to go on successfully in their own affairs. It was Solomon's praise that what he undertook he went through with, and it was by the grace of God that he prospered in it.

~~<1472>~~ 2 CHRONICLES 7:12-22

GOD'S PROMISES TO SOLOMON

That God accepted Solomon's prayer appeared by the fire from heaven. But a prayer may be accepted and yet not answered in the letter of it; and therefore God appeared to him in the night, as he did once before (~~<1400>~~2 Chronicles 1:7), and after a day of sacrifice too, as then, and gave him a peculiar answer to his prayer. We had the substance of it before, ~~<1100>~~1 Kings 9:2-9.

I. He promised to own this house for *a house of sacrifice to Israel* and a *house of prayer for all people* (~~<2307>~~Isaiah 56:7): *My name shall be there for ever* (v. 12, 16), that is, "There will I make myself known, and there will I be called upon."

II. He promised to answer the prayers of his people that should at any time be made in that place, v. 13-15. National judgments are here supposed (v. 13), famine, and pestilence, and perhaps war, for by the locusts devouring the land meant enemies as greedy as locusts, and laying all waste.

1. National repentance, prayer, and reformation, are required, v. 14. God expects that his people who are called by his name, if they have dishonoured his name by their iniquity, should honour it by accepting the punishment of their iniquity. They must be humble themselves under his hand, must pray for the removal of the judgment, must seek the face and favour of God; and yet all this will not do unless they turn from their wicked ways, and return to the God from whom they have revolted.

2. National mercy is then promised, that God will forgive their sin, which brought the judgment upon them, and then heal their land, redress all their grievances. Pardoning mercy makes ways for healing mercy, ~~<943B>~~Psalm 103:3; ~~<1100>~~Matthew 9:2.

III. He promised to perpetuate Solomon's kingdom, upon condition that he persevered in his duty, v. 17, 18. If he hoped for the benefit of God's covenant with David, he must imitate the example of David. But he set before him death as well as life, the curse as well as the blessing.

1. He supposed it possible that though they had this temple built to the honour of God, yet they might be drawn aside to worship other gods, v. 19. He knew their proneness to backslide into that sin.

2. He threatened it as certain that, if they did so, it would certainly be the ruin of both church and state.

(1.) It would be the ruin of their state, v. 20. “Though they have taken deep root, and taken root long, in this good land, yet I will pluck them up by the roots, extirpate the whole nation, pluck them up as men pluck up weeds out of their garden, which are thrown to the dunghill.”

(2.) It would be the ruin of their church. This sanctuary would be no sanctuary to them, to protect them from the judgment of God, as they imagined, saying, *The temple of the Lord are we*, ~~24006~~ Jeremiah 7:4. “This house which is high, not only for the magnificence of its structure, but for the designed ends and uses of it, shall be an astonishment, it shall come down wonderfully (~~25009~~ Lamentations 1:9), to the amazement of all the neighbours.”