

Since Jesus also fasted and said 'when you fast' (Mtt 6.17) why do you think fasting is not used so much by Christians today?

A future temple? : (Beware! Deep water.) Many Christians believe that the people of Israel as a nation still have a part in the future purposes of God. Indeed there were some Christians pushing for the re-establishment of Israel up to the 1947 UN decision to partition Palestine which led the following year to Israel declaring itself independent of British rule. There are some Zionists, and indeed a few Christians, who believe that the Temple should also be rebuilt. The complicating factor being the existence since 692 of the al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome on the Rock, built on the site where the Temple once was. Discuss!

Aside : ("*the place where I will set my Name*") *Some people claim that Deuteronomy was written long after the events it records in order to give spiritual and historical credence to the nation of Judah and its capital in Jerusalem. On this understanding "the place where I set my name" (Deut 12) is a deliberate reference to Jerusalem. The arguments in general are far from convincing but many seem to accept them and likewise some think that the Book of Kings was written at the same time and for the same reason. But the claim that "the place" refers to Jerusalem is just unnecessary and illogical. For 440 years after Moses preached Deuteronomy no-one thought "the place" referred to Jerusalem. If they were inventing a story to justify "the place" being Jerusalem then they did a pretty bad job, on the face of it in Deuteronomy just about anywhere could have ended up as "the place" and then only on a temporary basis. It is only when the Lord leads David to establish Jerusalem as his capital that it becomes clear that for a time this will be "the place". Now, wherever Christ is worshipped (Jn 4) and every believer (1 Cor 6.19) is "the place".*

David Phillips, September 2011

The Prayer of the Wise

Bible Study Groups

1 : 1 Kings 8.22



This passage was preached at the morning services on Sunday 4 September 2011. The audio is available at www.stjameschorley.org.

Digging in the passage

Read : 1 Kings ch 6 vv 1 & 9-14, ch 7.51 , ch 8.9-22

What a day : The idea of building a Temple had been put forward by King David many years before, but the Lord had said that it should be Solomon who built it.

How do you think Solomon was feeling as the events you have read about unfolded?

What do you think it would have been like to be part of the crowd?

When you have answered the last question have another look at ch 8 v 9-10 and if necessary revise your answer.

Before the Temple : Look at ch 8 v 16. For the last 480 years (ch 6 v 1) the people of Israel had had no Temple and no "city" (v16) "for my name to be there". The words of Solomon here refer back to Deut 12.5-11 which you may find it helpful to read.

Where did God "put his Name for his dwelling place" before the Temple was built?

What is the one continuing factor? (cf ch 8 v1)

Aside : Throughout these chapters in Kings the Hebrew the main word used to describe the Temple is an ordinary word for "house"

and it is also used in 1 Samuel etc of the Tabernacle. Another word, usually meaning grand hall or palace, is also sometimes translated as Temple or Tabernacle in English Bibles when it can refer to the whole place or more often to the inner part, the Sanctuary. This can get a bit confusing at times because a later verse appearing to refer to the Temple might mean the Tabernacle too.

Stephen was put to death for speaking against the Temple. His speech (Acts 7) and the violent reaction to it shows how people had made too much of the Temple. He particularly focusses on the fact that from the time Abraham was called right up to Solomon dedicating the Temple (well over 800 years) they had no Temple. Do you think there is any danger for us today in making buildings more important than they should be?

What do you think is the significance of Jesus' words in John 4.21-24?

Posture in Prayer : Solomon stood first (8.22) and knelt (cf 8.54).

What different ways (ie postures) do you normally pray?

Which do you prefer?

Can you think of occasions when you have prayed in a particular way because of what you were praying for?

Five particular ways seem to be mentioned in the Bible - standing (Lk 11-13), kneeling (eg. Dan 6.10), sitting (1 Chr 17.16), bowing (Ex 4.31 - though this is less clear), prostrate (Mtt 26.39). If you have time look them up. Have we missed any?

One of the advantages of pews is that they can make it easier to kneel for prayer. Do you think it matters what posture we use when praying together as a congregation?

(Don't forget however that Christians historically were more accustomed to stand when praying. Having seats or pews in churches only became the norm about 500 years ago.)

Do you pray just at particular times or do you sometimes pray when going about your daily business or chores?

Place and Prayer : Solomon was leading the people in public prayer. Yet Jesus also teaches us to pray in private (Mtt 6.6) and that seems to be what he expects to be the mainstay of our prayer.

What different places or settings do you pray in?

Do you find it easier to pray privately or to pray with others?

How easy is it to pray along with someone else (either when prayer is led in church or when we pray as a group)?

Do you feel comfortable aloud praying in a small group? If not what are the difficulties that you find?

If you do not normally pray aloud in a group the hardest thing can be doing it the first time. There is advantage is extempore (off the cuff as it were) prayer, but there is no reason why we can't on occasion use written prayers, just as we use the Lord's prayer. In the next study it will be suggested that you write some prayers and then pray them together. It is somewhat off the point but Winston Churchill said that the secret of his spontaneous putdowns of other people was that his best off-the-cuff remarks were rehearsed for days beforehand.

Thinking around

(Questions and discussion starters for those who get through the study quickly or want to explore some wider issues.)

Fasting : In the New Testament there are several instances of believers fasting and praying. What do you think is the benefit of doing both together?

Is fasting and praying something you have done? If so, when and why?