



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for March 23, 2008
Released on Wednesday, March 19, 2008**

"Fulfillment of God's Promise"

Printed Text: 2 Chronicles 6:12–17; Luke 24:44–49.

Background Scripture: 2 Chronicles 6; Luke 24.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 135:1–5.

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT:

2 Chronicles 6:12–17

12 And he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands:

13 For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven,

14 And said, O LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and showest mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts:

15 Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day.

16 Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law, as thou hast walked before me.

17 Now then, O LORD God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David.

Luke 24:44–49

44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Lesson Aims

Facts: to see how Solomon's prayer found fulfillment in the resurrected Christ and the spread of the gospel to the nations.

Principle: to be aware that God's redemptive plan depended on a risen Christ.

Application: to accept with confidence the truth that God always makes His promises come to pass.

How to Say It

CLEOPAS. *Clee-uh-pass.*

EMMAUS. *Em-may-us.*

LESSON BACKGROUND:

Lesson Background I: 2 Chronicles 6

Today's text of 2 Chronicles 6:12–17 closely follows the parallel of 1 Kings 8:22–26. A broad look at 2 Chronicles 6 reveals three separate addresses. First, Solomon prayed to God (2 Chronicles 6:1, 2). Solomon did this again as he faced the temple, acknowledging God as present in "the thick darkness" (compare Exodus 19:9, 16; 20:21; Deuteronomy 4:11; 5:22).

Second, Solomon turned from facing the temple toward the congregation in order to bless them (2 Chronicles 6:3–11). The content of this blessing was to praise God for fulfilling His promises to David (see v. 10, a major theme of this chapter). Solomon, David's son, had become king over David's house, the fulfillment of one promise. Another promise was fulfilled when God allowed Solomon to build the temple (vs. 10, 11).

Third, Solomon resumed his prayer to God as he stood on a specially built platform (v. 13) before the altar in the courtyard. Much of today's text is in this third section, with the dedication occurring in about the year 959 BC. The focus is on gratefulness for promises kept and anticipation of the keeping of promises in the future.

Lesson Background II: Luke 24

Luke 24 is the resurrection chapter of that Gospel (please read in its entirety). Here Luke records an appearance of Jesus that is not included in the other Gospel accounts: that of the resurrected Lord to Cleopas and his friend (vs. 13–35) as they walked seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Before today's text from Luke 24 opens, Jesus taught those two disciples from Scripture that the Messiah had to suffer before He entered into His glory (Luke 24:26, 27). After recognizing Jesus during the breaking of the bread (vs. 30, 31, 35), they reported their encounter to the disciples in Jerusalem.

Jesus then appeared to them while they were all together. They were so amazed and disbelieving that Jesus resorted to eating a piece of broiled fish in their presence to convince them that His resurrection was real (vs. 41–43)! No doubt the group had experienced this type of meal with Jesus many times before His crucifixion. This is where the second part of today's lesson picks up. Talk about a promise kept!

Solomon's Prayer

(2 Chronicles 6:12–17)

Place and Audience (vs. 12, 13)

1. How long had it taken to build the temple?

It took seven years to build the temple (cf. 1 Kings 6:38).

In the 1965 edition of *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Zondervan), Dr. Halley estimated that the temple would be worth, in money of that time, between two and five billion dollars. That amount would be much higher now, in 2008.

The temple, made of great stones, cedar, gold, and silver, was ninety feet long, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet tall. Upon its completion, Solomon planned a service of dedication to be held in the seventh month of the year (cf. 2 Chronicles 5:3). It was the twenty-third day of the month when the activities concluded, so, apparently it was done in coordination with the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. 7:10), which would have begun on the fifteenth. It was a time of bringing the ark to the temple and of joyous feasting and celebrating what God had done (cf. 5:4-14).

2. What did Solomon stand on during the dedication (2 Chronicles 6:12)?

Solomon had built a bronze platform on which he could stand and thus be easily seen by the people. It was approximately 7.5 feet square and 4.5 feet high. He had it placed in the middle of the courtyard. By using this temporary stage, he was able to be seen even by the people outside the courtyard walls.

This allows the full impact of the occasion to have its effect on the people when Solomon kneels with his hands outstretched toward *heaven* (compare Exodus 9:29, 33; Ezra 9:5; Job 11:13; Psalm 44:20). The setting is dramatic.

He first addressed the entire assembly, offering praise to God for having faithfully fulfilled what He had promised Solomon's father, David (cf. 2 Chron. 5:3-11). He then spread out his hands toward heaven and knelt on the platform to pray.

The entire dedication service was meant to give God honor and glory for the fulfillment of His promises. David had wanted to build this temple, but God did not allow him to do so. God promised him that his son would build the temple, so David had made extensive preparation. All that preparation and the years of hard work that followed had now culminated in this beautiful edifice built to honor the God of Israel. As God's people stood before him, Solomon knelt to lead them in a prayer of thanks and dedication.

3. How did Solomon praise and recognized God for fulfilling His promises to his father, David (vs. 14, 15)?

It was unusual for a king to kneel before someone else in front of his own people because kneeling meant submitting to a higher authority. Solomon demonstrated his great love and respect for God by kneeling before Him. His action showed that he acknowledged God as the ultimate king and authority, and it encouraged the people to do the same" (Barton, Veerman, and Taylor, *Life Application Bible Notes*, Tyndale). In this attitude Solomon began his prayer, beginning with reflection.

He began by reflecting first upon God Himself—who He is and what He is like. In the *King James Version* (as in many other translations), the word *LORD* as rendered in capital letters reflects the Hebrew word *Yahweh*.

Yahweh (known more familiarly to English readers as "Jehovah") is also Elohim, the supreme, almighty God above all gods. Furthermore, Solomon proclaimed that there is no god like Jehovah in heaven or on earth, because He is unique (the one and only). The implication is that all other gods are nonexistent and meaningless.

Reference to God keeping His covenant is further explanation of the name "Yahweh" (Jehovah). The word "mercy" is the Hebrew word *khesed*, which refers to God's loyalty to those with whom He has made a covenant. This word is often translated as "kindness" or "loving-kindness." This mercy, according to Solomon, was at that moment being poured out on God's people who were walking before Him wholeheartedly.

In verse 15, Solomon again spoke of God's faithfulness in fulfilling everything He had promised to David. Everything God had spoken He had faithfully accomplished. God had worked through His people to completely fulfill every detail.

Requesting God's Promise of an Enduring Dynasty (vs. 16, 17)

4. What further fulfillment did Solomon specifically pray for (v. 16)?

Solomon now looks to the future of the Davidic dynasty. He petitions Yahweh not to *fail* (literally, "cut off") the dynastic line. The fact that Solomon was on the throne succeeding David was further evidence that God was doing what He promised.

However, Solomon, speaking in about 959 BC, knows that the promise of an enduring dynasty is conditional in a sense. That is, the people as well as the king are to *take heed to their way to walk in my law* (see also 1 Chronicles 28:7).

While Solomon prays for God's promise of an eternal dynasty, the author of Chronicles (unknown, perhaps Ezra) can hope only for a Davidic Messiah to come in the future. For the author of Chronicles, writing centuries before Christ (about 450-400 B.C.), the promise is still to be fulfilled. This author has seen how badly the people have sinned in rejecting God's law.

The principle of obedience to God and His Word is just as important today as it was then. Israel could not be blessed by God if they turned from Him and were disobedient to His law; nor can we expect God's blessing if we turn from His Word and live by our own desires. It is still true, however, that when we repent of our sins and turn back to Him, He forgives and restores. We do not have to live the rest of our lives under the weight of guilt if we handle sin as He commands.

5. Why did Solomon want God to verify His word (v. 17)?

Solomon certainly wants God's promise to be *verified*, that is, "come true." This is similar to David's own request in 2 Samuel 7:25-29. The verification can come only as each succeeding king takes his place on the throne of Israel and as each king remains faithful to God's law.

The fact that most of the Davidic kings end up being unfaithful to God according to His law may leave the author of Chronicles wondering how God will fulfill His promise that David's dynasty will last forever. Yet the author of Chronicles hopes for the future. Christians know that God has fulfilled this important promise through the person and work of Jesus the Christ.

Jesus' Presence (Luke 24:44-49)

Prophecy and Fulfillment (vs. 44, 45)

Solomon reigned between about 970 and 930 BC. Thus we jumped forward almost 500 years to reach the day of the author of Chronicles, whether the author was Ezra or someone else. Now we jump almost another 500 years to Jesus' day in the first century A.D. How grand is the sweep of history!

After Jesus' resurrection from the dead, He appeared to various people. In the text before us, Jesus stands in the presence of His apostles (*them*) in their hiding place. Luke has prepared us for verse 44 by reporting at the beginning of his Gospel what the angel Gabriel said to Mary: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32b, 33). That time has come!

6. How did the disciples come to an understanding of the Scriptures (Luke 24:44, 45)?

After Jesus' resurrection, He suddenly appeared in the midst of the gathered disciples (v. 36), as they were wondering what to do next. His appearance at first terrified them.

But after reassuring them, having them examine His hands and feet, and eating food in front of them, He told them that what had taken place was the fulfillment of God's Word. Jesus had tried to tell them this before the crucifixion, but they never fully understood what He said. The human mind is incapable of grasping great spiritual truth without help from the Holy Spirit. On this occasion, Jesus Himself had to open their understanding to how God was working.

As He had on the road to Emmaus, Jesus referred to the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, telling them that everything mentioned throughout the entire scope of Scripture was being fulfilled in Him. This threefold division of Scripture reflects how the Old Testament was divided for the Jews: the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and Wisdom literature.

7. Jesus opened His followers' minds to the Scriptures. What was a time when you had an "Aha!" moment in God's Word?

The apostles had the promise that the Holy Spirit would guide them in all truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit still allows us to hear God's voice (Luke 12:11,12; John 14:25,26). When we read our Bibles, we are reading the testimony of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20,21). The gospel comes to us via the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:12). It makes sense to conclude, then, that the Holy Spirit will play an important part in our "Aha!" moments as we study God's Word.

Naturally, we should pray for the Spirit's help in understanding when we study or meditate on the text of Scripture. Hand in hand with that prayer should come good study techniques. When striving to understand a passage in the Bible, it helps to read verses, paragraphs, and chapters surrounding the passage for context. It can also be helpful to refer to other Scriptures. This practice is called letting Scripture interpret Scripture. Study Bibles often list passages dealing with similar themes.

Proclamation and Witness (vs. 46–49)

8. What parts of Scripture did Jesus refer to in describing how He was fulfilling them (vs. 46,47)?

The disciples had had great trouble with Jesus' teaching about His going to Jerusalem to suffer and die (see Matthew 16:21–23; Mark 8:31, 32; Luke 18:31–34).

Jesus here indicates that what He had been through had been prophesied. Of necessity He had to suffer, to die, and to rise again on the third day, because that was the only way Scripture about Him could be fulfilled. For example, Psalm 118:22–23 says, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." In Matthew 21:42 Jesus quoted these verses when He spoke of Israel's rejection of Him.

Isaiah 53 is a detailed prophecy of Jesus' rejection and crucifixion. There He is described as being despised and rejected, bearing the sins of mankind, and being led to slaughter like a lamb. Jesus' death on behalf of sinners is prophesied in verse 8: "He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken." God the Father made Him an offering for sin (v. 10), and it is through His sacrifice alone that we can be justified (v. 11).

Psalm 22 is perhaps partially an expression of great distress that came upon David and also partially a prophecy of the suffering of Christ. Some of the information given was perhaps true for David during a very traumatic time for him, but most of the details were strikingly fulfilled at the crucifixion of Christ. Verse 18, for example, says, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." We know that this literally happened at the foot of the cross as Jesus hung there.

Jesus also said that His message of repentance and forgiveness should be preached all over the world (Luke 24:27).

9. What were the disciples to do next? How were they going to fulfill the command Jesus gave them (vs. 48,49)?

Since the disciples had been firsthand witnesses of the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection, they were to take the message of the gospel far and wide. It was now time for them to understand their obligation and future ministry on His behalf.

But they would not have to preach in their own strength, because Jesus assured them that He would send the Holy Spirit to empower them.

"Trying to drive a car without keys, operating a power tool without electricity, a hydroelectric plant without any water source—all of these futile actions make as much sense as trying to minister to others without the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers can do nothing good without His power, yet how often they try!" (Barton, Veerman, and Taylor). Jesus knew the disciples could never accomplish the spread of the gospel to the world without the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus then led the disciples out to Bethany, where He blessed them and was carried away from them into heaven. The result of this farewell gathering was unity and great joy for the disciples (Luke 24:52). It was not too many days later that the Holy Spirit came upon them on the Day of Pentecost. They were endued with power from on high, and were on their way to ministry (Acts 2)!

After Pentecost, each Christian becomes a witness to the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit as well as a witness to the God who keeps promises (Acts 2:38, 39).

CONCLUSION

It is always good to be reminded at Easter that Christ's resurrection was absolutely vital to our salvation. Have your students turn to 1 Corinthians 15:12-22 to support this truth. If Christ had not risen, we would still be in our sins and miserable. However, He became the firstfruits. All believers will either be resurrected at His second coming or if they are living at that time, be caught up in the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Consider the fact that Christianity has a living Founder and Saviour. The founders of all other world religions are dead.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God makes promises. God keeps promises.

PRAYER

Our Father, thank You for fulfilling all Your promises to us in Jesus our Lord. We anticipate our own resurrection because You have raised Him from the dead. By the power of the Holy Spirit we will be witnesses, living godly in character each and every day. In Christ's powerful name, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:

Study 2 Chronicles 34 to become acquainted with the remarkable reign of King Josiah, which began when he was eight years old and lasted for thirty-one years. He was known for his righteous accomplishments.

Emphasize to your students the importance of having God's Word and following it.

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Have a Blessed Resurrection Sunday!

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