

What is the relationship between Solomon's worship and ours?
 What does this text teach us about OUR worship?

I would suggest that our worship ought to look exactly like Solomon's!
 That may sound strange, but let me explain.
 Worship throughout the history of redemption has changed a great deal,
 but it looks remarkably similar from the creation to the new creation.
 In other words, there is both continuity and discontinuity.

Every worship services described in detail in the Old Testament
 follows a remarkably similar pattern--
 Exodus 19-24; 1 Chron 15-16; 28-29; 2 Chron 5-7; 29 (Hezekiah); 35 (Josiah); Neh 8-10.
 The people come into the presence of God through the sacrifice;
 God speaks through his Word
 the people respond with their prayers and praises
 and the people partake of the covenant meal.

This same pattern is found in the heavenly worship in Revelation –
 and is reflected in every NT comment on worship as well.

Heb 7-10 is a glorious commentary on how the worship of the old covenant
 relates to the worship of the new covenant.
 When the Israelites came to the Most Holy Place on earth,
 (which was, after all, a picture of the heavenly temple)
 they had to come with a sacrifice.
 they had to come with the blood of a lamb,
 and they could only enter vicariously--through the High Priest,
 and that only once a year.

Hebrews says that when YOU come to the heavenly temple;
 when YOU come to enter the heavenly Most Holy Place;
 you DARE NOT COME without a sacrifice.
 you dare not come without the blood of the lamb.
 If you try to enter the Holy of Holies without the blood of the sacrifice,
 then God will destroy you. (Heb 9:22).

But now when we gather at the temple
 (and remember that Christ IS the temple--we are gathering IN CHRIST)
 Now, we all may go in to the holy of holies!

Jesus himself is the true temple –
 in the incarnation, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us;
 in the resurrection, this Word-made-flesh was exalted to the right hand of the Father;

and thus,

Jesus is the place where earth and heaven meet:
in the incarnation, heaven came to earth;
in the resurrection, earth ascended to heaven.

The temple was a picture of this.

The glory of the LORD that filled the temple was God coming to man.
The high priest entering into the Most Holy Place was man ascending to God.

And in Jesus Christ God has come to man, and man has ascended to God.

Tonight we'll look at the overall pattern of worship at the dedication of the temple,
focusing especially on the first part of the service (in 2 Chronicles 5).

Next week we'll look at the central part of the service:
the Word and Prayer (chapter 6).

And then the following week we'll look at the Feast,
together with God's response to the worship of Israel (chapter 7).

Chapter five has a chiasmic pattern to it.

First Solomon brings the golden vessels into the house of God (v1).
Then he assembles the elders and leaders and all the people (v2-3).
Then they bring the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem (v4-5).
Then at the center of the passage, they offer sacrifices (v6).
Then they bring the ark of the covenant into the Most Holy Place (v7-10)
Then the Levitical singers and musicians break forth in song (v11-13)
And then the glory of the LORD fills the house of God (v13-14).

The gold at the beginning of the passage points us to the true glory at the end of the passage.

And at the center of the passage is the sacrifice –
the shedding of blood that makes it possible for man to enter God's presence.

As we saw last time:
what happens at the altar is essential for what happens in the sanctuary!

1. Coming into the Presence of God through the Sacrifice (5:1-14)

a. Solomon Brought the Dedicated Things into the Temple (5:1)

¹ Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, and stored the silver, the gold, and all the vessels in the treasuries of the house of God.

b. Assembling the Elders and People (5:2-3)

² Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel, in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. ³ And all the men of Israel assembled before the king at the feast that is in the seventh month.

Verse 3 tells us that they assembled before the king at the feast that is in the seventh month.

Appropriately, this is the feast of tabernacles –
the feast when Israel would dwell in booths,

remembering how the LORD provided for them in the wilderness.
God had told Israel to appear before him three times each year,
at Passover, at Pentecost and at Tabernacles.

c. Bringing Up the Ark of the Covenant (5:4-5)

⁴And all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites took up the ark. ⁵And they brought up the ark, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the Levitical priests brought them up.

And so at the feast of Tabernacles,
the Levites brought the ark from the City of David to the temple;
they also brought the tent of meeting – the old tabernacle –
and all the holy vessels from Moses' day –
thereby expressing the continuity between the tabernacle of Moses
and the temple of Solomon.

d. The Sacrifice (5:6)

⁶And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered.

And as all these holy objects are brought up to the temple mount,
Solomon and all the congregation were sacrificing innumerable sheep and oxen.

On an ordinary day, you would sacrifice an ordinary number of animals.
On a feast day, you would sacrifice many, many more.
But on this day – on this most holy of days –
they sacrificed so many that they could not be counted.

Note this!

The more important the day – the bigger the sacrifice!
And then came the day to end all days –
the sacrifice to end all sacrifices!
The day when our Lord Jesus Christ –
very God of very God, begotten, not created –
who, for us and for our salvation, became man –
and he became the atoning sacrifice that removed sin once for all.
And *that* day became the most holy of days –
a day so holy that it has been commemorated every day since!

Is there a day in your life (since you came to faith in Jesus)
that you have not thought of that day?

I hope not!

Can a Christian go a whole day without remembering the death of Jesus?
That sacrifice that made you right with God?!

This is why every worship service at Michiana Covenant
(and every other church worthy of the name “Christian”)
begins with some acknowledgement of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

You cannot come into the presence of God, except through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

Notice how this is symbolized in Solomon’s day:

e. The Ark Brought into the Most Holy Place (5:7-10)

⁷Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the Most Holy Place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁸The cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles. ⁹And the poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the Holy Place before the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen from outside. And they are^[a] there to this day. ¹⁰There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

The priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD into the Most Holy Place.

Last time we heard that the cherubim were standing in the Holy of Holies,
facing the Holy Place –
so the ark is placed under the wings of the cherubim,
so that the cherubim cover the ark –
protecting the ark – the place where God’s glory dwells.

And there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses put there at Horeb. (v10)

In the Pentateuch we are told that a pot of manna and Aaron’s rod that budded
were also put into the ark –
but apparently they were removed at some point.

(Remember that the Philistines captured the ark at one point –
and there were several generations of careless priests,
so there were lots of opportunities for something important to be misplaced!)

But what is the point of having the tablets of the Law in the ark of the covenant?
The key is understanding the relationship between the altar and the sanctuary.
In Exodus 24, Moses had explained the relationship in this way:
“Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you
in accordance with all these words.”

And then the blood of the covenant was sprinkled on the people.

Remember how the altar and the sanctuary are related.
There is no way into the sanctuary – except through the blood of the altar.
And here in the sanctuary – in the Holy of Holies –
there is only one thing.

The Word.

The Torah – the Law of God – God’s instruction/direction for his people –
but *also* God’s promise.

Please don’t forget that the Law *starts* with the Gospel.

The preface to the Ten Commandments says:

“I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of bondage.”

I really want you to think about this!

The one thing that is in the holy of holies is the ark of the covenant.

And the one thing that is in the ark of the covenant is the Law (the Word of God).

So through the blood of the sacrifice

the high priest may come into the Most Holy Place,
the place that is *defined* by God’s covenant law.

In other words, the book of the covenant (the law)

has no power without the blood of the covenant.

But the blood of the covenant (the sacrifice)

has no meaning without the book of the covenant.

Think of it this way:

if God gave us his Law – if God told us what to do –

but Jesus never came and died and been raised from the dead –
what would the Law do?

It would condemn us –

because the book of the covenant (the Word of God)
apart from the blood of the covenant (the sacrifice)
is powerless.

But if Jesus had come and died and been raised from the dead,

and God never told us about it –
what effect would it have?

He would have died in vain –

because the blood of the covenant without the book of the covenant
is meaningless.

And in the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the Word has ascended to the Holy of Holies.

Even as the Law of Moses was brought in the ark of the covenant
and placed in the Holy of Holies,

even so, the Word of God became flesh (he tabernacled among us)

and in his humanity – in his glorified flesh and blood,
he has ascended to the right hand of God.

But it doesn’t stop there.

Because on the day of Pentecost, the glory of the LORD was poured out on the *church*,
even as the glory of the LORD filled the temple in Solomon's day.
And now the glory of the LORD – the Spirit of God –
has filled you.

Remember what the prophets had said?
That God would write his law – not on tablets of stone –
but on tablets of the human heart.

When you see the Law of God dwelling in a golden house
you are to marvel that all of this was designed to show you
that someday the Law of God – the Word of God –
would take up his abode in humanity.
And the church would become the holy dwelling place for God.

This is why the apostles are so emphatic about how *sin* has no place in the Christian life!
Remember how sin contaminated and corrupted the temple?
Do you remember how idolatry drove God *out* of the temple?
Well, that's why Hebrews is so emphatic about how the church
needs to be holy –
“Strive for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14)

You *are* the holy dwelling place of God –
therefore you must be holy.

f. The Singers and Musicians Give Thanks (5:11-13)

¹¹And when the priests came out of the Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had consecrated themselves, without regard to their divisions, ¹²and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kinsmen, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with 120 priests who were trumpeters; ¹³and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD),

In the OT this was symbolized by the priests.
While all Israel was supposed to be holy,
the priests and the Levites were set apart to be especially holy.

Verses 11-13 remind us of the divisions of the Priests and Levites.
On this most special occasion, they didn't bother with the divisions –
everyone showed up!

Indeed, one can see how this points us forward to how, in Christ,
the whole church becomes a royal priesthood, a holy nation.
In Christ, we do not have those who are priests, and those who are not –
but in Christ we have all been consecrated through his blood as a holy priesthood.

g. The Glory of the LORD Fills the House (5:13-14)

and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD,

"For he is good,

for his steadfast love endures forever,"

the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ¹⁴so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

The words "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever"

probably refers to the Psalm that they sang at the dedication of the temple.

Psalms 106, 135, 136 all have that line in them.

This is probably the title of the Psalm – not the entire text that was sung!

Any of these Psalms would have been very appropriate,

for they tell of God's work of redeeming his people from Egypt.

This is part of the reason why we sing songs that celebrate God's mighty deeds in history.

We need to remember that we are part of a grand story

that stretches all the way back to the creation –

and stretches all the way forward to the new heavens and the new earth.

Our words and our music needs to help connect us to the church in all times and places.

Now, there is one more thing you need to see here.

It is *not* the case that the glory of God fills the house,

and so the Levites sing praise.

The glory of the LORD comes in *response* to the praise of the Priests and Levites.

This is one of the clearest statements of the "dialogical principle" of worship.

The dialogical principle says that worship is a dialogue between God and his people.

It is very clear that in this dialogue *God speaks first*.

You can see this in history as God came to Abraham and revealed himself *first*.

Then Abraham responded to God.

You can see this in the Ten Commandments:

"I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the Land of Egypt..."

Therefore Israel is to obey him.

It is not the case merely that God speaks and we respond.

After we speak, *God responds to us!*

Here in the dedication of the temple,

all this is done symbolically:

the Word of God (the Law) enters into its place in the Holy of Holies –

and with the Word visibly placed before them,

the priests and Levites break forth in song.

And when God's servants lift up their songs of praise to the LORD,
the LORD responds by doing for Solomon what he had done for Moses and all Israel:
the glory of the LORD fills the temple.

Over the next couple weeks, we'll look in more detail at chapters 6-7,
but let me just show you briefly how it fits together.

At the beginning of chapter 6, Solomon expounds the Word of God.
Notice that it focuses upon what God has done in history:

God has been faithful to his promises, and has accomplished all that he had said.
He has given his people a place where they may worship him;
and he has given them a king who will lead them in his ways.

The point of Solomon's sermon is the gospel – the good news
that God has done what he has promised to his people,
and has fulfilled with his hand what he spoke with his mouth.

The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us –
and through his death and resurrection, he has triumphed over sin and death,
and now sits at the right hand of the Father –
even as God promised to Moses, to David and the prophets.

And then Solomon's prayer serves as the application of his sermon.
Solomon takes the sermon that he just preached,
and applies it to the situations of the people of God!

The prayer of the covenant community
is the response of God's people to His Word.
The Word of God declares his wonderful work of redemption;
the prayer of the covenant community asks him
to continue to do that work in our midst.

That's why the congregational prayer *follows* the sermon.

And then, when Solomon finishes his prayer,
fire comes down from heaven and the glory of the LORD fills the temple.
(We'll look more at this next week)

And finally,
the king and his people offer sacrifices--burnt offerings and peace offerings.
The peace offering, if you look back to Leviticus where it was instituted,
was to be eaten by all those who offered it.
Here, the whole assembly would gather together to share the peace offering
(I think 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep would probably be enough!)

Worship concludes with the covenant meal, as the worshipers partake of the sacrifice.

We partake of that sacrifice every Sunday in the Lord's Supper.
After all, if you want peace with God,
 then you must partake of Christ.
The peace offering was offered at the end of worship to symbolize
 the peace that had come through the shedding of blood.
This is what Paul says in I Cor 10:16-18.
 Those who eat of the sacrifice, partake in that sacrifice.
 The bread that we break and the cup that we bless
 are a participation in the body and blood of Christ.
We now have peace with God through the death and resurrection of Christ.

It is noteworthy that every biblical worship service follows this basic pattern.

In the last couple hundred years it has become quite popular in some circles
to say that Christian worship is based on the synagogue
 –NOT on the temple.
But if you look through the NT,
 you will find that the apostles do not think about worship
 in terms of the synagogue.
The reason is because no Jew ever called a synagogue meeting “worship.”
The synagogue was a place for studying scripture and prayer,
 but it was not a place of worship.

Does that sound odd to you?

Perhaps the reason is because we are used to worship
 that consists simply of prayer, singing, and preaching.
But the apostles were not.
 Every worship service mentioned in Scripture includes a covenant meal.

 In other words, every time Scripture talks about the people of God
 corporately meeting with their God,
 it includes participation in the sacrifice
 through partaking of the covenant meal.

The New Testament speaks in this way with equal clarity as the Old Testament.

 In Acts 2:42 we hear that the church in Jerusalem
 “continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
 in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
Four verses later it says that they met “daily with one accord in the temple,
 and breaking bread from house to house”

Here the covenant meal includes a whole meal.

 But the term “breaking bread” is not a normal Greek phrase for sharing a meal,
 It is intended to draw your attention back to the Lord's Supper,
 when Jesus broke bread with his disciples.

And, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10,
 the bread that we break is a participation in the body of Christ.

The apostles saw Christian worship as the fulfillment of this pattern of worship.
In the OT, only the priests were allowed to partake of the consecrated bread.
But in Christ, all believers are priests, and therefore we all partake of the one loaf,
because we are one loaf in Jesus Christ, our great High Priest.
Therefore the Jerusalem church had daily communion
as a means of demonstrating the true priesthood of all believers.
But while daily communion is appropriate
(and it was practiced in many places in the early church),
obviously it is not always possible for the church to gather daily.

Some have asked why we don't have the Lord's Supper on Sunday evenings.
After all, if every worship service has a covenant meal in scripture,
should we have communion Sunday evening as well as Sunday morning?
There would be nothing wrong with having the Lord's Supper twice on one day.
But there is also nothing wrong with meeting for singing, prayer, and preaching.
Our evening service may not be a full-fledged worship service –
but that's okay.
A few weeks ago we used the evening prayer service from 16th century Strassburg
in our evening service.
The Reformed Church of Strassburg had weekly communion Sunday morning,
but Sunday evening they had a service
that was remarkably like our evening service!
Some churches have chosen to have "full-fledged worship services"
only once a month, or once a quarter –
and the rest of the time, they have a partial worship service.

But let's set aside, for the moment, the question of weekly communion.
The real question is WHY do the apostles think of worship in terms of the breaking of bread?
Why does Luke say that they gathered on the first day of the week "to break bread"?
If the apostles were modeling their worship on the synagogue,
then they would never have called the public assembly of the people of God
"Coming together to break bread."
But the apostles do not model their worship on the synagogue,
because the synagogue was not worship.
The synagogue has no sacrifice!
The synagogue has no way to deal with sin!

When the church comes together to meet with her God,
she has a sacrifice—the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!
And because we come together in his name,
we have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins.

The synagogue was a Sabbath school.
It was the best the average Israelite could do.
They couldn't enter the Holy of Holies,
so they had to gather at a distance and pray.
Is that all that we are doing?

Are we barred from entering the Holy of Holies?
Are we simply gathering at a distance from Heaven,
praying toward the temple,
relying upon some distant priesthood?

NO!!!

Remember what Hebrews 10 says!

YOU may have confidence to ENTER the heavenly Holy of Holies,
because YOU have been washed with pure water;
YOU have been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ,
And therefore YOU (plural) may come into the very presence of God.

Christian worship is even greater and MORE glorious than temple worship,
Because our worship is not merely an earthly picture of the heavenly worship;
our worship enters into the reality of the heavenly temple.

This is why

- 1) we come into worship on the basis of the sacrifice.
We are to remember that we are here because of what Jesus Christ has done!
- 2) we then hear the Word of God remind us of what God has accomplished in Christ;
We too easily forget who Christ is, what he has done,
who we are in Christ, and what that means for our lives
–and we need to be called back week after week; day after day.
- 3) we then respond to the Word with our prayers and praises,
rejoicing in what he has done, and asking him to reorient us to our true identity.
- 4) we conclude with the covenant meal.
It is not enough merely to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
We must partake of him who is our life.

We're not talking about some abstract idea here.

Paul believed that partaking of the Lord's Supper was a means of grace,
enabling the Corinthian Christians to flee from idolatry (1 Cor 10:14)
The means of grace—the Word, prayer, and the Sacraments—are designed by God
to provide YOU with the strength that you need to walk before him day by day.
Our worship here, each Sunday, is to remind you of who you really are –
and our worship is then to overflow in all of life,

as we participate in the temple-building work of Christ,
as his gospel goes forth in our words and deeds to those around us.