

## Kings Series #3 “America’s Only Hope” 1 Kings 8:22-53

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Op Center*

1. In Feb. 95, TV miniseries called *Op Center*
2. Began with high drama as a team of American Marines and special forces troops were monitoring the decommissioning of three nuclear warheads in the Ukraine
3. But instead of sending the missiles to the junkyard, the Russian military officer in charge ordered his men to murder the Americans and hijack the warheads
4. Now, it was just a TV show and by the end, the nukes were recovered and all was well with the world once again
5. What most people do not know is that a real life drama of the same nature has taken place, and the end is yet to be told
6. 3 nuclear warheads were stolen from the old Soviet Union and found their way into the hands of Islamic extremists in Iran
7. Some intelligence groups are saying Iran may now have as many as 5 nuclear devices
8. The Iranians have purchased long range missiles from China and are attempting to fasten the Soviet warheads to them
9. Others are concerned that one of the warheads might be altered and then smuggled into Israel or the US and detonated
10. Virtually every intelligence agency in the world no longer debates over **IF** there will be nuclear terrorism, the only debate is over **WHEN**

#### B. *Today*

1. What does all this have to do with our study in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings?
2. Today we are going to be taking a look at Solomon’s prayer of dedication at the completion of the temple
3. It’s a remarkable prayer because it is clearly one he was led to pray under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
4. And the parallels between what Solomon prayed for Israel and what we see happening in our country today are striking

#### C. *America Past The Crossroads*

1. I have spent a lot of time this week reading and thinking about what I was to share today
2. And often I read the remarks of others that America stands at a crossroads
3. But the more I read, and meditated, and prayed, the more I came to the conclusion that America is NOT at a crossroads = We are way past any cross road
4. We are on the Road to Desolation
5. In fact, as David Wilkerson has said, we are already being desolated; we

are already being judged by God

#### **D. Hope, Not Despair**

1. But my message today is one of hope, not despair
2. You see, no matter how bad things are
  - a. no matter how bad they may get
  - b. as long as we draw breath, and as long as God sits on the throne
  - c. we can still pray
3. There is hope for America! America's Only Hope Is Prayer

## **II. TEXT**

### **A. Set The Scene**

1. The temple is now complete
  - a. the building is finished
  - b. the furnishings are all made and in their proper places
  - c. the ark of the covenant has been moved into the Holy of Holies
  - d. the glory of God's presence, called the Shekinah, has entered into the temple in the sight of all the people who have gathered for the temple's dedication ceremony
2. Then, King Solomon gave a sermon, telling the people of God's faithfulness
3. He concludes with a prayer to God . . .

### **B. Vs. 22-24**

**{22} Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven;**

**{23} and he said: "LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts.**

**{24} "You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day.**

1. He begins with praise and thanksgiving for God's past faithfulness
2. God had promised David that his son would build the temple
3. And now that promise has been fulfilled
4. From the faith that comes from seeing God's past faithfulness, Solomon asks that God would continue His goodness to the nation

### **C. Vs. 25-26**

**{25} "Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.'**

**{26} "And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father.**

1. God told David that if his sons remained true to the Lord, the throne would

- forever belong to them
2. Solomon knows of this promise from God and asks that it might indeed be fulfilled in his life
  3. From this we learn an important lesson about prayer
  4. The central thing about prayer is to discover the will and promises of God and then pray for them to be fulfilled in our lives and the lives of others

#### **D. Vs. 27-30**

**{27} "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!**

**{28} "Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today:**

**{29} "that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there,' that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place.**

**{30} "And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive.**

1. In a flash of enlightenment, Solomon realized that while the temple was a magnificent structure and God had even shown His approval of it by sending the cloud of His presence to fill it -
  2. No building could ever *hold* God
    - a. the skies are too small to contain Him
    - b. how much less some building made with stones?
  3. But still, in His grace and condescension unto man, God chose to place His name there
  4. Solomon asked that God would be attentive to the prayers that were offered at the temple
    - a. that He would hear from heaven
    - b. and do what the people asked
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5. In the next section of verses, Solomon asks for the Lord's mercy for Israel if she went astray but returned to Him
  6. It's in this section that I'd like us to examine the parallels between Israel and the course of our own nation
  7. But before we begin, let me say that I am not one of those who sees America as a modern day Israel; that just as Israel was God chosen people in the OT, America has now attained to that place
  8. God's purposes for Israel have not changed and remain in force
  9. America has not taken Israel's place in God's plan for the ages
  10. But the principles that we discover here in Solomon's prayer *do* apply to our nation
  11. You see, there is a fundamental difference between Israel and the US
    - a. the difference is this
    - b. God is the one who initiated the covenant with Israel
    - c. while it is our founding fathers that initiated a national covenant with God

- d. the specific promises of blessing and cursing God made to Israel cannot be transferred or adopted by America
- 12. But at the same time, we need to realize that God does deal with nations
  - a. the OT repeatedly shows how God judged nations --
  - b. either blessing or judging them based on how they acted
  - c. He blessed Lebanon and Syria when they helped Israel
  - d. He prospered Assyria and Babylon when they followed the principles of justice and virtue
  - e. but when they perverted justice and became corrupt, He destroyed them
- 13. You see, while God's final judgment of individuals is carried out in eternity -
- 14. Nations only exist on this plane, so they must be judged during their existence on earth
- 15. Our founding fathers based our institutions on the principles of God's Word
  - a. they saw the hand of God leading them to found a republic whose governing ideals would be drawn from scripture
  - b. and from the beginning they knew that the Republic would only be successful if the individuals who make up the nation followed God
  - c. they asked God to bless their experiment in self-government and to prosper and protect it
  - d. but they knew full well that if the people of the land ever turned from the Lord, He would judge them and their nation
- 16. I realize that what I'm saying runs contrary to the officially accepted and endorsed politically correct secular, revisionist view
- 17. But it's true
- 18. You see, I've read what the founding fathers *wrote* instead of just what others today *say* they *meant* -
- 19. And over and over they wrote and said that they sought to establish a *Christian* nation, under God

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- 20. Well, let's examine the parallels between Solomon's prayer and our nation today . . .

### **E. Vs. 31-32**

- {31} "When anyone sins against his neighbor, and is forced to take an oath, and comes and takes an oath before Your altar in this temple,**
- {32} "then hear in heaven, and act, and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked, bringing his way on his head, and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.**
- 1. Solomon is referring to disputes between people over issues of property and the like
  - a. really, he is praying for peace and justice among the Jewish people
  - b. that the nation would be marked by safety and peace rather than rampant crime & disrespect for one another
- 2. He prays that if a person does commit a crime, that they would be quickly found out and dealt with,
- 3. While the righteous would be rewarded

4. What are we to say of our nation today in terms of crime?
  - a. are our streets and homes safe?
  - b. what about our schools?
  - c. or our workplaces?
    - 1) is it safe at the post office?
    - 2) is it safe at the unemployment office?
5. According to the Bureau of Justice Report for 1994, [last full year for which they have statistics]<sup>[1]</sup>
  - a. 42 million serious crimes committed
  - b. in violent crime, 5 of every 100 people
    - 1) that means 15 of those in service
    - 2) Rape, Sexual assault, robbery, assault, murder
  - c. in property crime, 30 of every 100
    - 1) 90 of those in service
    - 2) Burglary, motor theft, Purse snatching, and the like
  - d. there were 23,305 murders in 1994
    - 1) in LA City alone, last year = 838<sup>[2]</sup>
    - 2) so far this year = 448
    - 3) in Oxnard, in 1995 = 11<sup>[3]</sup>
    - 4) so far this year = 14!
6. In the last 30 years, there has been a 560% increase in violent crime<sup>[4]</sup>
7. But I know I don't really have to give you a litany of these things
8. All of us are well aware of the sorry state of our land in terms of crime
9. One of the major sources of anxiety among teens today is the fear of violence
10. In fact, the fear is so great, many of them carry weapons to school for protection
  - a. 1 in 7 people carry a weapon either on their person or in their car<sup>[5]</sup>
  - b. and according to statistics, America is now the world's most violent nation
  - c. that may seem hard to believe when we hear about wars going on in Bosnia and Northern Ireland
  - d. but let's put it in the proper perspective
    - 1) 838 killed in LA last year
    - 2) there haven't been that many people killed in the war in Northern Ireland in the last decade!!!!!!!!!!

#### **F. Vs. 33-34**

**{33} "When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and when they turn back to You and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication to You in this temple,**

**{34} "then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to their fathers.**

1. Solomon prays that when the people turn their back on God, and He uses defeat in war as a way to wake them up,

2. That when they do repent and cry out to Him, He will relent and restore them
3. Well, our nation has turn it's back on God
  - a. we've turned our back on Him in a multitude of ways
  - b. we've turned from Him to pursue sin and perversion
  - c. we've turned away from Him and denied He even exists
    - 1) the official stand of our public educational system regarding origins is evolution
    - 2) science teachers cannot even mention creation under the threat of termination
    - 3) religion, and especially Biblical Christianity is being shut out of any and all public discourse
  - d. we took prayer out of the schools and now principles and vice-principles are confiscating the bibles of students who bring them to school
  - e. the Ten Commandments cannot be displayed on the walls of our courthouse
  - f. and City parks cannot put up crèche scenes at Christmas because it violates the principle of separation of church and state
  - g. some cities have even gone so far as to tell churches they cannot erect manger scenes on *their* own property because it offends non-religious passers-by!
4. Truly, we have turned our back on God as a nation
5. But thank the Lord that we haven't been defeated by an enemy - Or Have We?
6. I think very soon we will see the fulfillment of this very thing
7. Right now, the one subject that has everyone abuzz is terrorism
  - a. all of the intelligence groups and bulletins have been warning that terrorism is one of the biggest threats to national peace
  - b. not only internationally, but locally
  - c. it is certainly on the rise - especially as directed against US targets
    - 1) the bombing of the barracks in Saudi Arabia a couple months ago
    - 2) the Olympic Village pipe bomb
    - 3) the downing of TWA flight 800
      - a) which, by the way, is increasingly looking like a terrorist act
      - b) and according to Chuck Missler, most of the experts are saying it was probably a stinger missile fired from a boat just offshore that brought down the plane
      - c) of course, the press is silent on this because of the concerns over the damage such a report would do to air travel
8. About a month ago there was a major conference in Tehran
  - a. though it was a private meeting of terrorist leaders, a report of the their decisions was smuggled out
  - b. the upshot of the conference was that they planned a whole new wave of terrorist attacks against the US
  - c. besides the terrorists attending this meeting there were several high ranking Iranian officials and an Iranian billionaire who has placed his

wealth at the disposal of terror

### **G. Vs. 35-40**

{35} "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them,

{36} "then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.

{37} "When there is famine in the land, pestilence or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers; when their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness there is;

{38} "whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this temple:

{39} "then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men),

{40} "that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.

1. God uses drought, famine, plague, and pestilence as a means of correcting His people
2. Again, consider the parallels to today
3. The El Nino ocean system has altered the weather patterns all across the nation
  - a. the growing season has been dramatically changed
  - b. climate patterns that once made for excellent harvest have shifted and made the production of food difficult for many regions of the country
  - c. drought has devastated many areas and thousands of farmers have gone bankrupt
4. Then there is the rise of the new plagues which have the medical community scared to death
  - a. AIDS
  - b. virulent strains of TB, strep, staff, and all kinds of new STD's that are resistant to medication

### **H. Vs. 41-53**

{41} "Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name's sake

{42} '(for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple,

{43} "hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name.

{44} "When Your people go out to battle against their enemy, wherever You send them,

and when they pray to the LORD toward the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name,

{45} "then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

{46} "When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to the land of the enemy, far or near;

{47} "yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness';

{48} "and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name:

{49} "then hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause,

{50} "and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and grant them compassion before those who took them captive, that they may have compassion on them

{51} "(for they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out of Egypt, out of the iron furnace),

{52} "that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant and the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them whenever they call to You.

{53} "For You separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be Your inheritance, as You spoke by Your servant Moses, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD."

1. Solomon turns his thoughts and prayer to the impact Israel was to have on the other nations
2. They were to be a light to the world
3. But if their light was quenched because they forsook the Lord, then God would use foreigners to correct them
4. I think God is doing that to us today
5. Not just in the threat of terrorism that we have already considered
6. But in the fact that other nations have virtually defeated us, not on the field of battle, but in the field of economics
7. Other nations have co-opted large portions of our country
  - a. several of our landmarks are owned by other nations
  - b. just 20 years ago, the US was the world's lender
  - c. now we are the world's largest debtor![\[6\]](#)

### ***I. A Dismal Picture - But Wait!***

1. I know I've painted a pretty dismal picture
2. But notice that Solomon's words aren't dismal or defeatist
3. They are words of hope
4. He knows that man is prone to wander from God, but because God loves us



- he will correct us
5. Solomon's prayer was one of hope, that Israel would see the loving and correcting hand of God for what it was and would turn in humble repentance to the Lord
  6. His prayer was that God would hear from heaven, and heal the nation
  7. Over and over he prayer, "When the people turn from you, and you correct them, and they return and pray, THEN HEAR FROM HEAVEN AND HEAL"
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8. Earlier I said that America is *not* at a crossroads - that she is well past the crossroads and is on the fast track to desolations
  9. Indeed, the desolations are already falling
  10. But it is not too late to turn back to the Lord
  11. Just as Solomon prayed, if the people saw the judgment and turned back and prayed, God would relent and heal

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *America's Only Hope*

1. America's only hope is not going to be found in San Diego this week
2. Nor is it going to be found in the Democratic convention later
3. America's only hope is in the prayers of God's people
4. God will do His part if we will pray!

#### B. *An Example*

1. As we conclude, let me take you back in time . . .
2. It is a stifling summer day in Philadelphia
3. The founding fathers are sitting in a room, trying to hammer out the constitution for the new republic
4. But they are bickering and fighting over dozens of issues
5. Because they all come from different colonies, they all are trying to protect their own interests
6. The groups seems to be at an impasse - in fact, several of the delegates have left in frustration and returned home
7. The nation, which has yet to be born, stands to be delivered still-born
8. Then, when it was darkest and despair was at it's strongest, Benjamin Franklin rose and addressed the group

"In this situation of this assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened that we have not to this point once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understanding! In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for Divine protection. Our prayers were heard, and they were graciously answered. And have we forgotten this powerful Friend? or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men.

If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured in the Sacred Writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe that without His aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a bye word down to future ages. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our work, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business.”

9. There is one line from Franklin’s speech especially stirs me
10. “If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?”
  - a. my thought is,
  - b. and if an empire cannot rise without His aid,
  - c. surely He will not lightly or casually let it fall

### **C. Our Call**

1. Last Tuesday - first regular weekly prayer meeting
2. Prayed for the nation
3. As we prayed, I felt strongly impressed to not only pray for our leaders and to pray for the land
4. But that God wants us, as a church, to pray for prayer for our nation
5. It’s as though we need to pray that God will move His people to prayer

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[1] Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin - US Department of Justice, April 1996 NCJ-158022

[2] LAPD Press Relations Department, per phone call 8/9/96 213-485-3586

[3] Oxnard Police Department - Linda Gray 805-385-7688

[4] Lindsay, Hal *The Final Battle* Pg. 216

[5] Crismier, Charles *Preserve Us A Nation* Pg. 39

[6] Wilkerson, David “*God Has Already Begun To Desolate America*” 3-23-92