

Learning to Pray for the Church

from the Old Testament Prayers for Israel

“And forgive your people, who have sinned against you...for they are your people and your inheritance.”

– I Kings 8:50-51

Some Introductory Ideas:

- By “pray for the church,” we’re talking about:
 - Making supplications to God for the church
 - Praying about spiritual things *on behalf of* the church
- Two fundamental analogies in Scripture:
 - **Israel**, God’s nation of the Old Covenant, corresponds to the church today (see I Pet 2:9-10; II Cor 6:16-17; etc.) – ***NOT ANY PHYSICAL NATION!***
 - **The Temple**, God’s dwelling place of the Old Covenant, corresponds to the church today (II Cor 6:16; I Tim 3:15; Eph 2:19-22; etc.) – ***NOT ANY PHYSICAL LOCATION!***

Question of This Study:

What can we learn about praying for and on behalf of the church from studying the Old Testament prayers for Israel?

Examples:

- I Chron 29:10-19
- I Kings 8:14-53
- II Kings 19:15ff
- Ezra 9:5-15
- Neh 9:5-38
- Dan 9:1-19
- II Chron 20:5-12
- II Sam 22:1-51
- Isa 64:1-12

Background of I Kings 8

- **II Sam 7** – David not allowed by God to build the Temple, but:
 - God makes a covenant with David that one of his descendants will forever sit on the throne
- **I Chron 22-29** – All preparations are made, and praise offered, for building the temple
- **I Kings 5-7** – Under King Solomon, Israel builds the Temple
- **I Kings 8** – Solomon's prayer of dedication

The Church Is More Than A Community Group!

- **I Kings 8:15,22-26** – The promises temporarily fulfilled in David and Solomon were ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ!
 - **Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:29-36; Heb 1:8-9, 12:1-2**
 - Do you remember the church, and yourself as part of the church, as having this rich history?
 - God “keep[s His] covenant and mercy with [His] servants who walk before [Him] with all their hearts” (vs. 23)!
- This is not a social club! As Christians, we must remember who we are:
 - **I Tim 3:15; Eph 1:22-23, 3:10-13**

We Don't Own God; God Owns Us!

- **I Kings 8:27-30** – Was the tabernacle or the temple really the exclusive dwelling place of God?
 - This became a problem for some of the Jews: “*God only loves us!*”
 - **Jonah 4; Matt 9:9-13; Acts 13:42-51, 22:21-22**
 - They thought they had a monopoly on God and His love and started looking down on everyone else!
- “*The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you... hear the supplication of your servant and of your people*” (vs. 27,30)
 - **God will save who He wills: our duty is to teach and love all! See Matt 28:18-20; Gal 5:13-14; etc.**

Prayer Is Not Offered With Social or National Distinctions

- This point logically follows from the first two: **the church does not pray as a physical nation or exclusively on behalf of a physical nation!**
- **vs. 41-43** – The prayers of Israel often express this same concern: **that all people everywhere might come to know God!**
 - Ps 67; II Kings 19:19; Isa 56:7 w. Mark 11:17; etc.
- **The gospel knows no national boundaries, and neither should our prayers!**
 - Matt 28:18-20; Acts 14:16f, 17:30; I Tim 2:1-4

God's People Should Collectively Make Confession of Sin

- Is the church above confession of sin, as if we alone are perfect? Is it inappropriate for us to collectively make confession?
- **vs. 46-53** – Solomon's prayer for Israel was full of confession, proving their sincerity
 - See also Dan 9:1-19; Ezra 9:5-15; etc.
 - In the NT, see Jam 5:16, I John 1:9 w. Acts 8:24
- **vs. 39,46** – Sincerity is a must, for God tests our hearts!
 - **I Sam 9:3** – And He answers sincere prayers!