

# The Compass

Week 23

OT Readings: 2 Samuel 22:1-1 Kings 7:51

NT Readings: Acts 2:1-7:50

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## Things to Watch for in Your Readings this Week

### Old Testament

- 2 Samuel continues David's story;<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 1-2 will mark the final years of David's reign and life.
- Solomon's life is one who which begins well and ends extremely poorly. Watch for hints – what are the indicators that all is not well in Solomon's heart and life, what is the progression away from God and why?<sup>2</sup>
- Take note of David's charge to Solomon (1 Kings 2:1-4) and then Solomon's early encounter with God (1 Kings 3:1-15). Such was the early prospect of Solomon's reign! But it was not to be...
- A great deal of attention is given to the temple's completion, which is now the "permanent" dwelling of God with His people. There is a sense of completion and fulfillment – God and His people are together and at rest in the land of promise.<sup>3</sup>

### New Testament

- The Spirit's coming in Acts 2:1-4 is one of the most important events in the N.T. Notice how Peter explains it (2:12-36), his invitation for the crowd to receive the Spirit as well (2:37-40) and what results from the Spirit's work among these new converts (2:41-47).
- The events of Acts in this week's readings are centered in Jerusalem (6:7), but with the death of Stephen things will change (8:1-3).
- It is difficult to overestimate the need for the Holy Spirit's presence and power to achieve what God wants. How are you challenged by what you see in Acts?<sup>4</sup>

## Highlight of the Week: Who is God?

**Acts 2:1-4. 2:33-39.** If we restrict the Spirit's work in our lives to any one thing, e.g., power or holiness or evangelism, we will miss it. The Spirit's fullness is a multi-faceted and comprehensive lifestyle of walking with God where God provides for us everything we need to do this life and to do His will in this life.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, we might miss something critically important if are too general about the Spirit's fullness or too narrowly focused on the Spirit's abilities toward us. We might miss the fact that this about *intimacy and closeness of relationship*. Have you ever wondered why the early believers respond the way they do when the Spirit comes? What if it is a response of love to love given and *experienced*? The Spirit's coming is the fulfillment of Jesus own words in John 14:15-17. What if this is allot about God drawing as close to us as is possible in this life, pouring out His love upon us, and about us living in that love, experiencing that love, being empowered by that love, our hearts captured by that love, us being transformed by that love?

Paul captures this "love poured out" in Romans 5:5, "**For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.**"

*How do we know* how "dearly He loves us"? Not just from reading the Bible or listening to a message or hearing about what other Christians have experienced. No, it is about **experiencing it for ourselves!** Is this your experience? Have you asked God for an experience of His love? Is your heart open? Are you ready to respond *back* to His love when He gives it? God is not distant or impersonal. He wants to love us in such a way that we experience it; but that's only half of the story. He wants us to express back our love to Him so that *He* experiences it. What if *that* is what happened on Pentecost?

## Application: "What about me? How does this apply?"

**1 Kings 3:3-15.** If we read too quickly we might miss the immensity of the moment. As Solomon seeks God, God reveals Himself to Solomon – and hands to him, remarkably, a blank check, "What it is that you want Me to give you?"

If that was *you*, what would *you* ask? Now, don't think about it too long – what is the immediate thing that comes to mind? Health and wealth, more of the American dream? Perhaps we wouldn't be quite so crassly materialistic, maybe something good for our kids or grandkids or others.

How does God react to Solomon's request (3:6-9)? He was pleased (3:10-13); but perhaps thrilled is a more fitting description. You see Solomon's request revealed Solomon's *heart*. It was a heart that loved God (3:3) and a heart whose greatest concern was what Solomon believed must be paramount on God's heart – His people. Is God's great kingdom purpose what stirs us, what we dream about, what concerns us deeply, what consumes our resources, what focuses our life?

What might God do with us if we had a heart like Solomon's?

### Difficult Question of the Week

#### 2 Samuel 24:1f. Q. Did God cause David to sin? And then punish the people because of it?

A difficult passage to be sure; a few thoughts might help us here:

- "Incited" (NASU) instead of "caused" softens the blow a bit – God is interacting with David, but David is ultimately responsible for his actions. Is this a test to see where David & Israel are with God?
- The Chronicler (1 Chronicles 21) adds insight to the passage by bringing in Satan as the inciter, "Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel." This sounds a bit more like a matter of cosmic conflict, perhaps something like Job, where things are occurring in the background of which we are not informed but have important implications to the events.
- We seem to have jumped into the middle of an interaction between God and Israel that has now come to a crisis point, i.e., there is significant history leading up to what we see here, but we are not told exactly what.
- The focus of this narrative is more about David (his failure) and about the future site of the temple.
- Leaders and people are closely joined; we can really see this in our nation where we are free to choose leaders – whether we like it or not they do *represent* us – generally speaking they tend to look like us in attitude and character. Possibly the census reveals the truth about the heart of David *and* the people. Something seems really wrong with both David and the people in their relationship with God. God must act to avoid future difficulties. Perhaps this about needed discipline to deal lovingly with the issues. In discipline, the intention is to create a situation whereby change and repentance can take place. The pain of discipline is less than the consequences *IF* the course that David and the people are on continues to its conclusion unchallenged by God.<sup>6</sup>
- God's anger might be seen as a withdrawal of His blessing and presence; if so, then responsibility shifts decidedly toward David and the people; God is leaving them free to act how they will.<sup>7</sup>
- What is the "census" about? Perhaps it is about military conscription or taxation. Whatever it is, even Joab, who is certainly no saint, finds such action repugnant and against God.
- Yet, God's distaste for the need to discipline His people comes out in His mercy; He restricts the plague to roughly 12 hours and not three days (24:15-16).
- Want more on this? Follow this link to my study notes:

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<sup>1</sup> Notice that the narrator chooses to include a couple of David's songs in 2 Samuel. We have not addressed the Psalms due to lack of space. While many of the psalms in the book of Psalms are David's, all are not. For more on how to read the Psalms, see Fee and Stuart's *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth* (Zondervan, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2003), 205-223. As well, take time to read their chapter on the "Wisdom Literature" (p. 225-248) which includes Song of Solomon, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. We will look more at these later when we encounter them in our ongoing One Year Bible (OYB) readings.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes comes later in the OYB readings. However, its writing is traditionally attributed to Solomon and it makes insightful reading about his later life.

<sup>3</sup> See also how the narrator shows that God has fulfilled His word to Abraham in 1 Kings 4:20 (Gen. 27:17 and 32:12).

<sup>4</sup> I have come to appreciate with passion the term "supernaturally natural." We see amazing things in Acts, yet they seem almost commonplace or normal!

<sup>5</sup> Eph. 5:18. 2 Peter 1:2-3.

<sup>6</sup> In the OT, we will see other instances where God is at work to restrict the forward movement and momentum of sin by consequences and sometimes direct acts of discipline. I find discipline to be a better way to conceptualize judgment. It is not that God is not concerned with justice, BUT, consistent with His character, He seems far more interested in repentance and redemption.

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<sup>7</sup> Hezekiah is an interesting example, God tested Him *by leaving him to himself* to see what he would do when the Babylonian envoys came for a visit to ask about the miracle of the sun (2 Chron. 32:31).