

## Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 7, 1 Kings 6-7

### Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

#### 1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 7, 1 Kings 6-7, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Oswalt's lecture focuses on the significance of the temple in 1 Kings 6-7. He argues that **the temple's importance lies not in its physical structure, but in the heart attitude and covenant devotion it represents**. The lecture explores the temple's design, comparing it to Canaanite temples while highlighting key differences like the absence of an idol, symbolizing God's transcendence. **Oswalt discusses the symbolism within the temple**, such as the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat, linking them to God's grace and atonement. **He contrasts the Israelite worldview of transcendence with the pagan worldview of continuity**. The lecture concludes by examining Solomon's building projects, questioning whether he honored himself over God and providing insights regarding boundaries.

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in  
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]  
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →  
Historical Books → Kings).**



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on07.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 7, 1 Kings 6-7

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on 1 Kings 6-7:

#### Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on 1 Kings 6-7

**Main Theme:** While the temple is undeniably important in 1 and 2 Kings, it is *not* the central theme. The central theme is *covenant devotion to God*, demonstrated through right treatment of others and exclusive dedication to Him. The temple is a wonderful symbol when this devotion is present, but worthless without it. Furthermore, God uses familiar human forms (like temple architecture) to communicate, but with the risk that the form may overshadow the content.

#### Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Temple's Importance vs. Centrality:** Oswalt argues against the idea that the temple is the *primary* focus of 1 & 2 Kings. He states, "I wouldn't deny the importance of the temple in the book, but I would suggest that, in fact, the point that's being made is the secondariness of the temple." He emphasizes that "What is central is the heart attitude that the temple is supposed to represent."
- **Covenant Devotion as the True Focus:** True devotion to God, expressed in ethical behavior, is what matters most: "The central theme is covenant devotion to God, which is demonstrated in the way we treat other people. If that's happening, if we are truly devoted to him, if we are exclusively devoted to him, and we're showing it in our behavior, then the symbols are a wonderful, important thing."
- **God's Contempt for Empty Rituals:** Oswalt highlights God's disdain for religious symbols devoid of genuine devotion, referencing Isaiah 1:10-17 as an example: "The contempt that Yahweh has for these symbols when we try to use them to actually insulate ourselves from Him is almost unspeakable." He quotes God as saying, "Stop bringing meaningless offerings. Your incense is detestable to me."
- **Temple's Construction & Symbolism:** The temple was built 480 years after the Exodus (though Oswalt acknowledges this number could be symbolic). The layout (outer courtyard, porch, inner main room, innermost room) is typical of Canaanite temples. However, the crucial difference is the absence of an idol in the innermost room, replaced by the Ark of the Covenant (covenant box). This signifies a fundamental difference between Israelite and Canaanite religion.

- **Incarnation & God Using Familiar Forms:** The design of the temple reflects God's principle of incarnation. He uses familiar earthly forms to communicate spiritual realities: "God incarnates himself in our human experience. God takes on earthly forms and uses those forms insofar as possible, but transforming them." Just as Christian music uses modern forms to convey staid hymn content, so God takes a terrible risk in using our human forms to try to convey something else.
- **The Danger of Form Over Content:** Oswalt cautions that the *form* can overwhelm the *content*, leading to a superficial faith. He observes, "It is dangerous because it's possible that the form will overwhelm the content. I think it's not impossible that there were Israelites who came to this gorgeous temple complex and thought in pagan terms... I can manipulate him."
- **Symmetry and Order:** The temple's square and symmetrical design, similar to the tabernacle, reflects God's nature: "A God of decency and order who operates in an orderly fashion... Everything is in order. Everything is in balance. Everything is on purpose."
- **No Intrusions on God's Serenity:** The stones were prepared offsite and assembled without hammering to avoid disturbing God's serenity: "Nothing to intrude physically. And there's nothing to intrude aurally... Nothing impinges upon him, upon his perfection, upon his absoluteness."
- **Absence of an Idol: God Cannot Be Contained:** The absence of an idol signifies that God cannot be contained or made by human hands: "He can't be contained in anything that a human being would build... You cannot make God. He's the maker." He is beyond the world and human comprehension: "He is other than this world. You can't look upon him... He cannot be seen. He cannot be contained in the human mind."
- **God's Transcendence vs. Paganism:** The lack of an idol represents the worldview of *transcendence*, in stark contrast to paganism, where god is part of the world. Oswalt contrasts this with Carl Sagan's assertion that "This cosmos is all there is." The Ark of the Covenant (the box) represents this "180-degree different view of reality."
- **Solomon's Palatial Complex:** Solomon spent more time building his palace (13 years) than the temple (7 years), suggesting a shift in priorities: "Seven years for the temple, 13 years for his palace. What does that say to you? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? He honored himself more than God." The temple was simply part of a larger royal complex.

- **Compromise and the Slippery Slope:** Oswalt reflects on the dangers of gradual compromise, asking, "What am I getting caught up in? What is a potential to lead me astray?" He highlights the importance of pursuing closeness to Jesus rather than testing the boundaries of acceptable behavior: "Not how little like him can I be and still go to heaven, but how much like him can I be?"
- **Symbolism of Temple Elements:** The elements within the temple symbolize access to God's grace and provision:
  - **Altar of sacrifice:** "There, at the front, there is no remission of sin apart from the shedding of blood. Sin is real. It has consequences. It is deadly. And if I have sinned, somebody's got to die. If not me, then the sheep.
  - **Laver:** The priests have to wash before they enter the holy place. In Ephesians 5.26. He will make his church holy by the washing of water by the word. And then we are saved through the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.
  - **Lampstand:** "I am the light of the world."
  - **Table:** "I am the bread of life"
  - **Altar of incense:** Revelation tells us the prayers of the saints rise with the incense.
  - **Ark of the Covenant/Mercy Seat:** The Ark (covenant box) contained the broken tablets of the covenant. The High Priest sprinkled blood on the "mercy seat" (the lid of the Ark) to atone for the people's sins. "God says I don't want to destroy you. I'll make a way... Sprinkle the blood on the lid. And when I see the blood, I will forgive."
  - **Boundaries and Order:** The Bible emphasizes boundaries between God, humanity, and nature, rejecting the pagan worldview of continuity. He notes, "There are boundaries in this world...So, don't you dare have sex with a cow. Not because it's nasty, which it is. It's a theological statement."
  - **Choosing Good and Evil:** Genesis 3 is all about boundaries: "I will decide what is right and wrong. It's as simple as that. Nobody's going to tell me the conditions of my life."

This document provides a concise overview of the core arguments and supporting details presented in Dr. Oswalt's lecture.

## 4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 7, 1 Kings 6-7

### 1 Kings 6-7: The Temple and Covenant Devotion

#### Study Guide

This study guide is designed to help you review Dr. Oswalt's lecture on 1 Kings 6-7, focusing on the construction of Solomon's Temple and its theological implications. It aims to solidify your understanding of the text, its historical context, and its relevance to covenant devotion.

#### Key Themes

- **The Centrality of Covenant Devotion:** The temple's importance is secondary to the heart attitude and covenant devotion it is meant to represent. Without genuine devotion and ethical behavior, the temple becomes a meaningless symbol.
- **God's Incarnational Principle:** God uses familiar forms and structures (like the temple layout and decorations) to communicate with his people, transforming them for his purposes. This is analogous to the incarnation of Christ.
- **Transcendence vs. Continuity:** The Israelite understanding of God as transcendent, distinct from creation, contrasts sharply with pagan beliefs in the continuity between the divine, human, and natural realms.
- **The Ark of the Covenant:** The Ark, containing the tablets of the Law, symbolizes God's covenant relationship with Israel. The "mercy seat" (atonement cover) represents God's provision for forgiveness and reconciliation through the sacrifice of blood.
- **Solomon's Ambivalence:** Solomon's reign, marked by both great achievements and significant compromises, serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of pride, self-indulgence, and the seductive influence of paganism.
- **The Symbolism of the Temple:** The temple's various elements, such as the bronze altar, the laver, the lampstand, and the table, carry symbolic meaning related to worship, cleansing, atonement, and fellowship with God.

### Quiz (Short Answer)

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Oswalt, what is the central theme of 1 and 2 Kings, and how does it relate to the temple?
2. What is significant about the dimensions of the temple, particularly the inner room, and what does it reflect about God's nature?
3. How does the temple's design both resemble and differ from Canaanite temples, and what theological point does this make?
4. Explain Oswalt's concept of God's "incarnational principle" as it relates to the temple and the incarnation of Christ.
5. What is the meaning of the cherubim guarding the Ark of the Covenant?
6. What is the significance of the Ark containing the tablets of the Law, and how does the concept of the "mercy seat" relate to this?
7. Explain the contrast between the Israelite worldview of transcendence and the pagan worldview of continuity.
8. Why is the absence of an idol in the temple so important?
9. What is the symbolic meaning of the various furniture contained within the temple?
10. What does the construction of Solomon's palace say about his religion and the dangers that people face when religion becomes more of a show?

### Quiz Answer Key

1. **Central Theme and Temple:** According to Oswalt, the central theme of 1 and 2 Kings is covenant devotion to God, demonstrated by how people treat others. The temple is important, but secondary; it is a meaningful symbol only when accompanied by genuine devotion.
2. **Symmetry and God's Nature:** The symmetry of the temple, especially the perfectly square inner room, reflects God's nature as a God of decency, order, and balance, operating in an orderly fashion. Everything is on purpose.
3. **Similarities and Differences with Canaanite Temples:** The temple's layout and decorations (cherubim, palm trees, pomegranates, lilies) resemble Canaanite

temples, yet it differs dramatically in that there was no idol within the Holy of Holies. This highlights God's willingness to use familiar forms while transforming their meaning to communicate his unique revelation.

4. **God's Incarnational Principle:** God uses existing forms and structures to convey new meaning, just as he used the familiar architecture of the time. Just as God became flesh, the architecture became a house for God.
5. **Meaning of the Cherubim:** The cherubim are guardian angels, or guard forces, protecting the covenant inside the covenant box. Their image would have been familiar to the people of the time from the palaces of Egypt and Assyria.
6. **Ark and Mercy Seat:** The Ark contains the tablets of the Law, symbolizing the broken covenant. The "mercy seat" (atonement cover) is where the high priest sprinkles blood, representing God's provision for covering sins and offering atonement, allowing God to meet with his people despite their broken covenant.
7. **Transcendence vs. Continuity:** The Israelite worldview emphasizes God's transcendence, that God is separate and outside of the cosmos and other than this world. The pagan worldview emphasizes the continuity between the divine, human, and natural realms; there are no boundaries, so to speak.
8. **Absence of Idol:** The absence of an idol signifies that God cannot be contained or represented by anything in the created world. He is the maker, not made.
9. **Symbolic meaning of the Furniture:** The temple furniture symbolizes a spiritual reality, such as cleansing (laver), spiritual knowledge (lamp stand), worship (the altar of incense) and fellowship with God (the table).
10. **Solomon's Palace:** Building his palace took 13 years, which was 6 years longer than the building of the temple, and this fact demonstrated that he honored himself more than God. He demonstrates to the world both Yahweh and himself.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the temple in 1 Kings 6-7, contrasting the view that it is the central theme of the book with Oswalt's argument that covenant devotion is more important. How does this interpretation impact our understanding of worship and the role of religious symbols?
2. Explain and analyze the concept of God's "incarnational principle" as it is demonstrated in the design and function of Solomon's Temple. How does this principle relate to the incarnation of Christ, and what are the risks and benefits of God using familiar forms to communicate his truth?
3. Compare and contrast the Israelite worldview of transcendence with the pagan worldview of continuity. How does the absence of an idol in the temple reflect this transcendent view, and what are the implications of these contrasting worldviews for morality, relationships, and the understanding of God?
4. Analyze Solomon's reign, focusing on the construction of his palace and the potential compromises he made. How does his example serve as a cautionary tale about the dangers of pride, self-indulgence, and the influence of paganism?
5. Discuss the symbolism of the Ark of the Covenant and its contents (the tablets of the Law). How does the concept of the "mercy seat" demonstrate God's provision for atonement and reconciliation, and what does this tell us about the nature of God's relationship with his people?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Covenant Devotion:** Wholehearted commitment and loyalty to God, expressed through both worship and ethical behavior.
- **Incarnational Principle:** God's practice of using familiar forms and structures to communicate with his people, transforming them for his purposes.
- **Transcendence:** The concept that God is distinct from and beyond the created world, not limited by it.
- **Continuity:** The pagan belief that the divine, human, and natural realms are interconnected and mutually influence each other.
- **Ark of the Covenant:** A sacred chest containing the tablets of the Law, symbolizing God's covenant relationship with Israel.
- **Mercy Seat (Atonement Cover):** The lid of the Ark, where the high priest sprinkled blood for atonement, representing God's provision for forgiveness and reconciliation.
- **Shalom:** A Hebrew word for peace, wholeness, and well-being.
- **Cosmos:** The entire universe, including all created things.
- **Candelabrum:** A large, branched candlestick holding multiple candles or lamps, often used in religious ceremonies.
- **Fifth Column:** A group within a larger entity (nation, organization, etc.) who secretly undermine it from within, often in support of an enemy.

## **5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 7, 1 Kings 6-7, Biblelearning.org (BeL)**

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided text:

### **FAQ**

#### **1. Is the Temple the central theme of 1 and 2 Kings?**

While the Temple receives extensive coverage in 1 and 2 Kings, it is not the central theme. The text suggests the Temple is secondary to the heart attitude it's meant to represent. Covenant devotion to God, demonstrated through our behavior and treatment of others, is more crucial. Without genuine spiritual devotion, the Temple becomes a meaningless symbol.

#### **2. How does the Temple's design relate to Canaanite temples, and what's the key difference?**

The Temple's layout (outer courtyard, porch, inner main room) and decorations (cherubim, palm trees, pomegranates, lilies) are similar to those found in Canaanite temples. However, a key distinction is the absence of an idol in the innermost room of the Israelite Temple. Instead, there is the Ark of the Covenant, or covenant box. In Canaanite temples, the innermost room would house an idol, considered the idol god's palace, complete with a table and lampstand for the idol.

#### **3. What is the significance of the Ark of the Covenant (covenant box)?**

The Ark of the Covenant, or covenant box, represents a radically different worldview from paganism. Instead of an idol, which embodies a god as part of the world, the Ark symbolizes a transcendent God who is beyond the cosmos. It signifies that God cannot be contained or represented by anything in the created world.

#### **4. What does the symmetry and design of the Temple and Tabernacle signify?**

The symmetrical and square design of the Temple and Tabernacle, in contrast to the often asymmetrical Canaanite temples, reflects God's nature as a God of decency, order, and balance. It suggests that everything in God's world has discernible cause and effect and operates with purpose.

### **5. Why was there no hammering or chiseling during the Temple's construction?**

The absence of hammering and chiseling during the Temple's construction is interpreted as ensuring that nothing intrudes upon God's serenity and shalom. The stones were pre-cut and numbered, brought to the site, and laid in place to keep an aura of purity to the process.

### **6. What was inside the Ark of the Covenant, and what is the significance of the "mercy seat"?**

The Ark contained the two stone tablets of the covenant. The lid of the Ark is referred to as the "mercy seat." The high priest sprinkled blood on the lid annually, which represents God's forgiveness and atonement for the broken covenant. God meets his people "over the box" and speaks to them through the blood of the lamb, which covers sins.

### **7. What does the text reveal about Solomon's devotion, particularly regarding the construction of the Temple versus his palace?**

The text suggests that Solomon's devotion may have waned over time. The fact that it took him seven years to build the Temple but thirteen years to build his palace indicates that he may have honored himself more than God. His construction of a royal complex, of which the Temple was just a part, demonstrates a potential shift in focus toward worldly grandeur.

### **8. What are the key differences between the Israelite worldview and the pagan worldview, as illustrated by the Temple?**

The Israelite worldview, represented by the Ark, emphasizes transcendence – God is outside and other than the cosmos, and there are clear boundaries between the divine, humanity, and nature. The pagan worldview, exemplified by idols, emphasizes continuity – god is part of this world, the realms are intertwined, and there are no firm boundaries. This leads to practices like bestiality or incest being religiously acceptable acts, an idea that is directly rejected in the scriptures.