

4. The dedication of the Temple

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Eleven months passed between the completion of the temple and its dedication, when the major items of furniture were set in place. The dedication itself took place in the seventh month, presumably in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement. The ark of the covenant was brought into its official place.

The construction of the temple required the most sophisticated building techniques of the age, and no expense was spared in the construction, ornamentation, or equipment. Yet Solomon readily confessed that it was still not grand or holy enough to house the eternal God. We will find out that Solomon's prayer also underlined Israel's tendency to turn away from the Lord, who remained merciful and faithful. The climax of the dedication came when the shekinah glory filled the temple.

A. TRANSPORTING THE ARK OF GOD

1 Kings 8:1-9 Now Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the City of David, which is Zion. 2 Therefore all the men of Israel assembled with King Solomon at the feast in the month of Ethanim, which is the seventh month. 3 So all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4 Then they brought up the ark of the Lord, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that were in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up. 5 Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. 6 Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim. 7 For the cherubim spread their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. 8 The poles extended so that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. 9 Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

The dedication of the Temple timeline goes back to the end of chapter six when the Israelites finished the Temple of God which took seven years.

Solomon had learned how to carry the Ark properly from his father David's mistake which we can find in 2 Samuel chapter 6. Later David had learned the proper method to carry the Ark of God from the Law of God.

In v9 we find that there were only the Ten Commandments inside of the Ark. Originally Moses had placed within the Ark of the Covenant the two tablets of stone that contained the Ten Commandments, a golden bowl of manna from the wilderness and Aaron's rod that budded. But now, nothing was left in it except the tablets of the law. I wouldn't be a bit surprised the contents were stolen by the Philistines while they had it.

Speaking of carrying the Law of God, we need to think about a very important fact. As I have mentioned many times, we are the living epistle and the only Bible that

non-believers read. How do we carry ourselves in front of the non-believers who are around us at home, at work place, around our neighborhood? Do we behave godly when the chips are down? Or do we behave like crazy maniacs and throwing temper tantrums? Those non-believers will draw their own conclusion as to what Christianity should be with our actions.

B. THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE TEMPLE

1 Kings 8:10-13 And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, 11 so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. 12 Then Solomon spoke: "The Lord said He would dwell in the dark cloud. 13 I have surely built You an exalted house, And a place for You to dwell in forever."

Oh, how I long to have this kind of experience in our church worship! So many people miss out on that intimate worship experience by not participating in it. Sometimes I think that dead corpses have better expressions than some Christians during the worship time. I don't understand why they are so afraid to show their love to the Lord. I am not encouraging people to make a scene, but showing the Lord that they love Him in worship would be great.

As an individual, occasionally I was privileged to experience the presence of God that was so evident and overpowering during my devotional praying and worshipping time.

The presence of God in our worship can not be manufactured by our own excitement or hypes like some charismatic brothers and sisters try to make it happen.

But there are a few elements we can have to have intimate worship experience anywhere at anytime regardless of the musical quality of the worship team.

- 1) We need to have a deep desire to commune with the Lord – Not to ask favors or simply to chalk up as a special worship experience on our spiritual board, but a child of God desiring to worship his or her Father in heaven
- 2) Regardless of the song styles, we can still get into the worship of God, if we make the song lyrics our own worship words
- 3) We need to take care of forgiving others and asking forgiveness from others before we come to worship Him.
- 4) We need to immerse ourselves into who God is rather than what kind of situation we are in currently.

Our Father wants us to have an intimate worship experience. It is His desire to make Himself known to us if we seek Him first.

2 Chronicles 15:2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you."

This was the cloud of glory, seen often in the Old and New Testaments, sometimes called the cloud of Shekinah glory. It is hard to define the glory of God. We could call it the radiant outshining of His character and presence. Here it is manifested in a cloud.

- This is the cloud that stood by Israel in the wilderness. – Exodus 13:21-22
- This is the cloud of glory that from which God spoke to Israel. – Exodus 16:10
- This is the cloud from which God met with Moses and others. – Exodus 19:9,

24:15-18, Numbers 11:25, 12:5, 16:42

- This is the cloud that stood by the door of the Tabernacle. – Exodus 33:9-10
- This is the cloud from which God appeared to the High Priest in the Holy Place inside the veil. – Leviticus 16:2
- This is the cloud of Ezekiel’s vision, filling the temple of God with the brightness of His glory. – Ezekiel 10:4
- This is the cloud of glory that overshadowed Mary when she conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. – Luke 1:35
- This is the cloud present at the transfiguration of Jesus. – Luke 9:34-35
- This is the cloud of glory that received Jesus into heaven at His ascension. – Acts 1:9
- This is the cloud that will display the glory of Jesus Christ when He returns in triumph to this earth. – Luke 21:27, Revelation 1:7

Obviously, the extreme presence of the glory of God made normal service impossible. We know that God is good and that God is love. Then why should an intense presence of goodness and love make the priests feel they could not continue? Because God is not only good and loving, but He is also holy – and the holiness of God made the priests feel that they could no longer stand in His presence.

This was not about having goose bumps on their arms. This was not because God forced an uncomfortable feeling upon them, but because they simply could not be comfortable sensing the difference between their sinfulness and the holiness of God.

Isaiah 6:5-7 So I said: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts.” 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.”

This glory remained at the temple until Israel utterly rejected God in the days of the divided monarchy. The prophet Ezekiel saw the glory depart the temple according to Ezekiel 10:18.

C. SOLOMON’S SUMMARY FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE

1 Kings 8:14-21 Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing. 15 And he said: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David, and with His hand has fulfilled it, saying, 16 ‘Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that My name might be there; but I chose David to be over My people Israel.’ 17 Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple for the name of the Lord God of Israel. 18 But the Lord said to my father David, ‘Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. 19 Nevertheless you shall not build the temple, but your son who will come from your body, he shall build the temple for My name.’ 20 So the Lord has fulfilled His word which He spoke; and I have filled the position of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised; and I have built a temple for the name of the Lord God of Israel. 21 And there I have made a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.”

Solomon gave a quick summary of the Temple of the Lord.

He mentioned that even though his father David had a great desire to build the Temple, he was not allowed by the Lord. So he did the next best thing he could. He prepared the majority of the materials for the construction. Sometimes, we cannot do what we have in mind even if it is a godly thing. But the Lord sees that we desire to glorify Him, because He sees our motives.

D. THE DEDICATION PRAYER OF SOLOMON

1 Kings 8:22-27 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. 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. 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!

The more I learn from the Word of God, the more I realize that I am not even a spot in God's master plan, but He chooses to include me in it. He is infinite, omnipresent and all knowing.

Can He be contained in a temple that was built by men? Can He be measured by human knowledge? In my opinion, the intellects of the world who claim that there is no God or God is limited are actually talking about themselves, because they are limited and have no future in God.

Kenneth Copeland, one of the leaders of the Faith Movement, once told his congregation in his Texan accent, "God is about 5'10-11" weighing about 180-200 pound. Because the Bible said, 'He measures the universe with the span of His hand.' And the span is about six inches." Guess whom he described when he mentioned about the appearance of God. Yes, himself. What an audacity!

Isaiah 40:12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, Measured heaven with a span And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance?

In v22, we find Solomon spreading his arms out toward heaven as he prayed. Many modern people close their eyes, bow their head, and fold their hands as they pray, but the Old Testament tradition was to spread out the hands toward heaven in a gesture of surrender, openness and ready reception. But the physical posture of our prayer is not as important as the posture of our heart which is willing to be corrected and guided by the Lord.

Solomon called upon God to keep the promises that He made. This is the great secret to power in prayer - to take God's promises to heart in faith, and then boldly and reverently call upon Him to fulfill the promises. However, if we don't believe His promises in faith, God's promises are left unclaimed.

From v28-53, Solomon went through seven scenarios of God's people's sins and asked the Lord to forgive them when they repent and hear their prayers.

I wish that Solomon had heeded his own prayer that he was doing at this time so that he didn't have to walk away from the Lord in the later years. He started to walk away from the Lord when he married the Egyptian princess and started to accumulate horses and wealth too much against the Law of the Lord. Once we start to make excuse and justify our sins, there is absolutely no limit how far our sinful nature will go until we drop to the pit of no return.

E. SOLOMON'S URGE TO HIS PEOPLE

1 Kings 8:54-66 And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the Lord, that he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. 55 Then he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying: 56 "Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses. 57 May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us, 58 that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers. 59 And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the Lord, be near the Lord our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day may require, 60 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other. 61 Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day." 62 Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the Lord. 63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the Lord, twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord. 64 On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the Lord; for there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the Lord was too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings. 65 At that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the Lord our God, seven days and seven more days--fourteen days. 66 On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the Lord had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people.

22000 bulls and 102000 sheep were sacrificed – one thing for sure, Solomon doesn't know how to do anything in small scale, everything is so big and so much. To him, money was no object. It is no wonder why his people resented him due to such high taxes.

Solomon told his people to follow the Lord loyally. Solomon also asked God to help him and his people to have hearts that were inclined to the Lord and eager to obey His commandments.

Finally, Solomon asked the Lord to remember the prayer that he had spoken with his lips and from his heart. Our spoken words are but breath and sound, and they van-

ish almost immediately. It encourages us to know that no believing prayer spoken to the Lord is ever forgotten, because God remembers our prayers and answers them in His time and in His own way.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) In our worship, we need to immerse ourselves into who God is rather than what kind of situation we are in currently.
- 2) The physical posture of our prayer is not as important as the posture of our heart which is willing to be corrected and guided by the Lord.
- 3) When we pray, we need to take God's promises to heart in faith and boldly and reverently call upon Him to fulfill the promises.
We must believe His promises in faith, otherwise they are left unclaimed.