

## Solomon's temple

1 Kings 8:1-21 (5/23)

As a reward for being here instead of at the lake or in the woods, I have something special. You are about to take a trip back into time across the ocean to ancient Israel. I give you, The Temple of Solomon. Feel free to oooh and aaah. ([Video 3D Temple of Solomon](#))

Now that you have that picture in your mind, try to **imagine the whole nation** of people crammed into Jerusalem, maybe in the **valleys around Jerusalem**, watching and listening to see the day **when God's presence returns to the center** of his people. Here's what happened...**Solomon then summoned to Jerusalem the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes—the leaders of the ancestral families of the Israelites. They were to bring the Ark of the Lord's Covenant to the Temple from its location in the City of David, also known as Zion.** <sup>2</sup> So all the men of Israel assembled before King Solomon at the annual Festival of Shelters, which is held in early autumn in the month of Ethanim. <sup>3</sup> When all the elders of Israel arrived, the priests picked up the Ark. <sup>4</sup> The priests and Levites brought up the Ark of the Lord along with the special tent and all the sacred items that had been in it. <sup>5</sup> There, before the Ark, King Solomon and the entire community of Israel sacrificed so many sheep, goats, and cattle that no one could keep count! <sup>6</sup> Then the priests carried the Ark of the Lord's Covenant into the inner sanctuary of the Temple—the Most Holy Place—and placed it beneath the wings of the cherubim. <sup>7</sup> The cherubim spread their wings over the Ark, forming a canopy over the Ark and its carrying poles. <sup>8</sup> These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place, which is in front of the Most Holy Place, but not from the outside. They are still there to this day. <sup>9</sup> Nothing was in the Ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Mount Sinai, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel when they left the land of Egypt. <sup>10</sup> When the priests came out of the Holy Place, a thick cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. <sup>11</sup> The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of the Lord.

**Can you picture this amazing scene?** The elders of Israel, their key **leaders**, **bring the ark of the covenant** from The City of David, which is on the same mountain in Jerusalem. That symbolizes **God's presence and his faithfulness**. It is like **his throne** within his temple. Because this is one of their big **festivals** that reminds the people of what God did for them, bringing them from **homeless wandering** to their own home in the land of promise; there the **city would be jammed packed** with people. **The ark that has been roaming with them in a tent, now has a permanent home.**

The priests carry in the ark, which is so holy they can't touch it, they can only touch the poles that are used to carry it. They place it in the holiest part of the temple, God's throne room, between those two huge seraphim. As they walk out of the holiest place, a thick cloud of smoke fills the whole temple, causing the priests to stop what they are doing. The people of Israel know from their history what this means. This is the presence of Yahweh, the God of Israel, entering and taking up residence in this house made for him to his specifications given to David.

So, the program gets blown up because God shows up. Whether Solomon expected something like this or not, this would have to throw you off, causing him to lose his train of thought, or even just get lost in the moment. What is he going to do?

When all else fails, just start praying, which is what Solomon does next.

<sup>12</sup> Then Solomon prayed, "O Lord, you have said that you would live in a thick cloud of darkness. <sup>13</sup> Now I have built a glorious Temple for you, a place where you can live forever!" <sup>14</sup> Then the king turned around to the entire community of Israel standing before him and gave this blessing: <sup>15</sup> "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept the promise he made to my father, David. For he told my father, <sup>16</sup> 'From the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have never chosen a city among any of the tribes of Israel as the place where a Temple should be built to honor my name. But I have chosen David to be king over my people Israel.'" <sup>17</sup> Then Solomon said, "My father, David, wanted to build this Temple to honor the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. <sup>18</sup> But the Lord told him, 'You wanted to build the Temple to honor my name. Your intention is good, <sup>19</sup> but you are not the one to do it. One of your own sons will build the Temple to honor me.' <sup>20</sup> "And now the Lord has fulfilled the promise he made, for I have become king in my father's place, and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the Lord promised. I have built this Temple to honor the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. <sup>21</sup> And I have prepared a place there for the Ark, which contains the covenant that the Lord made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt."

The rest of Chapter 8 is a long prayer of dedication that Solomon prays for the people to hear. In this prayer, he asks God to remain faithful to them, to forgive them when they repent, praying toward this temple. He refers to God's "hesed" or loving faithfulness to keep his covenant with Israel. Then there are some words of dedication to the people, and they continue to celebrate the festival and the temple.

This is an amazing scene, but at another level, it's just a building. It's a very ornate building with a king's ransom of gold used to make it flashy. But it could be

like touring Buckingham Palace or the Taj Mahal. Spectacular, but still, at its bones, it was brick, stone, mortar, and wood. What really makes it God's temple? **A temple is just a building until God's presence enters** (and if he leaves?) Let's read again the point where Yahweh makes his much-anticipated entrance. <sup>10</sup> When the priests came out of the Holy Place, a thick cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. <sup>11</sup> The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Then Solomon prayed, "O Lord, you have said that you would live in a thick cloud of darkness. <sup>13</sup> Now I have built a glorious Temple for you, a place where you can live forever!" 1 Kings 8:10-13

That's the moment it becomes a temple! We could use that phrase in a lot of ways in our context. It's not worship until God shows up, it's just music and singing. It's not preaching the word until God shows up, it's just talking about God. It's not prayer until God shows up, it's just talking to yourself. It's not a bridge group until God shows up, it's just people sharing their ignorance with one another to feel better. It's not true kingdom service to neighbor until God shows up, it's just being nice and avoiding guilt.

None of the rest matters if God doesn't show up when the ark is placed under the wings of those mighty seraphim.

But because he does, it signals a new season in Israel's life as God's people. They have been subduing the land, taking what God has given them. They have fought battles. They have gathered materials and skilled craftsmen. They have paid for these supplies and had them delivered to this mountain. They have dug foundations, laid brick, done stone masonry, cut timbers to fit perfectly, created artwork out of gold...But now that season is over it's time to...**Rest** because your God reigns over all creation.

Does this mean be lazy? Does this mean retire and play golf? No, it means rest in the reality that the God of the universe lives with you. Go about living your life as if you know this is true. Enjoy his rest and the peace he has brought as you learn how to be his people.

The pattern Israel has been following is the pattern of creation. Creation was bringing chaos into order, then God rested.

The chaos of the wars and conquest of the land, the City of Jerusalem becoming David's city where God commands him to prepare for a temple to be there. Then there is the chaos of bringing the symbol of the presence of God, the ark back to the center of worship, and the people. Then the chaos of taking a mountain top that was a threshing floor and building a spectacular temple where God will live in the land within his people.

If you look in little **further into chapter 8**, you will find this...<sup>54</sup> **When Solomon finished making these prayers and petitions to the Lord, he stood up in front of the altar of the Lord, where he had been kneeling with his hands raised toward heaven.** <sup>55</sup> **He stood and in a loud voice blessed the entire congregation of Israel:** <sup>56</sup> **"Praise the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the wonderful promises he gave through his servant Moses. 1 Kings 8:54-56**

**God has created a nation, and the overlap between heaven and earth that is his temple. He has a people who are to show the nations around them what it looks like to be in relationship with the God of the universe. They are an example of God creating order out of chaos and then giving his people rest. Now they live and enjoy his presence by obeying him and remaining faithful to him. Look at this and see if this helps. (Video beginning -2:56)**

A temple is just a building until God's presence enters (and if he leaves)? And when he enters, he brings rest as he reigns. **God does all that because it's not just about Israel, it never was. The temple was to make God famous and accessible to all people.**

**People around the world would hear of the splendor of Solomon's wisdom, wealth, palace, and temple. Most already knew the story of how they came out of Egypt long ago. They heard about the miraculous escape, the conquering of their enemies, and God's blessing and protection for them. The temple would remind other nations that even if they believe that their puny gods can help the crops grow, providing the right amount of rain and sunshine, Yahweh, the God of Israel, reigns over all creation.**

**Now more and more people would hear the story of Yahweh, the one true God, and his people, Israel, who have been so blessed by the one true God.**

**By reading a little further in this same chapter you will hear this from Solomon as he challenges the people. Immediately after, he thanks God for giving his people rest now that he has occupied the temple, he adds three "May the Lord" statements requesting that He never leave them, give them the desire to obey his commands, that these prayers would bring God's justice and meet their needs.**

**Next comes a very important "then" or what will happen after God does these three things for Israel.**

*<sup>60</sup> Then people all over the earth will know that the Lord alone is God and there is no other. <sup>61</sup> And may you be completely faithful to the Lord our God. May you always obey his decrees and commands, just as you are doing today."*

**Solomon knows that this temple and God's blessing is so that all people would know that there is only one God, and he has created everything. The proof of that is that he will bless Israel because they keep their end of the covenant. But also, the proof will be when he scatters them because they have disobeyed. Either way, it is not just about Israel; it is so that other people can know their God, the only God, and learn how to enter his kingdom and experience his blessings.**

**This was from the beginning of God's relationship with Abraham and his descendants that they will be a blessing or example to all people. The covenant was always about getting to all people.**

**How can that truly happen when this temple will be destroyed and a second one built and it becomes corrupt and is destroyed. But there must be another temple, another place where heaven and earth overlap. That is where the promise of Messiah, God with us, living in our midst, inviting all people to join him. This is where we get to Jesus.**

Here's the rest of the story. ([video 2:56-end](#))

**Remember how Solomon said that this temple would be forever. But didn't it get destroyed once, and then another corrupt one was built, and it was also destroyed. This kind of takes the shine off this amazing powerful day. Or does it?**

**Solomon was wrong in one sense, but he was right in a way that even he didn't understand. He was building something of brick that God would enter. Later there will be a new temple that will be forever, that isn't a brick-and-mortar building with gold interior.**

**<sup>16</sup> Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. <sup>17</sup> He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. <sup>18</sup> Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. <sup>19</sup> So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. <sup>20</sup> Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. <sup>21</sup> We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. <sup>22</sup> Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:16-22**

**This new temple is both Jews and non-Jews, that is the "Good News." This is all through Jesus. They are members of God's family. Together they arranged to**

make a holy temple. **Holy, meaning God has entered it and taken up residence.**

**If that isn't enough,** listen to what Peter says about this new temple. <sup>4</sup> **You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor.** <sup>5</sup> **And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests.** Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. 1 Peter 2:4-5

**Anyone who is in Christ, is a living stone,** a part of this new temple, but that's not all; **they are priests** who no longer sacrifice animals because the once for all sacrifice has been given. **These priests, these living stones offer "spiritual sacrifices."** They give themselves. They offer **their everything** to Jesus, **And we do this in community with one another.**

This is simple...**We are the temple now.**

**Not just me, the individual.** It is within the community of people who belong to God through Christ. **We cannot be the temple in the same sense** that Paul and Peter are talking about, **if we only view this from an individualistic perspective.**

**Yes, the Bible does say** that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> **Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.** <sup>19</sup> **Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself,** <sup>20</sup> **for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.**

**The context here is not teaching individualism.** It is teaching that **sin affects where God lives.** Yes, that is for each person, **but also it is clear that sin affects others within the community of Christ, the church.**

**Here's the problem.** I don't think most people in churches around America even consider this. **They think it's a personal private thing between them and God.** No, the temple that I am a part of is about my relationship with you. **Individualism creates consumer Christians.** Since the temple is me, I'm my **separate little temple,** or "Jesus franchise," I just come to the church to get what my temple needs. **This couldn't be further from the lesson that God is teaching us through this story today.**

**Nothing is holy until God enters it...we are to rest in his reign over all...the temple is to make God famous to others...and since we are now the new temple, we are to make God famous to others.** We say it this way, **"We are to make the kingdom present for others."**

We have to do something about this! **Steps of Obedience:**

1. **Learn how to rest in the reign of King Jesus.**
2. **Allow yourself to be built into God's dwelling.**
- **Gather the lost and wandering.**

**Is there someone with whom God has allowed you to develop a relationship with who doesn't know Christ and it's time to invite them into the fellowship. Make a commitment to call them. I know who mine is.**

**There is space here** in your outline to write a couple of names. Who is God bringing to your mind who has been a part of this community, but has wandered off? **They haven't gone to another church**, they just aren't around anymore. Make a **commitment to contact them** and tell them how much they are missing.

- **Acts that promote unity:**

**Is there something you can do** that God is putting in your heart to do that will **promote unity in our fellowship** or within the churches in our community. **I've networked several times recently with churches** with whom I have some very different ways of approaching ministry. **I want God to help me to be a better leader in the community through getting to know other pastors.**

- **Commitment to intentional community:**

**You have fallen for the lie** that your faith in Jesus is a personal, private, individual thing. **He's your personal Lord and Savior**, but you have **avoided the messiness of being built** into this larger temple of God where Jesus sits on the throne.

**If God is speaking to you**, touching your emotions, then do something about it. **Maybe it starts with confession.** I've treated the church, which is the body of Christ, **like a public restroom.** I might use it from time to time, but I certainly don't want to hang out there.

**I hope you enjoyed our trip** into the past, but **I think we can all agree it's not about seraphim, gold, altars, arks etc.** **It's about you and me. Be the temple!**