

## Solomon Dedicates the Temple

Henrietta took the balled-up tissue in her hand, and dabbed her eyes as she opened them. Then she pushed herself up from the carpeted floor and took her seat, next to her book bag.

There was still a heavy aura of praise in the sanctuary. The musicians were playing an ongoing, melodic worshipful refrain. Many worshipers were singing along, while others were shouting phrases of adoration, some could be heard weeping, while others stood, knelt, rocked, or sat in silent meditation.

About 30 minutes earlier, Pastor Wright had stood behind the podium as if to preach. However, he had continued leading worship songs and encouraged the congregation to continue to praise God. And they had.

The only thing in the back of Henrietta's mind was her Aunt Mildred. Her appearances at church were few, because she always wanted to be "in and out."

Well, the church had certainly done some "carrying on" this morning! And Henrietta was neither ashamed nor apologetic about it. He was Immanuel! How she loved to walk in God's presence. Her recognition that God is always with her made Henrietta want to spend time with Him and more time at church, not just around Christmas and Easter.

On the ride home, Aunt Mildred was uncharacteristically quiet. "How did you enjoy service?"

"I don't think I've seen anything quite like it," Aunt Mildred said. "I found myself saying a little prayer."

- 1.** *When was a time you felt God's presence with you?*
- 2.** *Have you ever struggled to feel God's presence?*
- 3.** *How can you remember each day that God is near to you?*

## Remember and Celebrate

*2 Chronicles 7:1–3 KJV*

1 Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. 2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. 3 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

*2 Chronicles 7:1–3 NIV*

<sup>1</sup> When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it. <sup>3</sup> When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."

The covenant helps the Israelites to remember and to celebrate God's merciful presence. Through laws and covenant obligations, God often reminds them of the Exodus event. As they celebrate their festivals, as they honor Sabbath rest, and as they interact with the foreigner, they are constantly reminding themselves that they are God's holy people, and the creator has called them His "treasured possession" (Ex. 19:5). His presence has protected them, guided them, and provided for them. Their worship is a response.

It is no accident that this passage, where the temple of the Lord is dedicated, reviews many of Israel's interactions with God. The events described here call for Israel to remember their life with the Lord—to be faithful to Him

in the present and into the future.

What happens next points back to several events of Israel's past. Fire from heaven comes down and consumes the burnt offerings (v. 2), which recalls God's similar acceptance of David's previous offering in this very spot (see last week's lesson on 1 Chron. 21:26). Next, God's glory fills the temple, so much that the priests were unable to enter the temple building (v. 2). This is very much like what happened on the journey through the wilderness, when God appeared in a cloud (Ex. 13:21-22).

These events are like what God showed on Mount Sinai by coming down in a visible display of fire and smoke (Ex. 19:18). Like then, the Israelites fall down in worship, reciting the truth that "He is good" and "his love endures forever" (1 Chron. 21:3). Some of the same words are used in Exodus 34:6, when God first revealed His character as "compassionate and gracious . . . slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

Like then, this moment will be etched into Israel's memory. It is a confirmation of the covenant at Sinai and a reminder of God's protection into the future. Just like God was with Israel in a tabernacle, now Yahweh will be with His people in the temple. No wonder everyone bows in worship; all around they see evidence of God's presence.

**4.** *What "flashbacks" in this text point back to Israel's previous experiences with God?*

**5.** *What does this teach us about God's faithfulness?*

**6.** *Why is it so important that Israel remember what God has done in the past?*

## **An Extravagant Celebration**

2 Chronicles 7:4-7, 11 KJV

4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. 5 And king Solomon

2 Chronicles 7:-7, 11 NIV

<sup>4</sup> Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. <sup>5</sup> And King

offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. <sup>6</sup> And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.

<sup>7</sup> Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brasen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.

<sup>11</sup> Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the people dedicated the temple of God. <sup>6</sup> The priests took their positions, as did the Levites with the LORD's musical instruments, which King David had made for praising the LORD and which were used when he gave thanks, saying, "His love endures forever." Opposite the Levites, the priests blew their trumpets, and all the Israelites were standing.

<sup>7</sup> Solomon consecrated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple of the LORD, and there he offered burnt offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings, because the bronze altar he had made could not hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat portions.

<sup>11</sup> When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace,

Solomon sacrifices hundreds of thousands of animals. Picture the bleating, the smells, and the gory scenes in the brand-new temple. The Levites give a concert, making

music to the Lord in praise of His steadfast love. Animal and grain offerings overflow as the people fellowship with one another and the Lord. It is an ancient celebration, filled with meaning, joy, and praise for the people of God.

The temple is dedicated through sacrifices to God. Tens of thousands of cattle, sheep, and goats are offered to the Lord (vv. 4–5). In an agrarian society with no supermarkets or fast food, meat is precious and often rare. This extravagant offering shows the importance of this celebration and the great honor due to the Lord God of Israel.

The tribe of Levi is responsible for the temple, serving as priests, caretakers, and musicians. The refrain of praise and thanks for God’s merciful love, which endures forever, is used throughout Israel’s history—at the temple and even in battle (2 Chron. 20).

In verse 7, a different part of the courtyard has to be consecrated as well because the number of sacrifices cannot be contained. The fellowship offerings invite the Israelites to eat their fill in the presence of their God who dwells among them.

Verse 11 summarizes the events of the previous few chapters; Solomon has been successful in his task of building the temple of the Lord and his own royal palace. The instructions he had received from his father, David, were completed in full. Solomon’s temple would be remembered throughout Israel’s history as his greatest accomplishment.

The completed temple is a place for God’s people to come worship and spend time with Him. God’s goal has always been to provide a way for people to be in His presence. Solomon’s temple was a symbol of this truth.

**7.** *What do you think it would have felt like to be at the dedication of the temple?*

**8.** *Why were so many animals offered in sacrifice to God?*

**9.** *Why did the rest of the courtyard need to be consecrated?*

## Without a Doubt

I recently had a conversation with someone who struggles with doubting God. She has been a Christian for many years, but there are times when she wonders if God exists and questions if He does exist, whether He loves her. These doubts are in spite of the memories she has of God's very real presence in her life.

The day Solomon dedicated the temple would have left no room for doubt. Anyone who was there not only felt but even saw the glory of God descending. Everyone there couldn't help but worship because God was present.

After that, the Israelites would have gone home to their daily lives. God's glory at the temple would have faded into a memory. Doubt could have crept in. As a believer in Jesus, I know I have the very presence of God dwelling in me (1 Cor. 6:19). But I do not always feel this truth.

In my conversation with the woman who struggles with doubt, I reminded her that God is always asking His people to remember Him and the things He has done. I told her that when I struggle in my faith or when I'm in a dry season, I take time to think about how God has been near to me in the past. Stopping to recall my experiences with God sparks truth in my life and leads me to worship because I know that God dwells in me, even when I don't feel Him.

God has always provided a way for His people to be near to Him. He was in Eden, at the tabernacle, in the temple, and now in us! Even, in my moments of doubt or seasons of apathy I can take comfort in the knowledge that God is always with me.

**10.** *What are some of the faith-defining moments you have had with God?*

**11.** *When have you experienced doubt in your faith?*

**12.** *Why does it help our faith to remember the moments we've experienced God?*

## Week of Worship

God's very presence descended upon the temple, accepting the sacrifices offered to Him and causing everyone to worship and praise. That same God dwells in believers today. His presence is with us, and we can and should worship Him for it.

► *Spend some intentional time this coming week in God's presence. Consider taking an hour, or half a day, or even a full day to spend time talking to God, worshipping Him, and inviting Him to show up in your life in new ways.*

### KEY VERSE

And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. —2 Chronicles 7:3 KJV

When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."

—2 Chronicles 7:3 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of May 12 through May 18

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Psalm 30—Joy Comes with the Morning.

**Tues.** Colossians 3:12–17—Songs of Gratitude.

**Wed.** 2 Corinthians 1:2–14—Blessed Be the Merciful, Consoling God.

**Thurs.** Psalm 95—Enter God's Presence with Thanksgiving.

**Fri.** Philippians 3:1–14—Serve in the Spirit of God.

**Sat.** Ezra 1—The Exiles Return.

**Sun.** Ezra 3:1–6, 10–13—Building a New Foundation.