



**Reading:** 1 Kings chapter 8

**Key Thought:** : God has two desires for our lives: That He might dwell in us, and that we would abide in Him. **Galatians 2 v 20** It is no longer I that live but Christ that lives in me. **John 15 v 4** Remain in me as I also remain in you.

**Context:** The Ark of the Covenant. (Verses 6-11) The Temple would not be complete until the Ark of the Covenant was instated into its rightful place – at the centre of the Inner Sanctuary, the most Holy Place, situated behind the partition of the veil (a heavy, intricately woven curtain). In the Old Testament, this was God's dwelling place. But, when Jesus died on the Cross, this veil was torn by the hand of God, from top to bottom, signifying that the Holy Place of God's Presence was open to all who would come to Him, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. No longer were the Old Testament sacrifices needed. But in Solomon's time the Ark was important for their forgiveness – it was the place where atonement was made for the sins of Israel just once a year. And so, we can see why they were so delighted, and happy and thankful for this special day when the Ark took its rightful place. So amazing and awesome was the occasion that the glory of the Lord came down (expressed by the cloud filling the Temple) – and the priests were so overcome that they could not fulfil their duties! (v11) Older translations infer that they couldn't even stand – just as today, some people fall when the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

**Content:** Although powerful and successful, Solomon didn't take the credit for himself, because he understood that his wisdom came from the Lord. Because of this, his aim was not to build his own empire but to bring worship of God back to Jerusalem, to be at the very heart of Israel. And in this chapter, we see how Solomon achieved three things:

- He situated the Ark of the Covenant in the Inner Sanctuary, the Holiest Place in the Temple. (See above.)
- He, Solomon, delivered a prayer of thanks. He started with PRAISE (see verses 22-24), giving God his rightful place. He then made a PETITION (see verses 27-30) for forgiveness in the nation. Lastly, he stated his PRIORITY – his desire being that God's house would be a place of witness to the whole world.
- He conducted a dedication service (see verses 62-66), making sacrifices of thanksgiving. The glory of the Lord filled the Temple, and everyone fell to the ground and worshipped, thanking God for his goodness.

It was a wonderful accomplishment and a wonderful time. But, with it came a challenge to the people, to think about the purpose of the Temple. It wasn't to be like one of our great Cathedrals and become a visitor attraction. Fundamentally it was a place of bloodshed and sacrifice – a place where people could get closer to God and find acceptance and forgiveness. And the Inner sanctuary was the place where God dwelt among his people, shrouded in cloud. Only one man, The High priest, could enter the presence of God, and only once a year to make atonement for the sins of the nation, by sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice over the mercy seat (the lid) of the Ark of the Covenant.

**Challenges:**

Jesus is now our High Priest – the one who can bring our forgiveness, by His own sacrifice at Calvary. There is no longer any need for the thousands upon thousands of sacrifices made under the Old Covenant, praise God!

- As Living Temples, is Jesus the very centre of our hearts and lives? Think about it.
- Is our heart a sanctuary where Jesus lives, and where we know we are continually in His presence?
- Have we experienced being in 'the glory' as depicted by the cloud?

Can we say with Paul: It is no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives in me – not just once a year – but all the time.

**Communicate:**

Feel free to let us know if you have any questions or comments about this study. Perhaps you have a testimony or word of encouragement that might help others. Or maybe you would like prayer as you begin a new thing for God in your life. We will gladly get back to you.