

December 1

Scriptures: Read 1 Kings 8

Key Verse: “May the Lord our God be with us... that He may incline our hearts to Himself.
(1 Kings 8:57-58)

Overview

After seven years of building the Temple, probably preceded by several months of preparations, everything was finally ready for it to be officially dedicated to the Lord. The elders and leaders of all Israel were invited to join in the celebration which coincided with the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-43).

The first important part of the ceremony was to bring the Ark of the Covenant from the temporary tabernacle (a tent) which David had made for it on Mount Zion in Jerusalem (8:1; 2 Samuel 6:17). It would be taken to its new home on Mount Moriah, still within the boundaries of Jerusalem not far away. Solomon had learned the correct transportation of the Ark from the mistake of his father (2 Samuel 6:3-7), and this time he had it reverently carried and placed within the Most Holy Place of the Temple by the priests (8:3, 6). The original tabernacle of meeting and the other holy and consecrated vessels were also brought up from Gibeon (2 Chronicles 1:3) to the Temple in Jerusalem by the priests and Levites (8:4).

When everything was set in order and all the people were praising and worshipping God (2 Chronicles 5:13-14), the Lord’s presence was made manifest in a cloud (cf. Exodus 40:34-35). By this sign, Solomon knew the Lord had accepted the newly built Temple in the city of David as His habitation, the place for His Name in fulfillment of the command given by Moses (8:16; Deuteronomy 12:5). Solomon’s sermon to the people (8:12-21) confirmed that God’s promises to his father David had been fulfilled. God had given David a successor, who had built the house for the name of the Lord God of Israel (8:20; 2 Samuel 7:12-13). Before this time, the Tabernacle of meeting had been considered the dwelling place of the Lord, but it had been movable and of a temporary nature. The Temple in Jerusalem, however, was a permanent structure, intended to be the centralized place of worship for all Israel, the place God had chosen to put His name. From that point on, the proper way of worshipping God, as laid down by Moses, could now be fully realized (3:2; Deuteronomy 12:5-11).

In Solomon’s beautiful public prayer, he thanked God for His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to David and prayed that He would continue to keep a descendant of David upon the throne. He expressed many great biblical truths which show Solomon to be truly wise, spiritually sensitive, well versed in the Holy Scripture as taught by Moses, and well aware of the covenant relationship with God and all its implications. Surely the Holy Spirit was upon Solomon. Believers today can likewise partake of this same “spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (see Ephesians 1:17-19).

Solomon understood well the depraved nature of mankind — how all have sinned (8:38, 46; Romans 3:23). He also revealed a profound knowledge of God: One who is all-present and cannot be limited within the walls of the Temple, for even the heavens cannot contain Him

(8:27). He spoke of God as being One who is all-knowing, even to the innermost hearts of man (8:39); One who punishes the wicked, and rewards the righteous (8:32); One who can be appealed to for mercy; One who will show compassion and is able to forgive and answer prayer (8:49-50); and One who welcomes all people of all nations to come unto Him, serve Him, and worship Him (8:41-43).

Solomon's prayer not only showed his knowledge but also his humility and sincerity as he interceded on behalf of Israel. This prayer was undoubtedly led by the Holy Spirit, for it anticipated future events such as famines and even the exile; but who would have suspected such things to ever take place in the middle of Israel's golden age?

After his prayer, Solomon blessed the people and charged them to remain loyal to the One and only God (8:60-61). He and all Israel then offered up numerous sacrifices to the Lord, and thus the dedication of the Temple was completed. The people's hearts were joyful as they returned home, for they had given glory to God and had worshipped Him.

Prayer

Lord, we invite You to be with us, and we incline our hearts toward You. Because our natural inclination is to go our own way, we repent of our sins, joining Solomon and those present at the Temple dedication, so that our temples (our bodies) will be Your dwelling place (see 1 Cor. 6:19).