

**1 Kings 8:(1,6,10-11),22-30,41-43**

**Making space for God to turn up**

Solomon completes the task started by his father David by dedicating the newly built Temple, a permanent and elaborately decorated dwelling place for the Ark of the Covenant. God fills the Temple with a cloud. Solomon asks God to honour the covenant made with his father and includes in his prayer those foreigners and strangers who will witness God's glory through his presence with his people.



**Bible notes**



The newly completed Temple (see 2 Chronicles 3-4 for a description of its grandeur) is now consecrated for the exclusive use of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. Until now, Israel's worship was fragmented. The Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tablets bearing the Ten Commandments, resided in the city of David, and the Israelites under Solomon continued to worship at the grandest high place of other deities.

This chapter graphically depicts the transition and consecration of a place Israelites recognised as their place of worship. More importantly, God also recognised it as his home and dwelling place. Here gathered the leaders of the ancestral tribes of Jacob's 12 sons (Gen 49:28; Exodus 24:4). The priests who brought the Ark from Jerusalem also came from a long line of Levites, descendants of Aaron, Moses' brother. Here it was not the pageantry or symbolism that mattered; it was following the statutes and stipulations of God on their preparation for handling the sacred things and entering the Holy of Holies.

God was supposed to show up there, on the mercy-seat above the Ark. However, the whole Temple belongs to God, who would not be confined to the Holy of Holies or restricted to the prescribed orders and rituals.

King Solomon deployed God's gift of wisdom and understanding (1 Kings 3.9) to take charge of the ceremony. He acknowledges God's greatness as incomparable (v.23) and his faithfulness both to the covenants and his father, David (vv.23-26). Covenants also entail answers to prayers – those directed towards the Temple. Solomon dedicates three verses to foreigners (vv.41-43); these are not the foreigners who resided in Israel, but those who travel from afar – their prayers should also be answered. Then they will know that the God of Israel is above all other gods.

**WALK**

Go on a prayer walk this week and see where you notice God's presence as you do.

A A D F N Z L U C  
H B S E A R C H K  
G A J B N R P H O

Look up some pictures of different sacred places – some buildings or outdoor spaces, and see what special places humans have created or decorated for God. Which ones speak to you? Are there any nearby that you could visit?

**First impressions**

- What kind of spaces help you to worship?
- How does being in a different place (e.g. outdoors, at a festival, in a quiet space) affect your worship?



**A prayer of thanksgiving**

Jesus our Saviour, we praise you that you are always close to us. We praise you that one of your names is 'Emmanuel', God with us forever. Thank you for your presence. Amen.

**REFLECT**

Where do you find it easiest to feel God's presence – maybe it's a particular item, or place? Create a special corner/chair/setup, or decide on a place you'll go this week to meet with God.

**Pray**



Use your whole body in prayer in a short form of St Patrick's Breastplate. Say 'Christ around me' and make a circular motion around you. Say 'Christ above me' and raise your hands above your head. Say 'Christ within me' and place your hands over your heart. Say 'Christ beneath me' and rest your hands on your knees.