



Solomon's Temple

Called by God

About the Story

In our story today, King David's son, Solomon, has recently become king after the death of his father. Solomon finds himself in a surprising time of peace, a stark contrast to the many wars faced by both King David and King Saul. Solomon's great wisdom leads him to use this time of peace and prosperity to build a temple, which would house the holy Ark of the Covenant. Solomon immediately sets to work building the temple and after a few years the temple is completed and the Ark of the Covenant is brought to its new home.

All of Israel gathers together for this monumental occasion. Everything seems great—the twelve tribes of Israel are now finally united with one house of worship. God's presence fills the temple, and Solomon declares that the temple will be the house of the Lord forever. The temple became a tangible sign of God's presence among the people. It was much more than just a house of worship; it was the cultural, political, and financial center for all of Israel. And most of all, it was the house of the Lord, God's dwelling place among God's people.

We will see that this unity is short lived. Solomon's death causes the kingdom of Israel to split in two, eventually both kingdoms are captured and Solomon's temple is destroyed, the Ark of the Covenant lost.

It can be hard to understand why there is always so much division among the people of God. God nevertheless still dwells among God's people. God was and is present throughout all of history, with and among us. Our differences may be cause of divisions, but we are all united as children of God. God calls each of us and we give the best of us when we work to fulfill our callings in the world.

Opening Prayer

O Lord, our God, how majestic is your name in all the Earth. You called Solomon to build you a temple so that your presence could forever dwell among your people. We ask that in all times—but especially during darkness, sorrow, and strife—your unfailing presence is felt among your people. Guide us to share the good news of your presence with all the world. We pray this through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Point:

We give the best of ourselves when we work to fulfill our callings. God called King Solomon to build a temple that would be a physical reminder for all God's people that God dwells with and among them. Solomon spared no expense, and on the day of its dedication, all of Israel came to watch. We, too, are called to share God's presence with the world. God has given us talents and gifts that we can put to use when fulfilling God's calling to the world.

Last Week/Next Week

Last week, God called David to become king of Israel, choosing David because God saw the goodness in David's heart. Today's lesson, David's son, Solomon, fulfills his calling by building a beautiful temple for God to serve as a promise of God's presence among God's people. Next week, God performs great miracles but then calls Elijah in an unexpected, quiet way.

Into the Story

Find an image of Solomon's temple on the Internet—usually a simple web search of “King Solomon's temple” will yield numerous images with floor plans and layouts. As a group, try to guess what the various rooms or temple objects were used for. Then take a few moments and reflect on what the various images, furniture, and layout of your church might look like to someone who was never been in a church before. How would you describe things like the altar, podium or lectern, communion rail, and pews?

Learning the Story

King Solomon fulfills his father's promise to build a temple for God. When the temple is dedicated, God's presence fills it to the point of overflowing, forever promising to dwell among God's people.

Read 1 King 5:1-5 – The Promised Temple Is Built

- ❓ Why does Solomon say he is able to build the temple, but his father could not?
- ❓ What is the phrase Solomon uses when he refers to God? Do you think there is any significance in using that particular phrase?
- ❓ The temple would become the center of Israelite culture and religion. In today's world, is there something similar that centers Christianity? If so, what ways is the center similar or different from the temple?

Read 1 Kings 8:1-9 – The Ark Is Transported to the Temple

- ❓ Why do you think everyone came to see the Ark of the Covenant brought to the temple?
- ❓ The story spends several verses describing the ark in detail. Why do you think the writer spent so much time describing it?
- ❓ The ark was seen as a physical representation of the covenant that God made with the Israelites. What are some of the other physical signs of God's promises to us?

The Sacred Month Ethanim

Our story today tells us that the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the temple during the festival in the month of Ethanim. Unfortunately, we do not know much about what festival took place during this time. What we do know is that Ethanim was the seventh month of the Hebrew religious calendar and took place during autumn (roughly around September or October). We also know that the month of Ethanim is connected to the giving offerings and gifts to God, making it especially appropriate for the dedication of the temple to take place during this holy time.

Read 1 Kings 8:10-13 – God’s Presence Fills the Temple

- ❓ What happens when the ark is placed in the temple?
- ❓ Solomon says that God will “dwell in thick darkness.” Has there ever been a time of darkness in your life where you felt God’s presence?
- ❓ Solomon says that the temple is a place for God to dwell in forever, but we know that the temple was destroyed around 400 years later. Do you think Solomon was wrong? Without the temple, where do you think God dwells today?

Bible Connections

- ✚ God uses the Persian King Cyrus to call for the rebuilding of the temple after it was destroyed (Ezra 1:1-4).
- ✚ Jesus refers to himself as the temple (John 2:19-22).
- ✚ Paul says that we are God’s temple and God dwells among us (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

Living the Story: Service

On a cell phone or other device, search the Internet for a video of or lyrics for the song “Sanctuary” by Randy Scruggs and John Thompson ~~on YouTube~~ and show it to the group.

After listening to, singing, or reading the song together, reflect on what the words mean. What does it mean to be a sanctuary for God? Just as God was present in the temple, how can we be present for others in the world?

Closing Prayer

Have everyone think of a gift or talent that God has given them, then, think of how God might be using that gift or talent to make a difference in the world. After everyone has had a few minutes to think, have someone from the group begin the closing prayer with the following:

“O Lord, our God, you call us into the world to share your presence with all people. Help us to use our gifts to benefit the world.”

Then, go around the room, with each person saying their gift or talent and how they feel called to use it, saying: “God, you have blessed me with ____ (for example, the ability to sew). Help me to use it to ____ (sew blankets for children in need).”

Bible Nuts & Bolts: The Temple

The temple was very different than modern-day Christian churches. For instance, the temple was not just a religious building, but also a cultural and political building. The temple was seen as God’s literal house. Another big difference between churches and the temple is that the temple was a financial hub for Jerusalem, acting as a bank by providing loans, money-exchanging services, and collecting taxes in the form of tithes and other offerings.

After everyone has added to the prayer, close as a group by saying, “God, you call us all to help change the world for the better; give us the courage to answer. We pray all of this through your Son’s name, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

At Home

- ✠ If you were tasked with building a house for the Lord, what would it look like? Would it be similar to your church, to Solomon's temple, or something completely different? Draw a picture of what you imagine your house for God would look like.
- ✠ Imagine you could call God on your telephone. What would you say to God? What do you think God would say to you?
- ✠ Today is Halloween! If you celebrate, consider handing out positive messages along with the usual candy by writing the messages on a slip of paper and taping a slip to each piece of candy. You could hand out a religious message, like "God loves you," or, a non-religious but positive message, such as "Follow your dreams!" or "Don't give up!"

Daily Readings

Sunday—Read 1 Kings 5:1-5; 8:1-13

God promises to dwell among God's people. Pray that you may feel God's presence with you throughout this whole week.

Monday—Read 1 Kings 11:1-13

King Solomon disobeys God, leading to dire consequences. Ask God for forgiveness for the times you stray, trusting that God loves you even when you do stray.

Tuesday—Read 1 Kings 11:41–12:19

King Solomon dies and the kingdom is split in two. What are the divisions in your life, or maybe in your church? Reflect on how you can help to heal those divisions.

Wednesday—Read 1 Kings 16:1-28

An overview of the kings of the northern kingdom, Israel, and the relocation of its capital city to Samaria. Reflect on your lineage—has your faith been handed down through generations, or is your family new to the faith? Say a prayer of thanksgiving for all who have shared their faith with you.

Thursday—Read 1 Kings 16:29-34

King Ahab loses his way and worships Baal. Think of a time you got lost (literally or figuratively). Did you need help to find your way? Reflect on how you can be a help to others.

Friday—Read 1 Kings 17:1-24

A new prophet, Elijah, appears and performs a big miracle. In the Hebrew Bible, a prophet is not someone who predicts the future, but is someone who reminds people of God's promises and calls people to do God's work in the world. Who is someone you think is a prophet in today's world?

Saturday—Read 1 Kings 18:20-46

Elijah embarrasses the priests of Baal by performing many incredible miracles. Has God ever spoken to you through a miracle or a sign? Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all the wondrous things God has done.