

“A Holy House for God?”

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Third in a series on King Solomon

1st Kings 3:2-4; 6:1-14; 6:38 and 8:1-11

June 2, 2019

I offered this reflection at our annual shared worship and picnic. It was more conversational than usual, which was a lot of fun! So along with my words, I've included some of what others in the congregation said. Especially the kids!

It was Ascension Sunday, so we began worship with the account from the Acts of the Apostles.

Part 1: A House for God?

Please read the Scripture by clicking [here \(for the Ascension reading\)](#) and here: [1st Kings 3.2-4, 6.1](#).

We're finishing up the season of Easter. Easter begins with the Sunday of Jesus' resurrection, and it continues on for forty days! Jesus used that time to teach his followers important things they needed to know before he left them. Then, Jesus returned to the heavenly realm.

Here's the thing, though. Though they couldn't see Jesus anymore, and though we cannot see him now, Jesus is always with us. Jesus is God, with the Father and the Spirit. So wherever God is, Jesus is. That's everywhere. God is as close to each of us as our own heartbeat, and closer. God is everywhere in the whole universe, and farther.

Here's a question: ***If we wanted to build a house for God, what would it be like?***

[Discuss with children]

Part 2: Was God's House Big Enough?

Please read more of the Scripture by clicking here: [1 Kings 6.2-7](#).

Solomon was king of God's People, Israel. God made Solomon very wise. And Solomon decided to build a house for God.

We often use a fancy word for it, "temple." After all, it was very fancy. But they just called it a *bayit*; that was their ordinary word for "house."

Still, as I said, it was fancy. They made it out of finely-cut stone, and the best carved wood. Inside, they covered everything with gold. They decorated it with carvings of beautiful

things God's created: plants, flowers, trees, fruit, animals, even angels. They spent all the money they needed to, to make the best house for God.

Compared to almost everything else they built back then, it was big. God's house was about 30 metres long (that's 100 feet), and 10 metres wide (about 35 feet). So that's twice as wide as our Bethany church's building, and 3 times longer. Pretty big!

But was that big enough? Could all the people fit into God's house? No way! But that didn't matter. It wasn't like a church building, where we want to fit everyone in. It was for God.

Still, was it big enough?

It had 3 main rooms. If you walked through the door, there was a front room. Inside that was a big room; they called it the "Holy Place." That means it was very special. It had some special things inside, and only priests could go in there. Behind that was a small room, called "The Holy of Holies," the most-special place. Only one person, the most important priest, could go in there. No one else could, not even King Solomon. And the most important priest could only go in there once a year. That room was only for God.

This was God's House. It was only for God and God's helpers. Everyone else stayed outside.

Still, was it big enough?

Part 3: God Moves In!

Please read more of the Scripture by clicking here: [1st Kings 6.38; 8.1-11](#).

When Solomon built this house for God, he had lots of people working on it. Still, it took them seven years to build it all. Everything was done very carefully, as best as they could.

When it was all finished, they had a big celebration.

And God moved in.

God showed them God was moving in by filling it with a cloud. God is not a cloud. The cloud was a sign God was there. It's a good sign, because a cloud is real but it's also mysterious. You can't see into it. Everyone had to move back, when God moved into God's house.

But how can God be in a house? A house that people have made?

[Discuss with children]

God is everywhere, and beyond everywhere.

Wherever the farthest galaxy is, the most-distant piece of outer space, God is there. And God is beyond there. The whole universe cannot hold God! Yet God made all of creation, to be God's home.

God made every person in the world. Everyone is as important to God as everyone else. Yet God chose some people — Israel — to be God's special people, to do special work for God. God decided to live especially among them.

God made every place on earth. Forests and fields, tundra and desert, cities and towns, jungles and prairies, the surface of lakes and ocean floors — every square centimetre is precious to God. Yet God chose one special place — the house Solomon built — to be especially alive with God's presence. God is everywhere. And God was there.

Part 4: God's Holy House!

Please read more of the Scripture by clicking here: [1st Kings 6.11-14](#)

Remember the rooms inside God's house? Remember the one deep inside, where almost no one was allowed to enter. Do you know what was inside it?

A box. Just one wooden box, covered with gold.

And inside that box were two slabs of stone. On them were carved God's basic instructions. We call these the Ten Commandments.

God gave those to God's People, Israel, so they will know how to live well.

God has given them to us too, so we will know how to live well as Jesus' People.

God gave them as a promise, that God will be with them.

God gives us signs that God is among us. The house that Solomon built was one of those signs. When God filled it with the cloud, God was saying, "I'm here with you. Live my ways. Trust me, and you will know what true life really is."

God does not need a house. God is everywhere.

But, it seems, we need special places to remind us that God is with us.

Do you know what God's house is now?

It's you and me. God gives us each other, to remind us that God is with us. I get to remind you. You get to remind me.

God is with us. Thanks be to God. Amen.