

October 26, 2025

Good morning! I found this reading to be a bit challenging – maybe you all know what is going on...but I needed a little character review. Admittedly, I looked to ChatGPT to help me follow along. In the beginning of the reading, Solomon was anointed king as his father, David's, successor. So, let's character check...David was chosen by God. He was anointed by the prophet Samuel while Saul was still king. David first gained fame by defeating Goliath, the Philistine giant. This is where I really knew David. I am sure you all remember this story as well. I reread the story in 1 Samuel. Goliath, the giant with a helmet of bronze, armed with a coat of 5,000 shekels of bronze – the ultimate warrior standing an estimated 7 to 10 feet tall. And David, the youngest of 8 sons, was just a boy. A boy fueled by God's Spirit. David prevailed over Goliath with just a sling and a stone. We see the courage of David in this story.

As King, David's reign was plagued by violence and rebellion. Because of that, David could not "build the Lord's House" or a temple for God during his 40 years as king.

Solomon: Solomon was David's son. He was the son of David and Bathsheba. Now, the story of David and Bathsheba is for another day...but after the death of David and Bathsheba's first child, they had another son. They named him Solomon, meaning "peaceful". Solomon's birth symbolized restoration and grace coming after a war ridden time under David's leadership. Solomon would become the heir to David's throne. Solomon became King. As stated in 1 Kings 5:4: "But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune. So I intend to build a house for the name of the Lord my God. The Lord had said to David, Your son, who I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.

Solomon's reign brought the building of the First Temple, fulfilling David's dream. Within the temple sat the Ark of the Covenant. This was the most sacred object in ancient Israelite religion, and in Solomon's Temple (also called the First Temple), it was regarded as the earthly dwelling place of God's presence. From what I have found, according to the Hebrew Bible (mainly Exodus 25:10–22): The Ark was a chest made of acacia wood. It was overlaid with pure gold, inside and out. The Bible describes the Ark as containing The two tablets of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 25:16; Deuteronomy 10:1–5).

In the resource, Working Preacher, Alphonetta Wines describes Solomon's temple. "The temple held deep meaning for the Israelite community. It was built on land where, despite dire circumstances with death on the horizon, life prevailed. The temple was a seven-year joint project of Solomon and Hiram, King of Tyre, and friend of David. "Hiram's Phoenicians supplied cedar and fir building materials. In exchange, Solomon's Hebrews supplied food."<sup>1</sup> Detailed descriptions of the temple in 1 Kings 5-9 and 2 Chronicles 2-7 astound the imagination. Gold was everywhere, inside and out. Rich furnishings and decorations were made of the finest materials. Artistic and architectural excellence made the temple something to behold. Unlike other temples, there were no gods anywhere in this temple. Instead of images of gods, there were decorations of palm trees, flowers, and cherubim, reminders of God's creation. The Ark of the Covenant with two tablets of the Ten Instructions (Ten Commandments), Aaron's rod, and some manna was all that was in the Holy of Holies. This sparsity was a reminder of the invisible God, the one God, transcendent and immanent, separate from yet inexorably connected to humanity and all creation."

The building of the temple is a major turning point in the history and religion of Israel. Clearly one of the main things that Israel remembered Solomon for was constructing the Lord's temple in Jerusalem.

In 1 Kings Chapter 8, the dedication of the temple is occurring. This is where the ark of the covenant was brought to the new temple. That phrase — “a cloud filled the house of the Lord” — appears in 1 Kings 8:10-11 and 2 Chronicles 5:13-14, describing what happened when the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Solomon’s Temple at its dedication.

It’s one of the most powerful symbolic moments in the Bible, representing God’s visible presence filling His new dwelling place among His people. It symbolized God’s Presence — showing that the Lord Himself had come to dwell in the Temple. Majesty and Mystery — the cloud both revealed and concealed God’s presence; His nearness was real, but His glory was overwhelming. The priests could not continue ministering because the glory was too intense. “*The cloud that filled the house of the Lord,*” was a visible sign that the invisible God had chosen to dwell among His people — His glory filled the Temple just as His presence once filled the Tabernacle.

So, as I think about this grand temple that took 7 years to construct, it makes me wonder why building a grand temple was so important? Is this wasteful and unnecessary? Is it a grandiose gesture? Why do we build grand churches to worship God? Grand churches and cathedrals in Christianity have been built for many centuries not merely as impressive buildings, but as expressions of faith, reverence, and community identity. At the heart of it, grand churches are meant to glorify God. The size, beauty, and craftsmanship are expressions of awe and reverence toward the Creator.

Just as Solomon’s Temple was built to honor the Lord in the Old Testament, many Christians see a beautiful church as a “house of God” on earth — a place worthy of His presence. The architecture, light, and music are designed to lift the mind and heart toward heaven. Churches are also built to gather the Community. They serve a social and communal purpose. They are centers of worship, education, charity, and refuge. In medieval

Europe, the cathedral was the heart of the city — a place of baptism, marriage, worship, and mourning. Building a church was a community effort that united generations in a shared act of devotion.

I like this definition the best – Building a church was a community effort that united generations in a shared act of devotion. When my children were baptized at Grace Lutheran Church – I was reminded by my grandmother that there were the 5<sup>th</sup> generation to be baptized in the same baptismal font...Ben, Miranda, Larry, Joyce, Emor...and at that moment, I felt connected to generations past. It wasn't necessarily the beautiful, ornate baptismal font that defined that moment, but the knowledge that generations had worked hard to maintain the church as a place of worship spanning 5+ generations. I like to think that our churches are just merely the dwelling that provides opportunity for God's divine presence – and the "cloud" that fills this church could be seen in so many ways. A cloud of singing – our favorite hymns that bring a tear to your eye when sung...a cloud of tears mourning the loss of some of our dearest family and friends...a cloud of laughter and smiles when two lives are joined as one...a cloud of hope when a newborn is baptized...all of these moments demonstrate God's presence in our dwellings.

When I think of a dwelling – I think of what makes that dwelling special. What makes a house a home? Is it the fancy trim, beautiful windows, gold fixtures, grand ceilings? Or is it the moments within that dwelling that live in our hearts for a lifetime? As I think about this, I remind myself that God dwells within us and not just within a structure. I remember that the church, in all of its beauty can act as an outward reflection of our inward faith. I encourage you to remember that God fills our hearts, homes, churches, schools, and all places with his "cloud". What an awesome world we live in, where we experience God's presence in so many ways.