



READ: I Kings 5:1-5; 6:11-14 (ESV)

Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram always loved David. And Solomon sent word to Hiram, "You know that David my father could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune. And so I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD said to David my father, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.' Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, "Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel." So Solomon built the house and finished it.

ENTER THE STORY:

From the initial pattern for the tabernacle given to Moses in the wilderness to the glorious temple Solomon built, the goal was the same. In Exodus 25:7 God says, "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." God's desire was to live and dwell among his people, so they could know him and worship him. But since he is also holy, his very presence is not only dangerous but deadly for sinful or impure people. The sanctuary God had them build was the answer to this problem, but there were still restrictions.

In the pattern God gave them, there was a special room at the very back called the "Holy of Holies." This room was separated from all other areas, and protected by a big, thick veil because God's presence dwelled there in the form of a cloud that hovered inside and over that room. This is the same cloud that revealed God's presence and led the Israelites by day when they were leaving Egypt. When this cloud came to "dwell" over the tabernacle, the Israelites referred to it as God's "shekinah" glory which just means "God's settled or dwelling glory."

No-one was allowed in that room, except on one special occasion each year, and even then, it was *ONLY* the High Priest who was allowed in. He had to take incense and blood with him to cover his own sins before he could even offer other sacrifices for the sins of the people. This was just one of many regulations the High Priest had to go through on that day, but the point was clear...it is a sacred thing to walk into the presence of God, and it must be done cautiously, carefully, and exactly as God instructed.

There did come a point in time when, because of Israel's continued rebellion and disobedience, God's dwelling glory lifted up from the temple and left, never to return.

That is...until the day a young mother named Mary and her husband, Joseph, brought their newborn baby into the temple to dedicate him to the Lord. Upon laying eyes on the baby, a righteous man named Simeon, who had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he saw the Messiah, took the baby in his arms and prophesied that he would be, "...a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:32)

We refer to Jesus as "God in the flesh" because in Jesus, all the fullness of God's glory dwells...so when we read, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), we can see the connection ALL the way back to the original tabernacle of God's dwelling.

- Through Jesus, God's presence had come to dwell (or tabernacle), among his people again. But Jesus would not have to
- hide his glory in a cloud or behind a veil...it was on full display for all to see. But God desires to be even closer to his
- people, so before Jesus left, he promised to send another helper and manifestation of God's presence.
- This helper would not dwell *AMONG* God's people, but *INSIDE* God's people. God's "shekinah" glory is settled within
- Jesus' followers as a guarantee of God's promises fulfilled. And the Holy Spirit dwelling in us makes our bodies God's
- living temple (*1 Corinthians 6:20*). With this assurance inside of us, God's presence will always be with us; he will never
- leave us or forsake us.
-
-

■ **PRAY:** *God, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to dwell among us and show us what you are like, and thank you for giving us your Holy Spirit, so that we can always have your presence with us. Keep us close to you always. Amen.*

-
-