



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

When Hiram king of Tyre heard that Solomon had been anointed king to succeed his father David, he sent his envoys to Solomon, because he had always been on friendly terms with David. Solomon sent back this message to Hiram: "You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God until the LORD put his enemies under his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster. I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God, as the LORD told my father David, when he said, 'Your son whom I will put on the throne in your place will build the temple for my Name.' The word of the LORD came to Solomon: "As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel." So Solomon built the temple and completed it.

ENTER THE STORY:

From the very first 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, "...let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." God wanted to live and dwell among his people, so they could know him and worship him, but God is also holy, which means he is set apart from us because of his perfect and pure nature. His holy presence is not only dangerous, but deadly for sinful people. The place God had them build fixed this problem, but there were still restrictions.

God told them to have a special room at the very back called the "Holy of Holies". This room was separated from all the other rooms by a big, thick veil so that no one could see past it. God's presence dwelled there in the form of a cloud that hovered inside and over that room. This is the same cloud that contained 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, *ONLY* the High Priest was allowed back there, and he had to take a sacrifice with him to cover his own sins before he could offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. The point of this special day was clear, it is a *VERY SPECIAL* thing to walk into the presence of God, and it must be done carefully, and exactly as God instructed.

God's presence dwelled among Israel like this for a long, but when Israel's constant rebellion and disobedience went on long enough, God's Shekinah Glory lifted up from the temple and left...never to return.

That is, until almost 600 years later when a young mother named Mary and her husband, Joseph brought their newborn baby into the temple to dedicate him to the Lord. Through baby Jesus, God's presence had come to dwell 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. And after Jesus' work on this earth was finished, he would return to his Father in heaven, but before he left, Jesus promised to send another helper, who would also bring God's presence to the people.

This helper is the Holy Spirit, but he does not dwell inside a temple or *AMONG* God's people. When a person puts their faith in Jesus' death and resurrection to pay the penalty for their sins, God forgives them and puts His Spirit *INSIDE* his people as a guarantee of his promises fulfilled.

- God's "Shekinah glory" is settled within Jesus' followers as a guarantee of God's promises fulfilled. The Holy Spirit
- dwelling in us will make our bodies God's living temple (*1 Corinthians 6:20*), and with this assurance inside of us, God's
- presence will always be with us and he will never leave us or forsake us.
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■ **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.*