

## Unit III: Special Offerings and the Sanctuary

# A Grand Opening

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** 2 Chronicles 6:12, 14-27

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** 2 Chronicles 7:1-20

**PRINT PASSAGE:** 2 Chronicles 7:1-7, 11

### KEY VERSE

When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. (2 Chronicles 7:3, KJV)

.....

When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshipped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “He is good; his love endures forever.” (2 Chronicles 7:3, NIV)

### LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the importance of celebrating sacred spaces.
- Examine one’s motives for public displays of financial generosity.
- Look back on the milestones that were observed in the history of your own church body.

### \*KEY TERMS

**Glory (verse 1)**—Hebrew: *kâbôwd* (kaw-bode’): honor; abundance; splendor; reverence; majesty; dignity; respect; heaviness of weight, wealth, or importance.

**Hallowed (verse 7)**—Hebrew: *qadash* (kaw-dash’): set apart; “consecrated” (NIV); dedicated; sanctified; purified.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

### INTRODUCTION

The black church in America was birthed from the tremendous sacrifices of an oppressed people with very limited means and opportunity. In many cases, by the labor of



### The Biblical Context

The book of 2 Chronicles does not name its author, but tradition attributes authorship to Ezra. The book assesses Israel's religious history, specifically the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and spans the period from Solomon's reign to the end of the Babylonian Exile. Ironically, the chronicler rarely mentions the Northern Kingdom of Israel because of its propensity for idolatry and refusal to acknowledge the Temple. The narrative does not focus on the failures of Judah's kings (good or bad) because the text is presented from a priest's perspective. Practically, 2 Chronicles' purpose was to inform the returning exiles from Babylon living in Judah to evaluate the attitudes and behaviors of their ancestors to discover why they were blessed for obeying God's commands or punished for their willful disobedience—a timeless message for the faith community now. Thematically, 2 Chronicles highlights the significance of showing faithfulness to God's commands, Temple worship, the legacy of Judah's kings, and God's sovereignty regarding national and world affairs.

their own hands and the sacrifice of the meager offerings, faithful people labored together on their own land to build places of worship where they could gather together in their own communities, serve the Lord, and worship Him freely, away from the control of those who would prevent them from preaching and teaching the Word for themselves. In most congregations, the people regarded and revered the land, the articles of worship, the church building, and even the steps leading to it as “holy ground.” Across the generations, God shined with favor upon those churches, sustaining them through the darkest days of history and lifting them as pillars and key centers of influence in most black communities. God looked with similar favor on the site where David made his atoning sacrifice for the sin of demanding a census of his military forces—and again, later, when David's son Solomon offered prayers and offerings at the Temple dedication ceremony. While he finished his prayer (see 2 Chronicles 6:12-41), God signified His approval of the sacred space by sending fire from heaven, consuming the sacrifices, and filling the Temple with His Shekinah glory.

### ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

## The Temple Accepted (2 Chronicles 7:1-3)

### KJV

**NOW WHEN Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.**

**2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house.**

**3 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.**

## NIV

**WHEN SOLOMON finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.**

**2 The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it.**

**3 When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “He is good; his love endures forever.”**

Solomon and the Israelites were blessed to enjoy a unique and glorious worship experience—the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem. At the moment when Solomon ended his prayer asking God to accept the Temple as the people’s gift to Him, God responded with fire from heaven, consumed the sacrifices, and filled the Temple with His glory (**verse 1**). God’s quick response affirmed that He had heard Solomon’s prayer and given divine approval of and acceptance to the Temple and the accompanying sacrifices. This extraordinarily divine phenomenon had a dual effect on the priests and the people. The overwhelming intensity of God’s presence prevented the priests from entering the Temple (**verse 2**). This verse illustrates that God’s holiness is inaccessible without appropriate preparation. When the people saw the fire coming down and God’s glory above the Temple, they responded by kneeling on the pavement with their faces down, worshipping, and giving thanks (**verse 3**). Privileged to witness His glory, Israel acknowledged God’s benevolent character and everlasting loving-kindness. The people’s response underscores the truth that the only appropriate response to God’s manifested presence is worship that humbly reverences God’s holiness.

God gives free access to His presence through a spiritual relationship with Christ. Every believer who is filled with the Spirit is God’s temple and dwelling place. God’s presence is welcomed by the acceptable spiritual worship of those who have gathered in His name.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**How can we balance physical preparation (e.g., ministry meetings, choir rehearsals, etc.) with essential spiritual preparation to experience God’s manifested glory?**

## **The Temple Dedicated (2 Chronicles 7:4-7, 11)**

## KJV

**4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD.**

**5 And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.**

**6 And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.**

**7** Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brasen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.

.....

**11** Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

## **NIV**

**4** Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD.

**5** And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the people dedicated the temple of God.

**6** The priests took their positions, as did the Levites with the LORD's musical instruments, which King David had made for praising the LORD and which were used when he gave thanks, saying, "His love endures forever." Opposite the Levites, the priests blew their trumpets, and all the Israelites were standing.

**7** Solomon consecrated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple of the LORD, and there he offered burnt offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings, because the bronze altar he had made could not hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat portions.

.....

**11** When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace.

Solomon and the people continued their worship amid God's overwhelming response by presenting an extravagant but well-deserved sacrifice to God (**verse 4**). Solomon offered 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats in addition to the assembled worshippers' personal offerings (**verse 5**). The magnitude of these sacrifices underscored the significance of the Temple's dedication and Solomon's devotion to God. While the sacrifices were being offered, the priests and Levites took their positions. The Levites praised God with musical instruments—which David used to give thanks in recognition of God's never-ending lovingkindness—and the priests opposite them blew trumpets as the assembled congregation stood (**verse 6**). The number of sacrifices created a logistical problem because the bronze altar could not accommodate all the burnt offerings and the fat of the peace offerings (**verse 7**).

Underlying Solomon's decision to consecrate the middle part of the Temple courtyard was the spiritual significance of the offerings. Burnt offerings signified the people's total surrender and commitment to the Lord, atonement for their sins, and their desire for fellowship with God. Since fat is considered the richest and best part of an animal, burning it on the altar signified offering God the best and, in this context, sharing fellowship with Him. **Verse 11**

marks the completion of Solomon's building projects—the Temple and his palace. The Temple completion fulfilled the prophecy outlined in 1 Kings 8:19.

In summary, these verses reveal spiritual principles that apply to worship today. Israel's sacrifices had to be physically perfect and were, therefore, economically valuable to their owners. The people's willingness to present such offerings to God despite the cost revealed their desire to please God by offering Him their very best sacrifice. Believers should still strive to follow this example by presenting to God the best of their time, talents, and resources. The underlying symbolism behind these sacrifices is that God wants acceptable worship that is accompanied by a committed life. The first offering any worshippers can offer God is that of themselves.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**How much are you willing to sacrifice to worship God as He deserves and desires?**

## A CLOSING THOUGHT

Today's verses from 2 Chronicles 7 highlight the importance of dedicating sacred spaces for communal worship and presenting a proper attitude toward God's presence and provision. After God sealed His approval of the Temple as Israel's worship center, the people demonstrated the elements of authentic worship: humbly acknowledging God's holiness and glory, dealing with sin and seeking forgiveness, expressing gratitude for His goodness and steadfast love, sacrificial giving, offering Him the best, total surrender, and exuberant, God-centered praise.

## YOUR LIFE

Intentional sacrificial giving to God symbolizes sincere devotion and thanksgiving. God-centered worship is all about our giving a worthy God our best praise and service, and surrendering ourselves entirely to Him. Assess how "generous" you are in worship and consider ways to contribute and participate meaningfully in your congregation's weekly worship gatherings.

## YOUR WORLD!

God's sealed approval and acceptance of the dedicated Temple represented an invitation for His people to worship Him there. Everyone was moved by God's manifested presence at the Temple. Think about the communal atmosphere of your congregation's sacred space. Is it welcoming? Do visitors feel comfortable and at home? Consider what you can do this week to enhance your congregation's hospitality.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, help us make Your glory more visible in our sacred spaces designed and dedicated to worship You. As we surrender to You, fill us with Your Spirit so that our lives may reflect Your glory and draw others to You for salvation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



## CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson challenges us to consider how we can balance celebrating the new while honoring the past (Ezra 3:1-6, 10-13).

### Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, May 12	"Joy Comes with the Morning"	(Psalm 30)
TUESDAY, May 13	"Songs of Gratitude"	(Colossians 3:12-17)
WEDNESDAY, May 14	"Blessed Be the Merciful, Consoling God"	(2 Corinthians 1:2-14)
THURSDAY, May 15	"Enter God's Presence with Thanksgiving"	(Psalm 95)
FRIDAY, May 16	"Worship in the Spirit of God"	(Philippians 3:1-14)
SATURDAY, May 17	"The Exiles Return"	(Ezra 1)
SUNDAY, May 18	"Building a New Foundation"	(Ezra 3:1-6, 10-13)

### NOTES