

+

THE LOOKOUT

JUNE 2021

UNIT: History of Israel (2 Samuel; 2 Chronicles)

THEME: A King's House

OVERVIEW:

Israel reached her zenith during the reigns of Kings David and Solomon. The only reign to surpass them would be the coming of the true Son of David, Jesus Christ. This month, students will learn of the house (kingdom) of David being established, threatened, rescued, and secured.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF JUNE 27, 2021

LESSON AIM: **Sing, for he is good;
his love endures
forever.**

UNIT: History of Israel (2 Samuel & 2 Chronicles)

THEME: A King's House

LESSON TEXT: 2 Chronicles 5:1-14; 7:11-16

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 1 Kings 8

THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

BY MARK SCOTT

One thing that may well have distinguished Hebrew faith from other world religions of its time was that it was a celebratory faith. The major festivals of faith were essentially parties. Passover celebrated freedom from Egypt. Pentecost celebrated the giving of the Law and the beginnings of harvest. Tabernacles celebrated God's provisions in the wilderness.

Births, circumcisions, weddings, and even funerals were celebrated. And so were other big events in the Old Testament. One such event was the finishing of the tabernacle. When it was ready for use, God's glory inhabited it in a special way (Exodus 40:34-38). Some 450 years later, when Solomon's temple was completed, it was another occasion to celebrate.

Celebrating the Presence of God

2 Chronicles 5:1-14

The temple of Solomon was one of the grandest sites in the ancient world. It could easily have given the "seven great wonders of the ancient world" a run for their money. The temple took seven years to complete and was finished around 959 BC. It was filled with gold, silver, and bronze. King David had *dedicated* (made holy) many of the things in advance (1 Chronicles 22:14; 29:1-9). They were stored away for just the right time.

Solomon made it happen. He enlisted the *elders*, the *heads of the tribes*, and the *chiefs* of the families to bring the *ark of the Lord's covenant* (box or chest) from the old city of David up to the newly completed temple. This was all to be done during the *seventh month*. This was a party month—not only celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles but also the Day of Atonement. Good timing.

Even though the ark would not be carried a great distance (the old city of David sits just south of the temple area), they were going to transport it correctly this time (cf. 2 Samuel 6:1-11). The Levites were to bear it up along with the *sacred furnishings*. They would function both as the movers and the butchers. So many sacrifices were made that people lost count of them—though they tried to keep a record (2 Chronicles 7:4-6).

The ark was placed in the Holy of Holies (*inner sanctuary* or *Most Holy Place*). The priests placed the mercy seat (*wings of the cherubim*) on top of the ark (sending

the message that mercy triumphs over judgment). The poles for carrying it extended so far that they could be seen in the Holy Place (the room just outside the Holy of Holies). The Ten Commandments were placed inside the ark. The writer of Hebrews speaks as if the jar of manna and Aaron's rod were also inside of it, but the Old Testament never exactly said that (Hebrews 9:4; cf. Exodus 16:33-34; Numbers 17:10).

The decibel level of this celebration must have been deafening. Consecrated priests within their Davidic divisions, the musicians among the Levites (three are mentioned by name along with their *sons* and *relatives*), and a 120-priest brass band offered up praise to God. They sang that familiar song from Psalm 136 (God is good and his "loyal love" endures forever).

Reminiscent of when the tabernacle was finished, the cloud of God and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. In fact, it so filled this new house of worship there was room for no one else. The word *ark* occurs nine times in this chapter. It symbolized God's presence, which is something to celebrate.

Celebrating the Name of God

2 Chronicles 7:11-16

The ark and all the temple furnishings were magnificent. This moment certainly was a high-water mark in Israelite history. Solomon blessed the people (2 Chronicles 6:1-11) and dedicated the temple with prayer (6:12-42). God affirmed it all by allowing fire to fall from heaven (7:1-3). The people sacrificed animals and consecrated themselves to the Lord (7:4-10). But more important was that the *Name* of God was attached to this sacred space. If God's name was there that meant his person, power, and glory also were there. He said his name would be there forever. In fact, even his eyes, ears, and heart would be there (vv. 15-16)—no small thing.

The Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and reminded him of the covenant and the conditions of keeping the law. The absence of rain, the presence of locusts (see Joel), and plagues would remind the people of their unfaithfulness. But if they would *humble* (bring low or subject) *themselves, pray, and seek his face and turn from their wicked* (evil) ways, then God would *hear, forgive, and heal*. Celebrating the name of God in the place of God will remind one of the goodness and love of God. ■

APPLICATION

WHY BOTHER?

BY DAVID FAUST

It takes a lot of time and money to keep churches, missions, and other faith-based nonprofits operating. Think of all the boards, budgets, and buildings. Paid staff. In-person and online worship services. Sermons, newsletters, blogs, and podcasts. Conferences, retreats, training sessions, and business meetings. Is it worth the effort? Is this really what the Lord's work is all about?

I love the church, but I crave a higher purpose than just keeping the machinery going. "Business as usual" doesn't light my fire. When the church's quirks get on my nerves and weariness drains my enthusiasm, three motivators remind me why serving the Lord is worth the effort.

Three Reasons to Keep Believing and Serving

Logic demands it. I still have a thousand questions about my faith, but I can't escape the reasonable evidence that undergirds it. Science and nature, morality and justice, history and archaeology, fulfilled prophecy, and the positive example of faithful believers reinforce my confidence in God and the Bible. My faith isn't grounded in imperfect people and religious organizations. I have placed my past, present, and eternal future into the hands of a deceased and reanimated Jewish carpenter. I believe Jesus of Nazareth came back to life three days after dying on the cross, so logic compels me to follow him. Jesus' resurrection filled his first-century followers with contagious, uncontainable hope that overflowed spontaneously onto others. The Holy Spirit gave them an unstoppable sense of purpose. They kept believing, serving, and preaching in spite of hardship and persecution. Simon Peter had weaknesses of his own and at times he felt frustrated with other disciples, but he rightly said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Love requires it. I have seen God's love at work. Not always. And not often enough. But I have seen the church at its best. And it's a beautiful thing when followers of Christ care for the lonely, feed the hungry, heal the sick, nurture impoverished children, restore shattered marriages, and teach God's Word with passion and relevance. Who wouldn't want to be part of that? From conception to the cemetery, God's love moves us to care for our neighbors next

door and for strangers far away who need to be reconciled with their Creator. "Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14) to share the gospel of peace.

The Lord deserves it. Solomon's workers spent seven long years building the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6:38). This project cost an enormous amount of planning and money. Was their hard work worth it? Years later the Babylonians destroyed the temple and carried the Jews into exile. Were Solomon's efforts wasted? No. Worshipers rightly celebrated the completion of the temple.

[They] joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the Lord was filled with the cloud . . . for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).

The people weren't always good, but God was (and is). Kings like Solomon weren't always wise and loving, but God was (and is). The temple took years to build and eventually it was torn down, but for a time it was filled with the glory of God, who deserves all praise.

Today, the church is God's dwelling place. Yes, there are imperfections in this temple. Lots of things would be better undone (or done differently). There are things the church needs to streamline, simplify, or simply stop doing. But in the meantime, do we see God's glory dwelling in our midst like a bright cloud? Are we willing to keep believing and serving because our minds, hearts, and souls are convinced of the logic behind our faith, the love that drives our service, and the worthiness of God that inspires our worship?

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9).

Personal Challenge: What motivates you to keep serving the Lord? What keeps you going in spite of frustration and disappointment? On a piece of paper or in your personal journal, write down your own list of the reasons you refuse to quit following Jesus. ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How did the Spirit of the Lord speak through you to someone last week?
2. What new challenge or opportunity did you experience last week?

Ask two people to read aloud **2 Chronicles 5:1-14; 7:11-16** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to retell the story from these passages in a minute or less.

3. Imagine you witnessed the events described in 2 Chronicles 5. Describe the sights and sounds of the day.
 - What stood out to you from the verses in 2 Chronicles 7?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - Who were involved in the events of chapter 5?
 - How would you describe the demeanor of the people as the ark was carried into and placed in the temple?
 - How did God respond to Solomon's temple-dedication prayer?
 - How would God get the attention of his people when they were unfaithful to him?
 - Who specifically was God speaking about in 7:14? (*Look at the verse in the context of which it was written.*)
 - What promises did God make in regard to the temple?
5. What do you learn about God from these passages?
 - What do you learn about how God responds to our humble and sincere prayers?
6. What do you learn about how you should respond when you are unfaithful to God?
7. What do these passages teach you about obeying God?
8. What do you learn from the elders and priests about how to serve God?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What new challenge or opportunity do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **2 Chronicles 1:7-13; 9:1-8, 22-24** as we continue studying the history of Israel in a new unit called "A Troubled Kingdom." You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■