

Glory Days

1 Kings 8:1-66

(Show slide 1 as soon as Bible Reading ends)

Our experience of spending time with someone depends on who the person is.

Some people are really easy to meet up with. They don't require us to tidy our messy house, they get who we are and the effect of their presence makes us feel on top of the world. For other people it's much more complicated.

Change to slide 2 A number of years ago I got to shake the hand of the British Prime Minister. It wasn't easy for him to be present in a Glasgow hotel. Lots of **security preparations** had to be made and **official protocol** had to be followed.

Change to slide 3 My point is a simple one. Our experience of spending time with someone depends on who they are. It impacts how we **prepare** for their arrival, how we **interact** with them when they are with us, and also the **result** of being in their presence.

This morning we reach **1 Kings chapter 8**. This is a section of the Bible that focuses on what needs to happen if God is to be present with his people. The temple has been built but now is the moment when the new resident, the Lord God Almighty, moves into his spectacular home.

There are **four truths** that I want to highlight .

- God's presence requires sacrifice (Vs 1-5)
- God's presence is glorious (Vs 6-13)
- God's presence isn't containable (Vs 14-61)
- God's presence produces joy (Vs 62-66)

First, God's presence requires sacrifice (Vs 1-5)

Change to slide 4 Look at verse 1. **Read verses 1 to 5.**

This is a **huge occasion** for the Old Testament people of God.

The temple had been completed and now was the time for the ark of the covenant to be brought into the building.

The ark was a golden box and it contained the 10 commandments, the basis of God's covenant with his people,

The ark was deliberately designed to be like the footstool of a royal throne. Not a throne but the footstool for the king. Why? God wasn't contained to where the ark was and neither was his rule limited to where the ark happened to be. No, he rules from heaven above over all the creatures he has made. However, he has a special link with his chosen people and so he has his footstool with them. He is present with them and they are his people, a people who enjoy the experience of being ruled by his perfect words.

Up until this point the ark had been kept in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle, which was in essence a very large portable tent. But now in the seventh month of the Jewish year, when indeed they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, the command was given to move the ark from its **temporary tent** to the **permanent temple**.

However, as the whole people of God gather for this significant moment in their experience of the presence of God, there is a vital lesson that must be noted: God's presence requires sacrifice!

One of the features of **1 Kings** so far has been lots of accurate numbers. Our author loves to count things.

However, did you notice what he says in **verse 5**? There were just too many sacrifices to count!

Let's not sanitise this scene. The sacrifices were happening before the ark as it travelled to its new destination. This means the streets would have been covered in blood.

When a president or prime minister or a member of the royal family comes to visit there are inevitable security preparations before their arrival. Teams of police arrive to check out the terrain and put in measures so that the arriving dignitary will be kept safe.

Before the ark arrives in the temple, there is a committed security operation going on. Countless animals are sacrificed in preparation for the arrival of the Lord.

How does this keep him safe? It's not about his safety. It's about the safety of his people.

They need to be kept safe from his blazing holiness because of their inherent sin.

The way to achieve this is through sacrifice.

Hebrews 9:22, "...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

Punishment is deserved but punishment can be averted if a substitute suffers in the place of the offender.

This is the big lesson that we are being reminded of as we watch the royal procession enter the newly completed temple.

There is indeed a **red carpet** to follow but it is a **pavement stained with blood**.

You may have noticed that our corridors this morning were not covered with blood. Why not?

It's all because of the once and for all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not multiple sacrifices. Only one was required because Jesus is so precious.

The day of Jesus' death was a very bloody occasion.

The result of his death was profoundly significant for our experience of the presence of God.

Mark 15:37-38, "With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."

The no entry sign is gone. The barrier has been removed. This means two things. People can enter. But also that God's presence can spread outward.

That's exactly our reality. Jesus is building his global temple and because of his unique sacrifice, the presence of God is now in multiple temples around the world. That he, the Holy Spirit dwells within millions of Christians and is present in a special way as churches gather in corporate worship.

Second, God's presence is glorious (Vs 6-13)

Change to slide 5 There are **two glorious features** that I want to highlight in these verses.

The **first** one is in verse 9. **Read verse 9.**

The presence of the words of God is a glorious fact that should be **praised** by the people of God.

God is there and he is not silent. He wants to be known and to help his people know his ways and his will, he has spoken words that can be understood.

God's words are not exhaustive but they are sufficient.

Their presence is a glorious feature of our lives.

The **second** glorious feature is in verses 10 and 11. **Read verses 10 and 11.**

This dark cloud had been a feature of the journey out of Egypt into the Promised Land. It was a sign that the God of the universe was present with his people in a special way.

Or as **verse 11** puts it, "...the glory of the LORD filled his temple."

That is, the **splendid** and **substantial** presence of God was with his people.

On this special temple dedication day, the cloud descends yet again.

It is one of those hallelujah moments. The God who was with us then is with us still!

There is a place in the New Testament when we see a stunning combination of the word of God and the presence of the cloud of glory.

Mark 9:2-7, “After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: ‘This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!’”

We see the true glorious splendour of Jesus as the Son of God in human flesh.

God the Father doesn't say, “**Look at him**” but “**Listen to him**.”

This is a wonderful connection between the **presence** of the Lord and the **word** of the Lord.

The same principle continues in the church today.

The Spirit of God and the word of God go together. Or put differently, a church that is full of the Holy Spirit will be full of God's word.

Let's not divide what God has joined together.

Third, God's presence isn't containable (Vs 14-61)

Change to slide 6 This section is full of Solomon's words to the people and his words to God.

We have no time to pick up on everything that is said so let me highlight one theme that really got me excited.

Look at verse 27. **Read verse 27.**

The God of the universe cannot be contained in any human structure. He may be present in a special way but his entire being cannot be squeezed into even the most magnificent temple.

And yet even though all this is true, the temple itself is not an irrelevant structure.

Listen to the consistent theme that emerges over the next few verses.

Look at verse 28. **Read verses 28 to 30.**

Or verse 33. **Read verses 33 and 34.**

Or verse 37. **Read verses 37 to 39a.**

Or last one, verse 46. **Read verses 46 to 49.**

The temple is acting like a **mobile phone tower**, taking the prayers of God's people and directing them to towards heaven.

Why? It's preparing the way of the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray in Jesus' name. It is the constant reminder that we cannot access the Father without **mediating work of our Saviour**.

John 16:26-27, "In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God."

None of this way of communicating with the Father should surprise us if we remember the place of the temple.

For the Old Testament people of God, the temple was vital if their prayers were to be heard from heaven. What about us? The same truth applies. Our prayers will only be heard if we pray on the basis of the ultimate temple, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, if we do, we have the confident assurance that our Father will always listen to us.

Fourth, God's presence produces joy (Vs 62-66)

Change to slide 7 Not everyone we spend time with fills our life with joy.

What about God? Is it worth keeping him close or keeping him at a distance?

Look at verse 65. **Read verses 65 and 66.**

The presence of the Lord God Almighty produces a mood of celebration and joy amongst the people of God.

Back then, God was not a cosmic killjoy. The same is true today.

Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Let me say something that might initially seem odd. Often we miss out on joy in our lives because that is the focus of our pursuits. We seek joy or happiness as our end goal and then we experience disappointment and let down. The secret is not to pursue joy but to pursue God. When we have the presence of God within us, we will know a joy that cannot be matched! **Let's pray.**