

After the construction of the temple had been completed, Solomon then had the ark of the covenant and the rest of the holy objects used in the tabernacle transported to the temple to be set up in their proper places. The ceremony to dedicate the temple to the worship of the LORD was then held and the LORD showed His approval by manifesting His Shekinah glory in a cloud that filled the temple.

1 Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished: and Solomon brought in *all* the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God.

“Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished” – Chapters 3-4 describe the construction of the temple along with the utensils and furnishings to be used for the sacrifices and worship to be conducted in the temple. After seven years of work the temple construction project is declared to be complete.

“and Solomon brought in *all* the things that David his father had dedicated” – David had personally collected a massive inventory of materials to be used for building the temple and the items that would be needed for the worship of the LORD once it was built. The princes and other leaders of Israel responded to David's invitation to contribute to the collection of materials, which more than doubled the materials and money set aside for the temple (1 Chr. 29:2-7). Solomon now brings into the temple the surplus items not used in the construction so that it would be available for future uses in the temple.

“and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments [utensils; articles; furniture]” – Silver and gold could be used for money or as building material. The “instruments” refers to the items (tools and/or furniture) that were either donated or had been used at the tabernacle.

“put he among the treasures [treasures; supplies] of the house of God” – Evidently Solomon's plans for the temple included one or more areas to be used to store the “treasures” that belonged to the temple of God. This would have included not only money and valuables but also supplies and “instruments” that were not being currently used for worship. Solomon made sure that everything that had been contributed for building the temple remained at the temple for future use.

2 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which *is* Zion.

Once the construction of the temple had been completed, Solomon assembled the leaders of Israel to take part in the dedication of the temple. The first step in the ceremony was to move the ark of the covenant into the temple. David had previously brought the ark to Jerusalem and had placed it in a tent that he had set up to house it (2 Sam. 6; 1 Chr. 13, 15; 16:1; 2 Chr. 1:4). It was already within the city but now Solomon is moving it up the mountain to the newly built temple. We are also given an alternative name for Jerusalem: Zion.

3 Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king in the feast which was in the seventh month. 4 And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark.

“Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king in the feast which was in the seventh month” – The seventh month was the time designated for the Feast of Tabernacles, a week long feast at the end of the harvest (September-October) to thank the LORD for His blessings on their crops. Solomon chose this time for installing the ark in the temple.

“And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark” – The elders, as representatives of the people of Israel, were in attendance to witness the ark being moved to the temple. On his first attempt to move the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6), David had made the mistake of placing it on a cart pulled by oxen instead of having it carried by the Levites as prescribed in the Law of Moses, an error that cost a man his life (2 Sam. 6:6-7). After he subsequently learned that only the Levites were approved to carry the ark, David's second attempt to move the ark was successful (1 Chr. 15:2, 11-15). Solomon had learned from his father's mistake and instructed the Levites carry the ark to the temple.

5 And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that *were* in the tabernacle, these did the priests *and* the Levites bring up.

“And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation” – It must be remembered that the ark was in Jerusalem in the tent that David had prepared for it (2 Chr. 1:4) even though the tabernacle itself was still at Gibeon. The priests were responsible for the actual carrying of the ark and the Levites, under the law, were responsible for taking down the tabernacle and putting it back up during travels of the children of Israel in the wilderness before reaching the land of Canaan. Once they entered Canaan and started taking possession of the land, the tabernacle was rarely moved. At this time the tabernacle was still erected at Gibeon and the Levites took it down and transported it to the temple at Jerusalem.

“and all the holy vessels [utensils; furniture] that were in the tabernacle” – In addition to the tabernacle itself, the holy objects that had been made for the purpose of worshiping the LORD were also brought to the temple. These apparently included the candlestick, altar of incense, table of shewbread, etc. as well as various bowls, censers, cups, etc. that were used by the priests.

“these did the priests *and* the Levites bring up” – We are not told that the tabernacle was erected again, so likely it was stored among the treasures of the temple (v. 1). However, much of the other objects were taken into the temple to be used as they were in the tabernacle.

6 Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude.

Previously Solomon had sacrificed 1,000 burnt offerings at the tabernacle at Gibeon (2 Chr. 1:6), but now he goes beyond even that large number of offerings. It appears that not only did he make his own burnt offerings but he allowed the congregation of Israel to bring their offerings as well. The end result is that so many offerings were made that they lost count.

7 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, *even* under the wings of the cherubims: 8 For the cherubims spread forth *their* wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above.

“And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place” – The layout of the temple followed the design of the tabernacle, having the “holy place” (containing the altar of incense, the table of shewbread and the golden lampstand) and the “most holy place” (where the ark itself resided). The ark was placed in the “most holy place” where the LORD had designated that it should be.

“to the oracle [innermost chamber; the place from which God speaks] of the house, into the most holy place” – The writer gives a further description of “his place” where the ark was designated to be. The Hebrew word translated “oracle” is derived from a word meaning “to speak” but the word for “oracle” itself came to be associated with an innermost chamber.

“even under the wings of the cherubims” – These are the giant cherubim statues (carved of wood and overlaid with gold) that stood wingtip to wingtip with their wings unfurled spanning the full 20 cubit (30 feet) width of the temple (2 Chr. 3:10-13). They stood in the most holy place and ark was placed underneath their outstretched wings.

“For the cherubims spread forth *their* wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above” – The “staves” were the golden poles that were inserted through rings on both sides of the ark so that the priests could safely carry it since it was too holy for human hands to touch. The ark with its staves was placed between the cherubim statues so that they were “covered” by the outstretched wings of the cherubim.

9 And they drew out the staves *of the ark*, that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day.

The counterpart verse from the parallel passage seems to more clearly explain the situation here: **1 Kings 8:8** “*And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day.*” Most commentators believe that the staves were slid part way out of the rings on the ark so that the end of each protruded through the veil that separated “the holy place” from “the most holy place.” The apparent purpose was so that when the high priest entered the “most holy place” (which had no illumination) on the Day of Atonement, he would know where the ark stood and not accidentally touch it, which would result in death. The ends of the staves could be seen in “the holy place” but not “without” (outside the temple). The writer obviously wrote this before the temple was destroyed by the Babylonians since he said that the ark and the staves were still there “unto this day” (the time when he was writing).

10 *There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.*

Horeb is another name for Mt. Sinai and the “two tables” (tablets of stone – 1 Kings 8:9) refers to the tablets on which the Ten Commandments had been written by the finger of God when Moses met Him on that mountain. At one time the ark also contained the pot of manna (Ex. 16:33) and Aaron’s rod that budded (Num. 17:10), a fact referred to by the writer of Hebrews (**Heb. 9:4** “*Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant*”). Perhaps the pot of manna and Aaron’s rod were removed after Israel had taken up permanent residence in Canaan or perhaps they were removed when the ark was brought into the temple, but the clear statement made in v. 10 is that the ark now only contained the tablets of stone.

11 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place: (for all the priests *that were* present were sanctified, *and* did not *then* wait by course: 12 Also the Levites *which were* the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, *being* arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:)

“And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place” – This begins a statement that is concluded in v. 13 since vs. 11b-14 is parenthetical. Normally the high priest entered the most holy place alone on the Day of Atonement, but here it seems that many priests helped in placing the ark in the most holy place and setting things up properly. This statement establishes the point in the timeline as being when the priests finished and exited the temple.

“for all the priests *that were* present were sanctified, *and* did not *then* wait by course” – Not all priests served at the same time but were in a rotation established by David, but this day was a special occasion and so the priests in attendance had sanctified themselves for the task of dedicating the temple.

“Also the Levites *which were* the singers...” – The dedication of the temple was accompanied by singers and musicians who sang and played during the activities to celebrate the dedication of the temple.

13 It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up *their* voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: that *then* the house was filled with a cloud, *even* the house of the LORD; 14 So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

As the singers and musicians sang and played together in praise of the LORD, the Shekinah glory of God filled the temple, showing His acceptance of the temple. The glory of the LORD was so strong that the priests could not “stand to minister.” Either they had become so physically weak that they could not remain standing or else they were compelled to fall on their faces in the LORD’s presence. The glory of the LORD had filled the tabernacle in similar fashion (Ex. 40:34-38) and will again in the millennial temple (Ezek. 43:1-5).