



Wed 1 Dec

1 Kings 8:14 - 15, 19 - 20 (NIV, abridged)
Focus or location?

While the whole assembly of Israel was standing there, the king turned round and blessed them. Then he said: 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who with his own hand has fulfilled what he promised with his own mouth to my father David... "You are not the one to build the temple, but your son, who is your own flesh and blood - he is the one who will build the temple for my Name." The Lord has kept the promise he made: I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the Lord promised, and I have built the temple for the Name of the Lord, the God of Israel.'

The temple was completed not by the final building works but by God's revelation of himself within it. This is a lesson for any church building project - the time to celebrate is perhaps not when the builders move out and the ribbon is cut but when God first makes himself known to those using the new structure.

In today's reading, Solomon assumes the role of a high priest - addressing the people, blessing them and praising God on their behalf. In this moment of inspiration, he becomes a living prophecy, a prophetic precursor of another 'son of David' who will come later (Matthew 21:9) - the Messiah, who will be both king and priest for the people.

It's at this inspired moment that Solomon recognises the temple's limitations. As he says in 1 Kings 8:27, 'Will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!' The temple will be a focus of God's covenant with his people, a point in time and space where sacrifices will be made and forgiveness granted, and God will 'dwell' there, but not in the sense that he will be confined by the building. God always has been, and always will be, involved in the daily lives of his people. His presence in the temple does not equate to his absence from everywhere else. Dwelling there does not mean that God is 'located' there. He is everywhere, with everyone, all the time.

Prayer

Lord, may I know you in every moment, in every place.

David Robertson
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