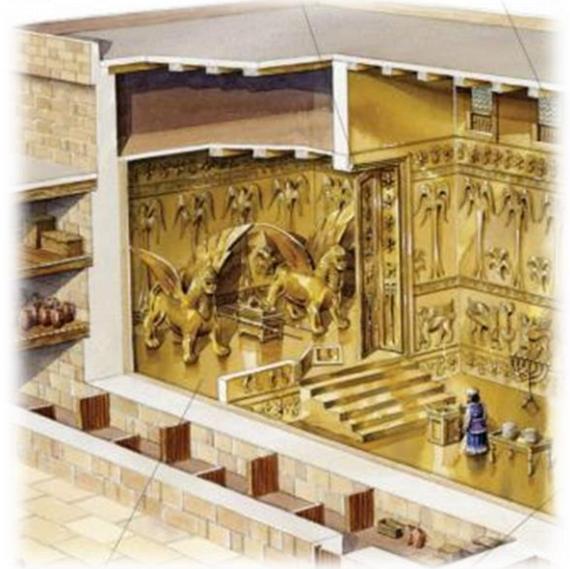


The Ark, The Glory and The Cloud

Specific Subject	Kings Reference	Chronicles Reference
Bringing the Ark	1 Kings 8.1-11	2 Chronicles 5
Solomon's Blessing	1 Kings 8.12-21	2 Chronicles 6.1-11
Solomon's Prayer	1 Kings 8.22-66	2 Chronicles 6.12-42

1 Kings 7.51: *So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD.* The Temple was finished after 7 years in building (1 Kings 6.38). It was now ready to receive the Ark, the very throne and dwelling place of Jehovah. David had constructed a special tabernacle (or tent) to house the Ark in Jerusalem on Mount Zion (1 Chronicles 15.1), but the Mosaic Tabernacle and Brazen Altar remained in Gibeon (2 Chronicles 1.3-6). Now the Ark and the Tabernacle (2 Chronicles 5.5) would both be brought up to the Temple on Mount Moriah.



This involved an elaborate ceremony (comprising two feasts of seven days each, cf. 1 Kings 8.65) in which all Israel were gathered together 'unto the king' (2 Chronicles 5.2-3). This was accompanied by unnumbered sacrifices (1 Kings 8.5), the placing of the Ark in the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 8.6) and the presence of the Lord filling the House (1 Kings 8.11). Solomon then spoke to the people and blessed them (1 Kings 8.12-21) after which he spoke to God in prayer (1 Kings 8.22-61). This was followed by fire coming down from heaven (2 Chronicles 7.1) and further worship and sacrifices (1 Kings 8.63-64, 2 Chronicles 7.3-5).

This all took place in the seventh month of the year (1 Kings 8.2), a full eleven months after the Temple had been completely finished (cf. 1 Kings 6.38). This was so the dedication of the Temple might take place during the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23.33-44). This is a feast which will be fulfilled during the Millennial reign of the Lord Jesus. It speaks prophetically of the regathering and restoration of the nation of Israel and emphasises the enjoyment of rest from labour and remembrance of God's goodness in the past. During the Millennium all Israel shall be gathered together unto the King at Jerusalem (Zechariah 2.10-12).

The Ark

The Ark of the Covenant was very special to God's people as it was the symbol of His presence, and place of His throne (Psalm 99.1). The Ark was 1.1m long and 0.7m in breadth and height. The Mercy Seat was a slab of pure gold and formed the lid of the Ark. Beaten out of the same piece of gold were the cherubim, located on either side of the Mercy Seat with their wings outstretched towards each other. The Ark is a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus as the risen Man.

The Ark was taken into the Most Holy Place and positioned 'under the wings of the cherubim' (1 Kings 8.6). Within the Most Holy Place were two large cherubim made of olive wood (1 Kings 6.23-28). Each cherub had two outstretched wings which together reached the whole width of the Most Holy Place (20m). The tips of the two outer wings touched the two side walls and the tips of the two inner wings touched one another in the middle of the Most Holy Place. Each cherub was 5m high with a wingspan of 10m each. What can all this teach us?

- The Ark was made of shittim wood (He is a Man) overlaid with gold (He is God). The Word was God (John 1.1). The Word was made flesh (John 1.14). God was manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3.16).
- The Ark only contained the unbroken tables of the law (i.e. the ten commandments) engraved on stone (1 Kings 8.9). The pot of manna was laid up 'before' the Ark (Exodus 16.33) as was Aaron's rod (Number 17.10). A copy of the Law was also placed 'in the side' of (beside) the Ark (Deuteronomy 31.24-26). Hebrews 9.4 does not necessarily contradict this. The unbroken tables of the Law contained within the Ark speak of the perfect life of the Lord Jesus. In His life, the Law of God was never broken (Psalm 1.2, 40.8).
- The Ark was placed 'in the midst of the house' (1 Kings 6.27) between the cherubim. The Ark ever dwelt in the midst of God's people (Numbers 10), going out 'before them' on only two occasions, both of which were to 'search out a resting place for them' (cf. Numbers 10.33). Christ has been given a central place of glory and authority in heaven (Revelation 5.6) and He should have the central place in our gatherings and lives.

- The Mercy Seat was exactly the same width and breadth of the Ark, completely covering the unbroken tables of the Law contained within. The Mercy Seat was stained with the blood of sacrifice and speaks of Christ who is the Mercy Seat (Romans 3.25-26). This is where the abiding value of the shed blood was placed before the eye of God and was left as a witness that a sacrifice had been made and God's divine claims met.
- The staves and rings of the Ark were used to move it whenever the people journeyed. So, God's presence was always with His people through the Wilderness journey. In the Temple, the Ark had now come to its final resting place (Psalm 132.8) as shown by the 'drawing out' of the staves (cf. Exodus 25.15). This pictures the Lord Jesus entering into the Holy Place, His work now finished (John 17.4). It also speaks of the eternal rest into which God will lead His people (Psalm 23.6, John 14.3, 1 Thessalonians 4.17). In a coming day, the presence and glory of the Lord Jesus shall be seen to be dwelling permanently in the midst of the Church (Revelation 21.22-23).
- Within the Temple, the Ark was associated with four cherubim. There were two looking **down** upon the Mercy Seat and two looking **out** towards the priests, the worshippers and beyond to the world. Cherubim speak of the righteousness, glory and presence of God which shall be seen universally as displayed in the nation of Israel and the Church throughout the Millennium.
- There is no mention of the manna (Christ as Bread from Heaven) or Aaron's rod (Christ as Great High Priest) in association with the Ark at this point. Both of these things were needed for the desert journey and speak of daily food and daily strength. In a coming day, the desert will be over and this provision will not be required. Nevertheless, God's word shall never pass away and shall eternally be obeyed (Hebrews 8.10), hence the emphasis on the two tables of stone (Isaiah 11.9).

The Glory and The Cloud

2 Chronicles 5.14: 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. This cloud was the visible symbol of the presence and glory of God. The same cloud had brought God's people out of Egypt (Exodus 13.21-22) and later filled the Tabernacle (Exodus 40.34-35). Although it would here fill the Temple, Israel's sin would soon drive it away from the land (Ezekiel 10.18-19). This 'bright cloud' is also associated with the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 17.5; Revelation 1.7, 14.14, cf. Matthew 24.30), the One Who is the Presence and Glory of God.

The presence and glory of God is evident in the Church today by the Holy Spirit (cf. Ephesians 2.22) who is called the Spirit of Glory. Note. It was when the Ark had been taken into the Holy of Holies and when the people 'were as one' in praising and thanking God, that the House was filled with the cloud. *Acts 2.1-4: And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting... 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.*

It is not enough to **know** this truth, it should be clearly demonstrated amongst us. Does the glory of the Lord fill the House? Is His presence clearly manifested in our midst (cf. 1 Corinthians 14.25)? How is this possible?

- **First**, the **basis** of the presence of God in the Temple was the Ark located in the midst of the Holy of Holies. Likewise, the basis of the glory and presence of God amongst us is a crucified, risen and glorified Lord Jesus who has entered into Heaven for us (Hebrews 9.12). God has given Him the central place of authority and honour and He must have this same place in our own lives and affections.
- **Second**, **all** the people were gathered together in unity to worship (1 Kings 8.2). 'As one' (cf. 2 Chronicles 5.13) the trumpeters and singers offered thanksgiving and praise to God in harmonious and melodious chorus. There is no substitute for complete unity amongst us. *Philippians 2.2: Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*
- **Third**, all the priests present were **sanctified** from any defilement. They were all in attendance regardless of their courses (cf. 1 Chronicles 24.3-19). The singers were attired in finely woven, white linen (2 Chronicles 5.12), speaking of the righteousness we have in Christ.
- **Fourth**, they stood at the east end of the altar (2 Chronicles 5.12). They were therefore facing the altar and the Temple, i.e. facing **Godward**, not manward. The crowds in the courts were behind them. Many years later, Ezekiel reports that the priests had their backs towards the Temple and faced the sun (Ezekiel 8.16). They had turned from God to idolatry (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1.9).
- **Fifth**, the place was characterised by **sacrifice**. The people and the king offered innumerable sacrifices (1 Kings 8.63-64). The Temple was chosen by Jehovah Himself as a 'house of sacrifice', 2 Chronicles 7.12.

2 Chronicles 7.15-16: Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attentive unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.