

A Place For All People

The Indonesian Reformed Church begins meeting in the Hills District of Sydney

On December 13, 2009 the Indonesian Reformed Church (IRC) began meeting in a new area of Sydney. This strategic move to the Castlehill area was made in order to increase their capacity to reach the lost for Christ. Jack De Vries spoke at this grand opening challenging those attending with the vision of the church being a place for all people.



Pastor Robby Moningka at the Grand Opening on December 13, 2009

“A Place for All People”

a message by Jack De Vries
Scripture: 2 Chronicles 6:32-33

What are some of the high points in your life? Some high-water marks – something happened that marked a high point in your life?

May 6, 1978 was one of those high points in my life. On that day a beautiful 19 year old young lady named Jeannie took my hand in marriage. It was a day marked with worship, celebration and feasting. That day remains way up there on the scale of high points.

Another high point happened a few years later – October 21, 1983. It was a cool autumn Friday. This was also a day of worship, celebration and feasting. After a good dinner with both our families, Jeannie



The Indonesian Reformed Church at their 7th anniversary celebration in June 2009.

and I went to church. I had buffed up my black shoes. I wore a freshly ironed white shirt and put on my blue blazer over my grey dress pants. Jeannie had put on her white blazer over her blue dress. The church was filled to capacity -- the ushers even had to set up chairs in the balcony. That evening I was ordained into the ministry. It was a high-water mark day in my life!

Last time I was with you your congregation celebrated a high water mark – your 7th anniversary. It was a wonderful day in which we looked back and saw all that God had done over the past seven years. You have seen God’s faithfulness in your church as you remembered all the milestones along your short journey as a church. That was a very

special day – a day marked with worship, celebration, and feasting – lots and lots of wonderful food.

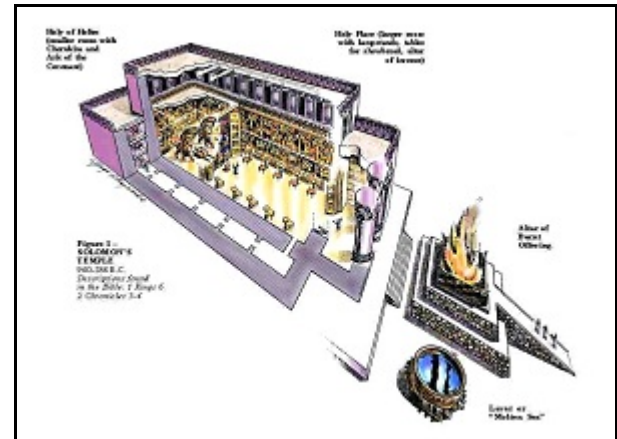
Well, the prayer of Solomon in chapter 6 – a portion of which we just read – and God’s response in chapter 7 marked a high point in the history of the nation of Israel. Here the whole nation of Israel gathered before the gleaming new temple. It too was a time marked with worship, celebration and feasting.

For seven years workers had sweated day and night to finish this magnificent building. Loggers in Lebanon cut down cedar and pine trees and sent them downstream along the Mediterranean coastline. The most skilled workers from foreign lands came and worked in the gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, purple, blue and crimson yarn. 153,000 foreigners also worked in the stone quarries. They cut the stone out of the hills and carried them to Jerusalem. Chapter 5 begins with the work completed on the temple. Now in chapters 6 & 7 the nation of Israel come together to dedicate this building.

There in front of them stood this glorious temple. The thick pillars stone walls rose up to the sky. Once inside the stonework was invisible. They were all panelled with cedar wood and the floors planked with pine boards. All the cedar panelling was overlaid with fine gold and decorated with palm tree and intricate chain designs. The beams, the doorframes, the walls, the doors – all covered with gold. The gold alone in the Most Holy Place weighed 21 metric tons.

The curtain in front of the Most Holy Place was made of blue, purple and crimson yarn and fine linen. Angelic like figures were embroidered into the fabric. The altar was huge – about 9 metres long and 4.5 metres high – it was made of bronze. There were ten tables lining both walls of the temple. There were ten golden lampstands and 100 golden bowls. In the courtyard was a huge water

basin mounted on 12 bulls made out of cast iron. This basin, also called the Sea, held 17,500 gallons of water.



Solomon's Temple

The people have all gathered outside the temple. The priests have gone inside. They have just placed the Ark of God in the Most Holy Place. All the best musicians start to play their instruments; the singers join in unison. With one voice they give praise and thanks to God. The cymbals crash, the trumpets blast, the lyres and harps resound – and they sing: “God is so good – his loves endures forever.” The glory cloud – the one that had guided Israel through the desert – it filled the temple with a dark cloud – this fire cloud came down from heaven. And the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the smoke starts to rise out of the windows and through the doors.

The nation of Israel stands there watching. Little children tug on their parent’s leg and point to the sky. What is this miracle of fire coming down from heaven and filling the temple with smoke? Young men clutch their wives – they’ve never seen fireworks like this before. This is awesome. This is out of this world! Old men, with old dreams, they remember Solomon’s father David, and his dream of this building. Now the dream has come true. The building is completed according to the plan. And to top everything, the glory of the Lord has returned to Israel.

The glory of the Lord has filled the temple of God.

Amazed, perplexed, in sheer wonderment the eyes of all the thousands of people are fixed upon this event. This is truly a high-water mark in the history of Israel. The people of Israel are united. They have peace on their borders. And the temple is finished. The time had come for the prayer of dedication.



This prayer of dedication is recorded in vv. 14-42 – it is a long prayer. In this prayer Solomon outlines what his temple is dedicated for. In other words, what is this temple all about? What is this place for? Why have this place? I want you to notice three things Solomon tells us!

First, this temple is a place for **the presence of God!** This was a place for God's glory to dwell. Now Solomon admits (vv. 18ff) that there is no way that this building – no matter how grandiose – would ever be able to contain the presence of God. As he admits: "The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" (v. 18). Solomon knows that God dwells in heaven (v. 21). That is his dwelling place.

But God would also dwell in the temple. This was a place for his Name (vv. 4-10, 20). God's Name refers to his self-revelation. It was here that God reveal himself – would show himself to the people of Israel. It was here that people could meet with God and come to know God. This was a place for God's Presence.

This was also **a place for prayer.** It was hear that people could come and pray to God. When they have sinned they could come here and confess their sins to God. And even if they were miles away, they could pray toward the

temple (v. 21), and God would hear them from heaven and he would forgive them.

Solomon knows that when people sin God often allows bad things to happen to them. Bad things like being defeated by an enemy, drought, crop failure due to pests or diseases resulting in famine – these things are not simply a punishment for sin (vv. 24-31), but a way for God to help people to turn from their sin and return to God in confession! The temple was a place for prayer – a place where people could either come or turn toward to lift up their cries to heaven. A place of prayer!

The temple was a place for God's presence; it was a place for prayer. And it was **a place for all people!** In vv. 32-33 Solomon dedicates the temple as a place for all people. The temple was not just for the Israelites – for the Jews! Foreigners – non-Jews – will come from distant lands. They have heard about the fame of the Name of the LORD God, the God of Israel. They have discovered about his mighty hand and outstretched arm – and the foreigner will come to the temple – this place will also be a place for prayer for the foreigner, the stranger, the non-Jew.

Solomon dedicates this temple as a place where all people – from all races, from all languages, from all cultural backgrounds – they will come to this place. And here they will come to know the name of the LORD God and come to fear Him, love Him, serve Him as do the people of Israel.

What a marvellous vision for the temple of God as this temple was dedicated! But this is not Solomon's vision for this place – this is God's vision for his temple! In Isaiah 56 the prophet envisions foreigners serving, loving and worshipping the LORD God for God says,

"My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." The Psalmist in Psalm 87 looks toward the day when the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Philistines, the Assyrians and the Africans will become part of the worshipping Israelites in Jerusalem.

One day our Lord Jesus Christ walked in the courts of the temple in Jerusalem. He noticed how the people of his day had corrupted the purpose for the temple. That had turned the temple into a business -- a place to buy and sell, make money; Jesus said, "This place is a place of prayer for all nations!" Yes, this was a place for all people – all nations – where every knee shall and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

Over the past ten years this vision was captured by our own denomination. The Christian Reformed Church is not just a church for people from a Dutch European heritage. This is a church for all nations, for every culture, colour, language and race. And this vision is becoming a reality in our denomination – even with the inclusion of churches like this one – an Indonesian church. We have other churches which have many people from Somalia. In others you will find huge groups of South Africans. In some we find Chinese Christians clustering together. The CRC in Australia is becoming a place of prayer for all people.

Today we dedicate this building as our new meeting places as the Indonesian Reformed Church. Just like in the days of Solomon, this place is dedicated to the glory of God! Yes, the glory of God – for God's presence and His purposes to fill this place! But here is the challenge I would like to place before you as a church. May this not simply be a place for you



and I to cluster together in our own little cultural group. And oh, how we like to cluster! This is a place for the glory of God – a place for his Name to be made known – a place of prayer for all people, for all nations. This is to be a place for the foreigners and strangers who come from distant lands – so that they too may come and know and fear the LORD God and his Son our Saviour Jesus!

And this is where you and I come in! With Solomon you and I know that this sanctuary can never contain God! God is much, much bigger than this building or our denomination, or even all Christian churches put together. In fact, each one of you who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ – you are a temple of the Holy Spirit. God has chosen to dwell inside of you!

God has put His Name in your heart. That is why you are called a Christian! You bear the name of God. You carry the Name of Jesus Christ wherever you go. And Jesus Christ has called you to spread the fame of His name to all people, to every culture, color, language and race! This is the task that God has placed before us as a church. This is the task that God has placed before you and I as Christians – as temples in which His Presence dwells, as people who carry the fame of His Name.

Australia is truly blessed in being multi-cultural. You just have to walk in any local shopping mall and you will discover the diversity. Not just Aussies, and not just people from Indonesia – but people from all over the world. The largest group of people coming to Australia as migrants are Chinese people. We don't have to go overseas to reach out to people who might be different from us. All we have to do is walk across the rooms in our schools, walk across the street in our

neighbourhoods, walk across the hall at our workplace.

It is so wonderful that God has brought each one of you to this beautiful country which you are making your home. It is so wonderful that God has gathered you together as a group of believers from an Indonesian background. But as you look ahead to what God will do in this place – sure, this will be a place where we will meet God. His presence will be among us. And yes, this will be a place of prayer – we will worship God and call upon his name, and he will answer.

But let us not forget, what a wonderful opportunity we have as Christians to reach out – to truly make this place a place for all people. Five years from now, ten years from now – no matter the colour of our skin or the country of our birth or the name on our passports – may God so direct our steps so that we make this place a place for all people. Perhaps there will come the day when you will consider changing the name of your church from the Indonesian Reformed Church to the International Reformed Church – still IRC, but not truly becoming a place for all people. A place where all people will call upon the name of God in prayer – and they too will find what we have found – the wonderful love of God our Father, the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

This then is our prayer: may this place be a place of prayer for all people.

