

**Life Group Notes**

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**Speaker:** Andy McCullough

**Title:** The Presence: Fire in the Temple

**Passage:** 2 Chronicles 7:1-3

God built the world in six days. Then on the seventh day he rested – means he entered the house which he had built for himself. The purpose of Creation is the presence of God. The goal of the six days is day seven. Solomon's Temple has taken seven years to build. And now God comes into his house to dwell there. With any undertaking, we ought to have the same expectation. Build it, prepare it, furnish it, but if God doesn't come in it's just an empty shell.

Fire is terrifying. Uncontrollable. Untameable. This goes back to Sinai – giving of the 10 commandments and fire fell, The dedication of the tabernacle (Lev 9) – fire fell. Also looks forward to Pentecost: fire falls on the disciples. After that the disciples are quite uncontrollable. They get in trouble. There is nothing tame or domesticated about the fire of God on the life of a person.

Fire falling is vertical (from heaven). Glory filling the house is horizontal. The priests are interrupted. They had planned their ceremony and liturgy, but then the Glory got in their way. They are hindered, stopped. They had a well-organised plan that all went to waste. When the glory of the Lord fills the house, it becomes about God's glory, not Solomon's. There can't be two kings. If God comes, he comes as King. God upstages Solomon.

"Fill" is a horizontal, spreading out word. The earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. Whatever you put God in, he expands and fills it.

All this points forward to Pentecost. Jesus has been building a new house for God. It's not made of bricks and wood and linen, it's made from people. Acts 2:1-4. There are two fillings: The entire house is filled. They were each filled. There is also a personal filling with the Holy Spirit.

Fire: God can't be controlled or withstood. // Glory: God can't be constrained. This is a theology of interruption.

**Suggested Questions:**

1. Has there ever been a time when God has interrupted your plans and changed your direction? What did you learn in that moment?
2. When do you most sense the presence of God? In what circumstances are you most aware of his voice?
3. Why is it important to think of the presence of God as being like fire? What does this image suggest to you?
4. What does it mean that the people of God are now the Temple? What difference does this make to our understanding of Church?
5. Have you ever been filled with the Holy Spirit? Can you describe the difference he made in your life?
6. Pray and worship to experience the presence of God together as a group.