

Sunday 22nd August 2021

“SHELTER”

Bible references 1Kings 8:1, 6, 10, 11, 22-30, 41-43.

Deuteronomy 9: 17-21, 10: 1-5. Psalm 84.

*The song “Shelter”, written by Eric Bogle, is an anthem for how we Australians are truly blessed to live in what has been termed, “the lucky country”. Let’s all sing it now and remind ourselves! (for these Covid times, just run your eye over the words)

3000 years ago, more than 900 BC, King Solomon had ordered the building of the temple in Jerusalem. It was decorated with many magnificent gold ornaments and then he installed the most important item into the inner sanctum, the most holy place.

Q:- What was this special item?

A:- The Ark of the Covenant.

For more than 700 years the Jewish people had travelled through the wilderness, bearing the Ark on a wheeled cart.

Q:- Why did they do this.

A:- Because the Ark contained the 10 Commandments given by God to Moses on Mt Sinai and all the laws following, for the Jewish people.

Q:- What did the Ark look like?

A:- It was a box made from Acacia wood, like Wattle.

* Having placed the Ark into the new magnificent temple, Solomon then offered to God, a beautiful prayer of dedication.

* In it he acknowledged that God Almighty not only announces but also delivers on all his promises, of care and protection.

* He accepted that as long as Israel was faithful and obedient to God’s laws, it would always have a king to lead it.

* He questioned the notion that God would ever live on Earth, saying that highest heaven cannot contain God, so how could the temple hope to contain him?

* Therefore he entreats God to hear the prayers of the people and having heard them, to forgive!

* Solomon then goes on to include all people on Earth in his plea for God’s care, protection and shelter, for all humanity not just the Jewish nation. He even asks God “to do whatever the foreigner asks of you “, foreshadowing the message of Jesus who would come to Earth about 900 years later, saying that his message was for all humanity everywhere.

* In this dedication of Solomon we hear his clear understanding that, as magnificent as it was at that moment, the temple was only an earthly vessel for human worship but that one day, the Lord God Almighty, will take us to his heavenly realm to live forever with him if only we believe , trust and obey.

* In his Psalm number 84, Solomon’s father David, has written an anthem to the care protection and indeed shelter bestowed by Almighty God upon his people Israel.

* Verse 6 mentions the Valley of Baca.

Q:- Does anyone know where it is?

A:- it is a dry place on the way to Jerusalem, where vegetation seldom grows.

* In this case it is a metaphor for wrestling with repentance and the effort of pilgrimage and the psalm says that the God seeking pilgrim can make the valley into a place of rain, filled with pools of water which will promote growth and prosperity in spirit.

* Then comes my favorite part of psalm 84, verses 10-12. Read it.

* SHELTER INDEED!