



*... he began to build the house of the LORD...*

*<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD. 1 Kings 6:1*

I offer an introductory word to those who love the beautiful and intricate details of the building of the Temple that carry with them both physical and spiritual truths: This devotion is not intended to be a detailed study of the Temple, but an observation of what the Temple means to us in a devotional setting. Volumes are required to reveal all meanings of every column, door, and piece of furniture in Solomon's Temple. So this devotion, hopefully, will stir yearnings in the heart of the reader to learn and study more of this magnificent structure. I undertake this devotion with a sense of awe, humility, and with an awareness of my limited expertise to reveal all that should be known about the Temple. For a more complete description of the symbolism in the Temple, I invite your attention to my devotion on Wilderness Tabernacle – available on digits from our office in North Carolina.

Our first notice might be directed to the fact Solomon built his own house (1 Kings 5) before undertaking the building of the House of the Lord. I draw no rash conclusion from this fact, but, yet, it provokes a mild curiosity about the nature of man's heart.

The Wilderness Tabernacle was a portable prototype of the Temple of God constructed by Solomon. It provided the same design and intent as was reflected in the finished Temple at Jerusalem. The Tabernacle was a work of beauty on its interior, and a structure lacking any artistic appeal whatsoever on the exterior (being covered in goats hair). But the Tabernacle represented the attributes of our Lord Jesus Christ. He possesses all of the benefits of grace, sacrifice and beauty in His heart, but lacked any particular outward attraction. *<sup>2</sup> For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup> He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we*

*esteemed him not.* (Isaiah 53:2-3)

King David lost the privilege of building the Temple due to his breaches of God's Law. So Solomon would finally build the Temple as a monument to the Glory of God. Since the focus of the Temple was of a greater spiritual application, no tools of man were permitted inside its walls during construction. *And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.* 1 Kings 6:7 We cannot truly do the work of the Lord unless we are following His floorplan and purpose. Construction began 480 years after Israel's coming out of bondage in Egypt, and in the fourth year of the reign of Solomon. It took seven years to complete, seven representing the perfection of Creation as from the beginning in Genesis 1.

The First Temple was a model of that perfection that can only be achieved by human effort that depends upon the guiding counsel of God for its authority and purpose. That First Temple might be regarding in the same light as our first parents, on the day of their creation in Eden, for perfection. Their souls, bodies and spirits were created in a perfect state by the hand of God. But just as our first parents fell away from that perfection in rejecting the Tree of Life (Christ) and opting for the ill-winded Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, so did Israel fall away from the God of their comfort in the years following the building the First Temple by Solomon.

As Adam and Eve would suffer death, so did the First Temple suffer ruin at the hands of the Babylonian Empire. Captivity is a certain consequence of falling away from God. Israel (or more particularly, Judah) went into a 70 year captivity in Babylon. *1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. 3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. 4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land? 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. 6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."* Psalms 137:1-6 It is a pity the captives had not given account of the singing of praises to the Lord BEFORE the captivity. Our memories are frail things. We of our own nation had best take heed of the consequence of our own falling away from God and singing His praises.

From the building of Solomon's Temple, until its destruction, the righteousness of Israel had fallen into an accelerated decline. There were punctuated moments of repentance during which God showed mercy, but, as a drunk's cure for the hangover, they went back to their bottles of sin until God could no longer withhold His hand of judgment. The sacking and destruction of Jerusalem was a cruel endeavor by a heartless enemy who knew not God; but God had rather give power over to infidels than to those of His people who have openly rebelled and rejected His offers of forgiveness and salvation.

After those long, hard years of captivity, God placed a man on the throne of Persia in Babylon who would heed the Word of the Lord and send His messengers back to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and, finally, the Temple. His name was Cyrus the Great, and God had foretold his ascension to the throne – by name- some two hundred years before his birth. *1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; 2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: 3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.* Isaiah 45:1-3 Cyrus was the first benevolent world ruler. He is a man of singular virtue for his time. I had the

privilege to visit his palace and tomb in Iran (old Persian) and to stand at an altar at which Daniel the prophet ministered. I could sense the holiness of the place.

*<sup>1</sup> Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, <sup>2</sup> Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. <sup>3</sup> Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. Ezra 1:1-3* The work to rebuild the Temple preceded apace for a time until stopped temporarily by Artaxerxes. Later appeal was made to King Darius (successor to Artaxerxes) and decree was given to resume the building – this after a meticulous search for Cyrus’ decree which was found in the palace of Ecbatana (Adam Clarke erroneously claims Ecbatana was in India, but it is located in the modern city of Hamadan where Esther and Mordecai are buried in north central Iran.

The second Temple was not as imposing as the first, and lacked the beauty and grandeur of the Temple of Solomon. When the foundation was laid, even then, it was obvious to those who had known the old Temple that this new Temple would be less imposing. *<sup>11</sup> And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. <sup>12</sup> But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: Ezra 3:11-12* The younger of the people rejoiced because they had not known the Temple of Solomon. When the final remnants of the Last Great Generation are gone from our midst in America, who will remain to remember what the greatness of America was during the time of the Great War? Who will remain to remember the Providential hand of God in preserving us a favored nation among the nations of the world?

It is easy for us to observe a sharp contrast in that First Temple and the more worldly Temple to follow. Observe that we (the people of God) are the true Temple. The Temples made of marble, wood, and marvelous works of art were only a type of the true Temple of God which Temple we are! . . . . *ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>17</sup> Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, <sup>18</sup> And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 2 Cor 6:16-18* Just as the first Temple fell into disrepair and ruin because of sin, so did the first man, Adam, made in perfection, fall into the throes of sin and death at Eden. Our second temples are nothing like the first; however, that Temple of God, which is found in the heart of the believer, stands erect and sure and is furnished with every needful accoutrement for the true and faithful worship of our God. As long as we maintain that Temple intact, we shall never be forced to hang our harps upon the willows, that is why we call them “Weeping Willows”, by the Rivers of Babylon.