

Two Ancient Hebrew Temples

'The Most High does not dwell in temples made with human hands' (Acts 7:48). 'God Who made the world and everything in it, He being Lord (The Ultimate Ruler) of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with human hands. Nor is He served by human hands as though He needed anything, since God Himself gives to all life and breath and everything creation needs. He made from one blood every nation of mankind to dwell on the entire surface of the earth' (Acts 17:24 to 26).

'Do you not understand, you are a temple of God and God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him for God's temple is holy, which you are ... Do you not understand your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God?' (1 Corinthians 3:16 & 17; 6:19). 'What agreement has a temple of God with idols? You are a temple of the living God' (2 Corinthians 6:16).

'Remember you Gentiles, who were uncircumcised in the flesh, you were called Goyim (uncircumcised) in the flesh by human hands. You were at that time separate from Jesus, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. In Jesus, you who were once far off are made near in the blood of Jesus for He is our peace, Who made both Jews and Gentiles one spiritual Body and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in the flesh the hostility, the law of commandments contained in ordinances so He might create in Himself 'one new man (one spiritual Body) of the two', making peace and reconciling them both in one (spiritual) Body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility. He came and preached peace to you Gentiles who were far off and to the Jews who were near. Through Him we both, Jews and Gentiles, have our access in one Holy Spirit to the Father. You are no longer strangers and foreigners but you are fellow citizens with the saints (dedicated believers) and of the household of God (the Jewish people), being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Himself being the Chief Cornerstone in Whom the whole (spiritual) 'building', fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord in Whom you are built together for a habitation of God in the Holy Spirit' (Ephesians 2:11 to 22).

Moses warned the children of Israel, their obedience to God was the key to their remaining in their promised land. Their disobedience would see them removed from Israel for a time. The first temple was an idea of King David but because he was a man of war he was forbidden to build the house of God, but David's son Solomon completed the temple during his reign (1 Chronicles 28:2, 3 & 6; 1 Kings 6:14). The temple was a solid construction built with huge stones. The layout was similar in design to the Tabernacle of Moses, both of which were constructed in the shape of a cross. The glory of the Lord filled both the tabernacle and the temple. 'The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting (Appointment) and the glory of God filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud rested on it and the glory of God filled the tabernacle' (Exodus 40:34 & 35). 'The house of God was filled with a cloud so the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God' (1 Kings 8:10 & 11; 2 Chronicles 5:13 & 14; 7:1 & 2). Solomon's temple had to meet the highest architectural criterion so the priests could fulfil God's requirements for the detailed Jewish laws. The first temple was dedicated by Solomon for two weeks of music, feasting and joy (1 Kings 8:65 & 66; 2 Chronicles 5:1 to 14). It was built to be a sanctuary for the holy presence of the Lord Who filled the temple. The Lord's holiness does not tolerate sin and God said He would destroy the temple if King Solomon walked away from Him, so God would remain filling the temple with His presence on condition Solomon walked continually with Him. That was a great responsibility on Solomon's shoulders. The temple would remain dependent on King Solomon continually walking with the Lord God of Israel. Sadly, Solomon did walk away from God as did several kings after him and then God destroyed the temple. The first temple was plundered by King Shishak of Egypt (1 Kings 14:25 & 26; 2 Chronicles 12:9), restored by King Jehoash (2 Kings 12:5 & 12), cleansed by Hezekiah, the grandson of Zechariah (2 Chronicles 29:1 & 5), polluted by King Manasseh who later repented and restored the temple (2 Chronicles 33:1 to 19), it was repaired by King Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:1, 10 & 11), then finally, in 586 BC, four hundred years after its construction the first temple was burned down and completely destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon with the help of the Chaldeans when many thousands of Jewish people were forced into captivity (2 Kings 25:1 to 21). The Jewish people were perplexed. 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house? ... Because they abandoned the Lord, the God of their forefathers Who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They took other gods, worshiped them and served them, therefore He has brought all this evil on them' (2 Chronicles 7:21 & 22). The Book of Lamentations relates the story of the Jewish people as they suffered following the destruction of the first temple. This book begins with the Hebrew word 'aiche' meaning 'how'? How could such a thing happen? It happened because the Jewish people rebelled against God.

The Jewish people eventually realised the idols they had been worshipping plus the false prophets they heeded, were the reasons for their captivity and the destruction of the first temple. They put away their idols and have not worshipped idols since then, just as it was prophesied ... "It will come to pass in that day," says the Lord God of heavenly hosts, "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land of Israel and they will be remembered no more. I will also cause the false prophets and the spirit of impurity to pass out of the land" (Zechariah 13:2). The Lord gave the nation of Israel a second chance. The prophet Daniel worked out by studying the Old Testament prophecies, the time of slavery and captivity was coming to an end. He prayed and repented on behalf of the children of Israel. The messenger angel Gabriel visited Daniel to confirm he was correct (Daniel 9:2 to 24). When Persian King Cyrus came to the throne he allowed the Jewish people living in Babylon to return to Jerusalem so they could rebuild their temple. 'Who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd and will perform all my pleasure," even saying of Jerusalem, "She will be built," and of the temple, "Your foundation will be laid?"' (Isaiah 44:28). Ezekiel prophesied about a temple that would be built in Jerusalem. Ezekiel was one of the people taken into captivity in 586 BC. In Ezekiel chapters 40 to 43, we read about Ezekiel's vision of the second temple which was built during the days of Cyrus. The temple was built by Ezra and Nehemiah under the leadership of Zerubbabel in 445 BC, more than one hundred years after Ezekiel's vision and prophecy. Ezekiel's prophecy was about the building of the second temple, not a third. In the second temple, the priests would minister to the Lord in the same way as they had in the first temple. Ezekiel chapters 44 to 46 give details telling the priests how to run the new temple, the order of the holy service, the positions where visitors were to sit, where priests and other Levites were to sit and directions regarding the animal sacrifices. The Book of Nehemiah describes the restoration of Judaism, the reading of the Torah (Jewish Laws), the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, the sealing of the covenant and other details. The prophet Zechariah returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel (Nehemiah 12:1 & 16).

'When the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets. The Levites, the sons of Asaph with cymbals to praise the Lord according to the instructions of King David of Israel' (Ezra 3:10). Over four hundred years later, about 20 BC, King Herod had the temple renovated and expanded over a ten year period. He had the temple heightened to twice its size then had it overlaid with marble to make the temple more prestigious. He wanted to impress the Jewish population living in Jerusalem. Some of the huge stones used in the renovations were ten metres long, one metre high and two metres wide. Other stones were even larger than those. The second temple was where newborn Jesus was dedicated to God (Luke 2:22). It was where Jesus at age twelve sat with the teachers, asking questions and answering their questions, referring to the temple as, "My Father's house" (Luke 2:42 to 49). That was the temple where Jesus, zealous for the Father's house drove out stall holders and the customers, calling it, "My house" (Matthew 21:12 & 13; Mark 11:15 to 17; Luke 19:45 & 46; John 2:14 to 17).

A few people were genuinely waiting for the Messiah, people like Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25 & 26). 'Anna gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Jesus to all those who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem' (Luke 2:36 to 38), but most of the Jewish people were not expecting a baby to arrive, but a warrior to deliver them from Roman oppression; someone like Moses who returned to the Hebrews aged eighty and delivered them from the Egyptians. That is why they were not ready for Jesus when He came the first time. He came as a servant and a Lamb, not a warrior King as He will be at His second coming. Zachariah's prophecy regarding John the Baptist was misunderstood as being their imminent deliverance from the Romans. 'Grant to us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, should serve Him without fear' (Luke 1:74). Jesus' first coming seemed to be very sudden but that is what the prophet Malachi foretold. The messenger was John the Baptist then very suddenly, Jesus began preaching in the temple and synagogues. "Behold, I send My messenger (John) and he will prepare the way before Me and the Lord Whom you seek (desire, long for) will suddenly come to His temple' (Malachi 3:1). In this verse, Malachi was referring to Jesus' first coming, not His second coming. Not long before His death, Jesus said the second temple would be utterly destroyed. 'As Jesus went out of the temple, Mark said to him, "Teacher, see what kind of stones and what kind of buildings are here!" Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone on another that will not be thrown down"' (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:1 & 2; Luke 21:5 & 6).

Forty years after Jesus' death and resurrection, in 70 AD the temple was utterly destroyed by the Romans and burned to the ground. History tells us, as the temple burned the gold melted and ran between the building blocks and the Roman soldiers prised the huge stones apart to collect the gold that had run between the stones during the massive fire. All that is left are portions of the Western Wall, the Hulda Gate and a corner of the southern wall. Both the first and second temples were destroyed on the ninth of Av in the Hebrew calendar, approximately six hundred years apart. The second temple was not destroyed because of sin or idolatry but was destroyed for another reason – a very good reason. It was used to conduct animal sacrifices and blood rituals. 'You will kill the ram, take some of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of

Aaron, on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand, on the big toe of their right foot and sprinkle the blood around on the altar. You will take of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him. He will be made holy, his garments, his sons and his sons' garments with him' (Exodus 29:20 & 21). When Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac, the Lord provided for Himself an adult ram for the sacrifice (Genesis 22:13). Notice these verses describe an adult ram as being the sacrifice. Jesus was our ultimate sacrifice – the ultimate Adult Ram, the holy Lamb slaughtered for all humanity. Only Jesus can remove our sin, therefore all animal sacrifices had to cease and the only way to stop the Jewish people from continuing the practice of animal sacrifice and blood rituals was to destroy the temple where the sacrifices were held and move them away from Israel to stop them rebuilding it. Thousands of Jewish people were murdered or forced into slavery. It was a terrible blow to the sovereignty of the Jewish people in the land of Israel.

Jesus ushered in a new covenant written in His blood. 'Jesus took the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is poured out for you"' (Luke 22:20). 'Jesus took the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink (of the communion bread and cup) in memory of Me"' (1 Corinthians 11:25). The length of time for the old covenant of laws was fulfilled and we now live under the new covenant of grace. The purpose of this is to reconcile Jews and Gentiles and do away with divisions under the old covenant rules. Jews were no longer to consider Gentiles as unclean. 'Peter said to them, "You know it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew to join himself to or approach a person of another nation, but God has shown me I should not call any man unholy or unclean,"' (Acts 10:28) and through the cross and blood of Jesus, Jews and Gentiles were to become one new body of believers. 'Through Jesus we both (Jews and Gentiles) have our access in one Holy Spirit to the Father, so you are no longer strangers and foreigners but you are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. You are being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Himself being the Chief Cornerstone in Whom the whole building, fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord in Whom you are built together for a habitation of God in the Holy Spirit' (Ephesians 2:18 to 22). We can see by what is written here, the new temple will not be a building but will be the collective Body of genuine believers in Jesus. This temple is not made by human hands but is being built or made up of righteous people with Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone. When Jesus died, He opened up the gates of heaven for all who believe in Him and who adhere to His teachings. No longer did anyone have to sacrifice animals to be made righteous. Believing in and continually obeying Jesus is enough to be saved. Before Jesus came, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies but at the moment of Jesus' death, the veil in the temple was rent apart and suddenly the Holy Place and Holy of Holies were open to all genuine believers. 'Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom' (Matthew 27:51). 'Brothers, we have boldness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the way He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, through His flesh and having a great High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and being washed with the pure water of the Word' (Hebrews 10:19 to 22).

Will a man-made temple be built for the third time? Probably not. The animal sacrifices must never begin again because Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice. From the time of Jesus' death and resurrection, all believers are to offer spiritual sacrifices, not animal sacrifices. From the day the temple was destroyed, animal sacrifices ceased. They had to. Jesus was the perfect Sacrifice for all mankind and animal sacrifices could no longer lead to righteousness. Righteousness comes by faith and we are to be living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1). No amount of animal sacrifices can cleanse humanity of sin. That can only be done by the blood of Jesus Who referred to His own body as a temple (John 2:19 & 21). Humans are the temple of God and the stones of the temple are symbolic of humanity. Jesus said, "I tell you, if these people were silent the stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40). 'We are God's fellow workers. You are God's handiwork; God's building ... No one can lay any foundation other than what has been laid, which is Jesus' (1 Corinthians 3:9 & 11). 'If you have tasted the Lord Jesus is gracious, coming to Him, a Living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious. You as living stones are built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through (the blood of) Jesus. It is written in Scripture, "Behold I lay in Zion a Chief Cornerstone, chosen and precious' (1 Peter 2:3 to 6). 'Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a Stone, a tried Stone, a Precious Cornerstone of a sure foundation' (Isaiah 28:16).

This is the Lord's instruction for building a third temple; Jews and Gentiles together, harmoniously as one new man or body of believers, to be a community of dedicated believers, building our firm foundation on our Rock Jesus, eternally fitting together, ministering to one another, each of us yielding to God and to each other, collectively creating a temple for the Holy Spirit of God to fill with His presence; a functioning, living, breathing, unified, Holy Spirit-filled house of living stones, walking together, supporting each other, remaining

true to the Word of God. This is a temple not made with human hands but created by God through the cross and blood of Jesus. Jesus, being a Jewish Man broke down the wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles so together, we are all, Jews and Gentiles alike, fellow citizens of heaven, spiritual stones being made into the last holy temple with Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone. It is this holy temple God is currently building, not one made with human hands. We must all humble ourselves, submit to the Lord, support and love Israel and the Jewish people the world over and seek to embrace our Hebraic roots, which are our sure foundation. This third temple is made up of genuine believers, Jews and Gentiles together, overcomers, who have collectively become the Bride of our Messiah. 'I (the angel) will show you (Apostle John) His Bride, the wife of the Lamb' (Revelation 21:9). There is a holy temple in heaven that was seen by Isaiah and Apostle John in separate visions. 'I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. The train of His robe filled the temple' (Isaiah 6:1). 'Those who overcome, I will make them a pillar in the temple of my God' (Revelation 3:12). 'They (the people martyred in the name of Jesus) are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night within His temple. He who sits on the throne will cover them with His Holy Spirit' (Revelation 7:15). 'God's temple that is in heaven was opened and the ark of the Lord's covenant was seen in His temple' (Revelation 11:19). The third spiritual holy temple has been created with the foundations of the twelve tribes of Israel, Judaism, the Jewish patriarchs and the twelve original apostles (minus Judas, replaced by Matthias). 'He (the angel) carried me (Apostle John) away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God ... The wall of the city had twelve foundations and on them twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb ... I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb are the city's temple' (Revelation 21:10, 14, 22). 'The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power. No one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished' (Revelation 15:8).

Although Jewish people believe another temple will be built in Jerusalem, they are not able to understand the new temple will not be a building made with stones, but a Spiritual 'building' made up of 'spiritual stones', the Messiah's true followers. The Jewish people cannot comprehend this mystery because many do not accept Jesus as their Messiah. Most Messianic Jews do understand the new temple will be made up of the Messiah's people. 'The Holy Spirit shows us, the way into the Holy Place was not revealed while the temple was still standing, which was a symbol of the present age (the age of grace ushered in by Jesus), where gifts and sacrifices were offered that were incapable of making the worshipper perfect ... But Jesus having come as a High Priest in the age of grace, through the greater and more perfect Temple, not made with human hands, not of this creation, nor through the blood of animals, but through His own blood, entered in once for all mankind into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption. If the blood of animals and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify to the cleanness of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Jesus, Who through the eternal Holy Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For this reason He is the mediator of the New Covenant, since a death has occurred for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, so all those believers who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance' (Hebrews 9:8 to 15).

Amen and God bless you.

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