

90 REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

INTRODUCTION: One of the sad effects of believing the “day of the Lord” is in the future instead of a first century occurrence, is the materialistic expectations it engenders. Specifically, many Christians are anticipating the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple. They rightly understand, based on scriptures like 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and Matthew 24:15, for example, that it is necessary for the temple to be standing for the “Day of the Lord” to occur. However, this belief can cause blindness to the pervasive teaching of the New Testament regarding the true spiritual temple of which believers are a part. The New Testament clearly teaches a transcendent spiritual understanding of the temple. We will seek to show that the temple in Jerusalem, like the establishment of the kingship in Israel, was a concession to carnal human thinking and, at best, only a shadow of the superior reality which we now enjoy and need to understand.

1. JESUS’ TEACHINGS REGARDING THE TRUE TEMPLE

A. Comment: Jesus taught that He is the true temple.

A. Scripture: *“Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’... But He spoke of the temple of His body.” John 2:19-21*

B. Comment: The temple building was extraneous to true worship. We worship God in our spirit, regardless of place, as we acknowledge His presence.

B. Scripture: *“The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to be his worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” Jn 4:23-24*

C. Comment: Jesus signaled the physical temple was worthless and would be destroyed.

C. Scripture: *“Jesus said, ‘You see all of these things [buildings of the temple], don’t you? Most certainly I tell you, there will not be left here one stone on another, that will not be thrown down.” Mt 24:1-2*

2. ACTS REGARDING THE TRUE TEMPLE

Comment: Although the temple was traditionally regarded as Yahweh’s house, the Creator God does not dwell in man-made houses.

Scripture: *“Stephen said, ‘Solomon built Him a house. However, the Most High doesn’t dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says, ‘heaven is my throne, and the earth a footstool for my feet.... Didn’t my hand make all these things?’” Acts 7:47-50. (Also see Isa 66:1-2, 1 Kings 8:27)*

Scripture: *“The God who made the world and all things in it, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, doesn’t dwell in temples made with hands.” Acts 17:34*

3. EPISTLES REGARDING THE TRUE TEMPLE

Comment: The epistles speak repeatedly of believers being a growing, spiritual temple of God in Christ. This dynamic present reality is far superior to any man-made structure.

Scripture: *“Believers are ‘being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom the whole building, fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.” Eph 2:20-22*

Scripture: *“Come to him, a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God, precious. You also as living stones are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” I Peter 2:4-5*

Scripture: *“Don’t you know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” 1 Cor 3:16-17*

Scripture: *“For you are a temple of the living God. Even as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk in them. I will be their God and they will be my people.’” 2 Cor 6:16*

Scripture: *“Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?” I Cor 6:19*

4. YAHWEH’S PROMISE TO DAVID REGARDING A TEMPLE, WAS ABOUT JESUS’ MESSIANIC KINGDOM.

A. Comment: David wanted to build a temple for Yahweh, but this desire was not motivated by God. God’s response to David was that David should not build a temple. He, Yahweh, would build a spiritual eternal temple with one of David’s sons. This son would be king and reign forever. Since nothing material is eternal, Yahweh was speaking of the Messianic kingdom and the spiritual temple established in Christ.

A. Scripture: Yahweh commanded the prophet Nathan: *“Go and tell David my servant, ‘Yahweh says, “You shall not build me a house to dwell in...Yahweh will build you a house. It will happen, when your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I [Yahweh] will set up your offspring after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He will build me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son.... I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom forever. His throne will be established forever.”” I Chr 17:4-15*

B. Comment: Yahweh told the prophet Nathan to tell David not to build a temple. God did not want it.

B. Scripture: “Yahweh’s word came to Nathan, saying, ‘Go and tell my servant David, ‘Yahweh says, “Should you build me a house for me to dwell in? For I have not lived in a house since the day that I brought the children of Israel up out of Egypt, even to this day, but have moved around in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all places in which I have walked with all the children of Israel, did I say a word to anyone... ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’”” 2 Sam 7:4

C. Comment: David claimed that God said he couldn’t build the temple because he had shed blood, but there is no evidence that Yahweh, through the prophet Nathan, communicated this to David. God was clear He did not want a temple, likely, because it was a pagan practice and engendered idolatry.

C. Scripture: David said, “Yahweh’s word came to me, saying, ‘You have shed blood abundantly and have made great wars. You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight.’” 1 Chr 22:8 (See also 1 Chr 28:3)

D. Comment: Perhaps through wishful thinking and/or willful ignorance David fostered the falsehood that Yahweh wanted Solomon to build a temple. David didn’t seem to understand that Yahweh said He Himself would build the temple and it would be eternal. There is nothing eternal in the physical world nor has there been a man to carry out God’s commandments and ordinances, except one, and it certainly wasn’t Solomon. (See P.P. #39-40 regarding Solomon’s waywardness and association with 666)

D. Scripture: “Of all my sons (for Yahweh has given me many sons), he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of Yahweh’s kingdom over Israel. He said to me, ‘Solomon, your son, shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. I will establish his kingdom forever if he continues to do my commandments and my ordinances, as it is today.’” 1 Chr 28:5-7 (also see 2 Sam 7, 1 Chr 22:9-10)

E. Comment: Yahweh allowed the temple as he had allowed a king in Israel and showed His presence in the temple.

E. Scripture: “...then the house was filled with a cloud, even Yahweh’s house, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for Yahweh’s glory filled God’s house.” 2 Chr 5:13-14

F. Comment: After the temple was built, God consented to it being the new place of sacrifice.

F. Scripture: “Then Yahweh appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself for a house of sacrifice.’” 2 Chr 7:12

5. OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS DISPARAGED THE TEMPLE.

A. Comment: Jeremiah warned Judah that the temple had no power to save them. They had to repent.

A. Scripture: “Don’t trust in lying words, saying, ‘Yahweh’s temple, Yahweh’s temple, Yahweh’s temple...’” Jer 7:4

B. Comment: Micah considered the temple to be just another “high place” i.e. a place of pagan worship.

B. Scripture: “And what are the high places of Judah? Aren’t they Jerusalem?” Micah 1:5

6. JOHN’S REVELATION REPORTS THE TEMPLE WAS AN IDOL TO THE JEWISH REBELS.

Comment: Although first century Jews didn’t worship typical idols of wood and stone, they had made the temple an object of worship. The temple was made of gold, brass, stone, wood, and the furnishings were made of silver and gold.

Scripture: “The rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, didn’t repent of the works of their hands, that they wouldn’t worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood, which can’t see, hear, or walk. They didn’t repent of their murders, their sorceries, their sexual immorality, or their thefts.” Rev 9:20-21

7. JESUS, THE PRIEST/KING, WALKED AMONG THE LAMP STANDS

A. Comment: In John’s vision, he saw the perfect high priest, tending the lamp stands (menorah) in the boundless temple of God which, in this case, reached all the way to Asia Minor.

A. Scripture: “Having turned, I saw seven golden lamp stands [Christian assemblies]. And among the lamp stands was one like a son of man, clothed with a robe reaching down to his feet, and with a golden sash around his chest.” Rev 1:12-13

B. Comment: We participate of the true temple when we are “in Christ”.

B. Scripture: “I saw no temple in it [New Jerusalem], for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” Rev 21:22

Concluding thoughts: The temple was a shadow of something much better and the idea of rebuilding a shadow makes no sense. The teachings of the New Testament argue, overwhelmingly, for the fulfilled Day of the Lord. We are currently God’s walking, breathing, growing temple.