

# Building The Temple

By

Curtis Dickinson – 1975 Article

Shortly after the Six Day War Jewish zealots paraded the streets of Jerusalem with the motto, “Rebuild the Temple now.” Protestant leaders jumped on the bandwagon, preaching the temple as fulfillment of prophecy. Soon there were reports that stone was being shipped from Indiana to Jerusalem for rebuilding the temple, but this proved to be a hoax.

Newspapers have added to the false concepts by reporting that construction of the proposed “Jerusalem Great Synagogue” has something to do with a so-called “longed-for dream” and “Messianic Sign.” They conveniently overlook the difference between a synagogue and the temple with its priesthood and animal sacrifices.

Instead of a future temple in Jerusalem fulfilling prophecy, as dispensational and Premillennial doctrine holds there is already a temple in existence in fulfillment of prophecy.

Zechariah prophesied that the man whose name is the Branch “shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and shall be a priest on his throne” (Zech. 6:12–113). The temple was built when Christ established His church (Matt. 16:18). Paul, in pointing out that all Christians make up the true Israel, wrote, “So then you are no more strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom every building, fitly framed 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. 2:19–22). Again he writes, “know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you?” (I Cor. 3:16).

Christ now sits and rules on his throne. “...as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21). This throne is also David’s throne: “Solomon sat on the throne of David his father” (I Kings 2:12). But, “Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah as King instead of David his father, and prospered” (I Chron. 29:23). Solomon was sitting on one throne, which was both the throne of David and of the Father. So, when Christ sat down on the throne of the Father after his ascension, he was also sitting on David’s throne.

This is Peter’s argument on the day of Pentecost, showing that Jesus was the longed-for Messiah and King, as David had predicted (Psa. 89:3, 132:11).

“Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne, he fore-seeing this spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades (the grave), nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this, which you see and hear” (Acts 2:30–33).

According to Zechariah Jesus was to be a priest on his throne at the same time he ruled. However, Jesus could not be a priest on earth. The Bible says, “Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all...” (Heb. 8:4).

Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, from whence the priest must come under the law. But since the law is abolished, and since the temple was a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Heb. 8:5).

Jesus has become “A high priest who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heaven, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (Heb. 8:1–2).

The Greek word translated “temple” is **naos** (I Cor. 3:16 & 6:19). It is the same word used for Solomon’s temple and other structures used for the worship of God. The temple represented the dwelling place of God. In heathen worship various temples were dedicated to particular gods and each god was believed to dwell in his temple. In the temple of Jehovah, His presence was to be manifested in the temple which He had built for that purpose. Of course, God in the fullness of His nature cannot be contained or localized (Acts 17:24, Isa. 66:1–2, I Kings 8:27). Nevertheless God was manifested by His own power in the Holy of Holies within the temple, and the people were to pray toward the temple, knowing that God was hearing them in heaven. “When they shall pray toward this place: yes, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-lace; and when thou hear, forgive” (Solomon’s prayer of dedication of the Temple, I Kings 8:30).

Christ promised to dwell in the Christian. “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God” (II Cor. 6:16). This is the work of the holy spirit, which is given to every one upon baptism (Acts 2:38). Thus Paul writes, “Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you?” The temple at Jerusalem had been abandoned by God when Christ died, as evidenced by the rending of the temple veil separating the holy place from the Holy of Holies, the actual mercy seat where God manifested His glory. With this veil gone, there was no more a special place where the priest might sprinkle the sacrificial blood for atonement for sin. The reason is simple: “But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:11–12). Christ’s sacrifice ended all blood sacrifice and need of a temple “made with hands.”

The New Testament used two Greek words to refer to the temple in Jerusalem: *naos* and *hieron*, both translated “temple” in English. However there is a difference. *Hieron* included the whole structure, the courts, porches and other building surrounding the temple proper. *Naos* was the actual habitation of God, the heart and center, the Holy of Holies (Acts 7:48, 17:24, I Cor. 6:19). When Christ “taught in the temple” He was in the *hieron*, the outer court (Matt. 26:55, Luke 21:37, John 8:20). It would have been a violation of God’s law for Him to have entered the *naos*, the Holy of Holies, as this was reserved for the priest alone.

In I Cor. 3:16–17 *naos* means God’s habitation, the place where God is manifest on earth. Christ makes His abode with the Christian who becomes a “new creature,” whose life is consecrated to the service of God, who offers himself a living sacrifice, is transformed and made holy, more precious than the gold and silver of Solomon’s temple, (I Pet. 1:18–19), universal and eternal. “You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual

house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 2:5). The dead stones are rejected and replaced by living souls. This is the temple “built up” by Christ for it is Christ who transforms and gives life to the new creature; it is He who “adds” to the church living stone upon living stone. And in each stone Christ dwells. The Christian thus becomes sacrifice, priest and temple all in one.

The ancient tabernacle was built of the people’s most precious possessions. Later they gloried in the temple, its beauty, majesty and richness. But no more. “You are God’s building,” Paul said (I Cor. 3:9). “Know you not that you are the temple of God” — filled with the presence of Christ Himself, enriched with every spiritual blessing, empowered with the very holy spirit of God and adorned with the beauty of the righteousness given by Christ?

The present temple (the Church) is not dependent upon material embellishments, cathedrals, forms, prestigious dignitaries of the world, nor upon the favors and works from the hands of men. The true glory of the temple is the beauty of holiness seen in the lives of Christians.

In Scripture the temple took the place of the tabernacle, but the two terms are often used interchangeably. When Peter sought to show the brethren at Jerusalem that God was accepting both Jew and Gentile through grace, James concluded that this was fulfillment of the prophet Amos. “After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called” (Acts 15:11–17, Amos 9:11). Many had thought that Amos was speaking of rebuilding the material tabernacle, but James and the apostles considered this prophecy to be fulfilled in the establishment of the church. The Church indeed is the tabernacle and temple of the living God. Christ abolished the law which was the “middle wall of partition” between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:11–22), so that the “Israel of God” now consists of those who obey the gospel of faith thereby becoming “Abraham’s seed” (Gal 3:16, 26–29). Christians are strongly warned against ever reverting to the Old Testament system (Gal 3:23–25, 4:3–9, 5:1, Col. 2:16–17, Heb. 10:11–14).

God destroyed the temple in Jerusalem but raised up Christ to live forever as the High Priest of His people. He also “raised us up with Him and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). God’s people are never again to be held together by a political, economic or racial power. Men of “every tribe and tongue, and people, and nation” flow into the Kingdom of Christ, for His Kingdom is not national or racial, but spiritual, based upon faith in Him and not upon fleshly descent.

Rather than speculate on what might or might not happen in the nation that calls itself Israel, it is better for Christians to concentrate on keeping the present and true temple of God holy and fit for His spiritual service, remembering that “If any man destroys the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy which temple you are” (I Cor. 3:17). The temple was to be kept from pollution and reserved strictly for those things ordained for the service of God. It was not to be employed in any activity that was low, vulgar or apart from God, but only in that which was pure and divine. So the Christian. His life is not to be a mixture of serving the world with service to God added on. Rather it is to be fully consecrated for God’s presence and work, “for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

When John saw the New Jerusalem, the city of the temple, coming down out of heaven from God, it did not appear as a building at all, but as the redeemed people, the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2). This is the true temple, the spiritual house of God.

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