

[R4296 : page 374]

## **THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS HOLY**

**- I KINGS 8. - DECEMBER 13. -**

**Golden Text: – "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." – Psa. 122:1.**

NEARLY twenty years elapsed between the incidents of our last lesson and those of the present one – the dedication of the temple of God, built by Solomon chiefly of materials accumulated by King David, his father. There were no methods of rapid construction in those days such as we have now. Solomon, with all his wisdom, had not invented steam-saws for cutting stone and wood and iron, nor steam-hoists for elevating materials into place, nor traveling cranes, nor hundreds of other useful conveniences [R4296 : page 375] which help to make our day so wonderful, in contrast with every other time. We are not for this to plume ourselves on a greater brain capacity or wisdom, but rather to accept the Scriptural interpretation that God specially lifted the curtain and disclosed to us these blessings, as part of his preparation for the Millennium, incidental also in bringing in the great time of trouble, with which the Scriptures declare this age will end. Nevertheless, Solomon's temple was one of the grandest buildings in the world in its day, although we consider the following comment by Edersheim rather exaggerated. He says: –

"Alone and isolated in its grandeur stood the temple mount. Terrace upon terrace its courts rose till, high above the city, within the enclosures of marble cloisters, the temple itself stood out, a mass of snowy marble and of glorious glittering in the sunlight, against the half-encircling green back-ground of Olivet....Nor has there been in ancient or modern times a sacred building equal to the temple, whether for situation or magnificence."

## **THE GREAT COST OF THE TEMPLE**

Estimates of the cost of the temple are made, which we consider very unlikely – estimates running up into the hundreds of millions, and even as high as thousands of millions of dollars. On this fact was based an argument that Christian people today are well justified in building grand and costly edifices for divine worship, chiefly used one day in seven. It is not for us to find fault with others of a different view who choose thus to invest their energies. It is their own concern and they are right in following the dictates of their own consciences. We remember, however, that the temple at Jerusalem was the house of prayer for all the people of that nation, numbering millions, and that it is also styled, "A house of prayer for all nations."

We remember that at the beginning and at the middle of their year were festivals, which God's people from all parts of the land of Israel and the whole world were expected to attend personally or by representative. Thus viewed the temple, even from the standpoint of the natural man, was a very different structure from a local church meeting-house. The Jews had meeting places styled synagogues, and they were generally quite humble and simple. Fault is sometimes found with us that we take a different course in this matter. Instead of erecting grand edifices in which to worship, we are poor and cannot attempt so to do except by solicitation of aid from the world, which is contrary to our judgment of the Lord's will, contrary to our conscience. Instead, our benevolences go towards the propagation of the Gospel by word or printed page. We have very economical arrangements for our little assemblies and also for our Convention spiritual feasts. We, of course, consider that our view of the matter is the correct one.

### **IN THE DIVINE LIGHT**

There might be room for dispute amongst the Lord's people on the subject of costly church edifices, until we get to see the

subject in the Divine light of God's Word. Thereafter there should be no room for discussion. That Divine light shows us the temple at Jerusalem as more than a house of worship for its time, as a type of a greater Temple to be built by a greater than Solomon. That greater Temple, the New Testament assures us, is the Church, the Body of Christ, of which he is the Head. This is the Temple of which St. Peter declares that himself and all of the Lord's thoroughly consecrated followers are antitypical, the living stones or members. This is the Temple of which our Lord declares, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God." This is the Temple of which our Lord again said, "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will rear it up"; he spake of the Temple of his Body, not of his own flesh, for that was but a tabernacle and was not reared up by our Lord. The Father raised him from the dead, but in a new body, a spiritual one.

Of the Temple, the Body of Christ, the Church, he declares, "I will raise him up at the last day." The last day, the seventh day, the Great Millennium, is the third day referred to by our Lord. He was living in the fifth thousand-year day, there following the sixth, and the seventh has just begun, and with it, we believe, the raising up, the "change" to glory of the "Church, which is his Body."

Of this Temple St. Paul writes, "The Temple of God is holy, which Temple ye are." (I Cor. 3:17.) He here referred to the Church in its present condition, on probation, as though it were a finished Temple, because by faith may be realized the Lord's presence and protecting care amongst these members in their temporary organization as the Church of Christ. But the same Apostle shows that this Temple is not quite complete, saying, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles, Jesus, Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord." (Eph. 2:20,21.) In a word, as St. Peter suggests, the Lord's consecrated ones, as living stones for the glorious spiritual Temple of the

future beyond the veil, are now being shaped, chiseled, polished, fitted for their places.

## **THE ANTITYPICAL TEMPLE**

That glorious Temple, The Christ, in the power of the First Resurrection will share in the glory, honor and immortality of the divine nature; and through it during the Millennium, the heavenly Father will communicate his blessings to the world of mankind for their uplifting out of sin and death. Thus, as the High Priest in his robes of glory and beauty represented The Christ, the Messiah, Jesus the Head and the Church his Body, so the temple in which he served likewise symbolizes the same Redeemer and the same Church. The one illustration discloses one relationship or communication between God and men. The other represents another feature of the same ministry of reconciliation, as it will ultimately reach the world of mankind.

From this standpoint we can readily see that God's temple, built by Solomon, represented so glorious a class and such rich blessings of God to men that it was very appropriate that the type of these riches of grace should be costly, ornate, beautiful in the highest degree.

But now in the strict sense of the word these living stones are undergoing the process of chiseling and polishing, and the stone-yard and surroundings are not gorgeous and beautiful. Rather, as the Apostle declares, the Church in its present condition is a body of humiliation, or, as improperly translated, "Our vile body." The Church in the present life, like her Lord, is disesteemed in the world, despised, persecuted, "counted as fools all the day long," and "the filth and offscouring of the earth." It is in full harmony with these actual conditions pointed out in the Scriptures and known to us by experience that we see it to be the will of God that our present religious conditions should be very humble ones, unostentatious, inexpensive, to the intent that our energies may be

the more efficaciously used in the forwarding of the work at the present time, rather than in attempting to make further [R4296 : page 376] types of the "glory that is to follow" our Resurrection "change."

This is further shown in the type. God's association with his people now is represented in the tabernacle and its court and its tent, all of which were temporary. Thus the Apostle speaks of us who are in this tabernacle as groaning, waiting for our house from heaven, waiting for our "change" to the Temple condition through the power of the First Resurrection.

### **"THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE TEMPLE"**

The record tells us that the stones and timbers of the temple were brought to the spot all prepared, shaped and marked for their several positions, so that the actual construction was a quiet one. We read that, "The parts came together without the sound of an hammer." The antitype of this is that the chiseling and polishing and preparing of God's saints in the present life and the marking of them for their several places, by which God sets the various members in the Body as it hath pleased him, will leave the work of the First Resurrection a very quiet one, so quiet that the world is not aware that it is now in progress. Thank God it is not yet finished, and there is yet hope and opportunity for some of the consecrated now living to "make our calling and election sure," and by the final "change from glory to glory" to be placed in the great spiritual Temple, in the particular niche or position for which under Divine providence we shall have been prepared. This resurrection "change" will make us all glorious and like unto our Lord and Redeemer, who is the express image of the Father's person.

Our Lord described the assembling of the representatives of all the tribes of Israel for the grand occasion. The festival

apparently lasted more than two [R4297 : page 376] weeks, certain prominent features marking each day of the time. The priests bore the ark from Zion, the city to which it had been brought by King David, as described in a previous lesson on, "The Homing of the Ark." Mount Zion was one division of the City of Jerusalem, while the temple was built in another division called Mount Moriah. At one time they were separated by considerable of a valley, but the topography has greatly changed in the intervening period and the bottom of the valley is filled in some places twenty feet and more. The city wall surrounded both of these mountains, or, as we would say, hills, for Jerusalem is built on a mountain.

There were great demonstrations of joy in connection with this dedication of the temple. It meant much to the holy people as they realized that the great Creator had deigned to approve the erection of a dwelling-house with them. As the ark came forward the Levites sang and chanted, probably some of David's psalms, which apparently by inspiration were written for the occasion. (Psa. 47, 98, 99, 107, 118, 136.) The theme of the occasion seems to have been, "For his mercy endureth forever." Ah! how that oft-repeated expression of the Psalmist will be understood, appreciated by mankind shortly. When the priests with the ark shall have entered in, and when the Levites of the future, the Ancient Worthies and others, shall chant the praises of Jehovah throughout all the earth, making known to the people "That his mercy endureth forever" and that during the Millennial Age, in and through the Anointed, The Christ, they will have the privilege of returning to God and to all that was lost, how joyful indeed will be the occasion! How world-wide the blessing! Then every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the glory of the Father!

## **THE DEDICATION SERVICES DESCRIBED**

Prof. W. J. Beecher, after studying the account, offers the following suggestions respecting the order of ceremonies observed. We think it not unreasonable and quote as follows: –

(1) "Then spake Solomon, the Lord said that he would dwell in thick darkness"; the declaration of I Kings 8:12,13; 2 Chron. 6:1,2.

(2) King Solomon then turned and blessed the standing congregation. – I Kings 8:1; 2 Chron. 6:3.

(3) King Solomon then delivered an address to the standing multitude. – I Kings 15:21; 2 Chron. 6:4-11.

(4) King Solomon then offered a dedicatory prayer, the multitude kneeling. – I Kings 8:23-53; 2 Chron. 6:14-40,54; 6:3.

(5) Psalm 132 was then chanted: "Arise, O God"! Then fire from the cloudy pillar descended upon the Mercy Seat, the Shekinah, and the glory of the Lord filled the house and the multitude outside prostrated themselves. – 2 Chron. 6:41; 7:1-3.

(6) The Congregation then said, "For his mercy endureth forever." – 2 Chron. 7:3.

(7) King Solomon closed the ceremony with an address and benediction, the multitude standing. – I Kings 8:54-61.

## **"HE SHALL PRESENT YOU FAULTLESS"**

As living stones of the Spiritual Temple requiring much chiseling and polishing to prepare us for places in the heavenly temple, let us appreciate these. Instead of seeking to avoid them, let us rather thankfully welcome whatever experiences of this kind the Heavenly One shall see fit to permit us to have. We are his

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Our present disciplines are intended to develop in us the character necessary to the great service for which our Creator intends us.

The good works, the great works of God to some extent, are most abundantly manifested in this "New Creation," the Church, and some of our good works are as colaborers with God and Christ in shaping and up-building one another in the most holy faith. The great good work of God to which he has called us is that mentioned in the oath-bound Covenant to Abraham, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." – Gal. 3:29.

While we longingly look forward to our glorious station of the future, when the glory of the Lord shall fill the Temple, "When we shall know as we are known," let us not forget that unless we are submissive to the molding and fashioning influences of the School of Christ, we shall be set aside. Our names will be blotted out of that special role and our crowns apportioned to others. It is in full view of the possibilities of so great a loss of so great a prize that the Apostle wrote, "Let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short."

The cultivation of pride along any line, the development of an unsanctified ambition, are amongst the greatest dangers to these living stones now in preparation. Such flaws developed would render us unfit for this special service. And if they should develop in us headiness or high-mindedness, they would probably also develop envy, malice, hatred, strife, evil-speaking, evil-surmisings, all of which are contrary to the Spirit of Christ and would soon render such "none of his."

