

## THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

—1 KINGS 8:1-11,62,63.—DECEMBER 13.—

**Golden Text: „I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.”—Psa. 122:1.**

VERY INTERESTING is the story of the great Temple of God purposed and largely prepared for by King David and built by King Solomon the wise. It was commenced in the fifth year of Solomon's reign and finished in the twelfth. The story of its cost seems fabulous, the gold and silver employed in its construction being estimated at from \$1,000,000,000 to \$2,500,000,000. We are inclined to think the smaller estimate nearer to the truth, or that the ancient standard of values, a talent, possibly, experienced a change of values, as for instance was the case in the English pound sterling, which originally meant a pound of silver in value but subsequently a quarter of a pound of silver, and to-day, by reason of the change of standard from silver to gold, it has a still different meaning not at all connected with silver. Similarly the Jewish talent may have experienced changes of value in the long centuries of its use. However, regardless of the aggregated value of the gold, silver, brass, precious stones, constituting the Temple, we have every reason to conclude that it was a wonderful structure for its day—one of which King Solomon in all his glory and wisdom, and the people of Israel with him, had good reason to rejoice and not feel ashamed.

The context shows that King Hiram of Phoenicia not only contributed largely to the Temple as a friendly gift, but also supplied skilled workmen under Solomon's pay, who in various ways assisted in the preparation of the brazen columns for the porch, utensils for the court, etc. etc. Thirty thousand Israelites were drafted to serve in the Temple construction one month out of each quarter. Besides these there would appear to have been 150,000 laborers, apparently foreigners, hired from outside (1 Kings 5:13-16; 9:21,22), or they may have been aliens residing in the land of Palestine—Canaanites. The overseers would appear to have been 550 chiefs and 3,300 subordinates, of whom 250 were Israelites, and 3,600 Canaanites. (2 Chron. 2:17; 8:10.) This preponderance of the Canaanites amongst the overseers seems to imply that the laborers were Canaanites, and also reminds us that „the Canaanite was still in the land.” The fact that the Canaanites, strangers from the Commonwealth of Israel, were the chief laborers in the construction of the great Temple, seems to have been typical of the fact that aliens, strangers, foreigners, and enemies of the Truth have the larger share in the work of preparing the antitypical

Temple. Their hammering, their chiseling, their melting and casting, under divine providence, serve to make ready the living stones and the glorious pillars for the spiritual house. Verily they know not what they do. Their work is greater, better, than they comprehend, as the glories of eternity will demonstrate.

The lesson opens with the Temple's construction finished, and the chiefs of Israel gathered with King Solomon at Jerusalem for its dedication, at the time we call October, corresponding to the Jewish New Year feast, held in connection with the great day of atonement. The Atonement Day was probably past, the sacrifices of atonement having been made in the Tabernacle and the blessing of the Lord, as usual, dispensed upon the people for the new year. While they were thus legally cleansed, reconciled to God typically, was the most appropriate time for the dedication of the Temple, which represented the spiritual hopes and aims of the nation.

The Ark, representing typically the divine covenant with Abraham, the fulfilment of which centered in the Christ, must be transferred from the Tabernacle to the Temple, that thus the latter might supersede the former as the meeting place between God and his covenant people. The thousands of sacrifices offered during the procession of the King and priests and the celebrities of the nation, besides evidencing their devotion to God and their willingness to sacrifice, had a typical significance as representing the consecration even unto death of the whole company thus engaged in transferring the emblem of their faith and hope. In some respects, therefore, the King and the chiefs of the nation represented typically our Lord Jesus and the overcomers, and the chief priests and under priests represented the same from another standpoint. The

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procession was the meeting place between the sacrificing emblems of the present age and the typical representation of the kingdom glories and honors of the next age. The Lord's people to-day seem to be following this type. The Great King, antitypical of Solomon, has about finished the Temple construction and has sent forth the invitation of the heads, the chiefs of spiritual Israel, to attend and share in the great dedication. These chiefs are not the great of this world, but the Lord's very elect. From the four quarters of the spiritual heavens they are gathering, the procession has already commenced; but as the Temple was not complete until the Ark, its most important part, was placed in position, so the glorious Temple will not really be finished until every member of the body of Christ has been changed from the Tabernacle condition to the Temple or permanent condition in the first resurrection.

The declaration that there was nothing in the Ark save the tables of stone on which was inscribed the Law, seems at first to be in conflict with the Apostle's statement in Heb. 9:4, where he mentions also the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded. We are to remember,

however, that this description related to the Tabernacle and not to the Temple. The golden bowl of manna which did not corrupt was a type of illustration of the immortality or incorruptibility which the Lord has provided for the Royal Priesthood, and the budded rod was a reminder that the blessing and fruitfulness and privilege of service belong to the antitypical Levite, but as types both of these will end in the present dispensation. They met with the Tabernacle conditions; they will not be needed in the future conditions of glory, honor, and immortality represented by the Temple, because there the glorious things typified by these will have been fully entered into by the overcomers of the Church. But the law will still be an integral part of the divine covenant. As the Apostle explains the fulfilling of the law is love, and love never faileth. It will always be the divine requirement and essential to participation in any of the blessings connected with the divine favor represented in the Ark of the covenant.

While the priests proceeded with their work of placing the Ark, the Levites, „arrayed in white linen, having psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the [brazen] altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets. It came to pass that the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voices with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord saying, ‚For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever,‘ that then the house [Temple] was filled with the cloud”—the peculiar pillar of cloud which symbolized the Lord’s presence through the wilderness journey, and subsequently in connection with the Tabernacle, and now in the Temple, for the first time rested upon it. This, which outwardly had the appearance of a cloud in the sanctuary on the mercy seat, represented an extreme brightness—so great that the priests could no longer remain in the Holy.

But meantime the King explained to the people the significance of the Temple, that it was the house of God and built under divine direction, given to himself and to his father David. Then standing near the altar of the court, spreading forth his hands toward heaven, he prayed a most beautiful prayer, and one which we recognize as prophetically directed, and as teaching us the purpose and object of the great antitypical Temple constructed by the antitypical Solomon. The literal Temple was to be the place toward which all the Israelites should look as God’s dwelling place, the center of his power, authority, forgiveness and blessing and help in every time of need. So in due time, when the spiritual Temple shall have been constructed and dedicated and filled with divine power, it will be the center toward which all who would approach God shall look for help and assistance and blessing and forgiveness, toward which they shall make their prayers, and in which they shall realize the manifestation of divine power and blessing on their behalf.

After Solomon’s dedicatory prayer was finished, the Lord openly manifested his favor toward the King and all the people by accepting their sacrifices with fire from heaven, as we read: „When

Solomon had made an end of praying the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah filled the house [the Temple]. ... And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down and the glory of the Lord was upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, „for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever'”—probably joining with the Levites in singing Psalm 136.

It is noteworthy that the Levites and the people did not sing of divine wrath never ending, but of divine mercy forever. This, however, according to the strict significance of the Hebrew word, does not mean „without an end,” but „to an end”,—that is to say, that divine mercy shall be exercised to its completeness, to its fulfillment, until every creature shall have been brought to a knowledge of the Lord and his goodness and to an opportunity of knowing him and of benefiting by the great promise made to Abraham and symbolized in the Ark of the covenant, through which all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Similarly in the last book of the Bible we read of the song of Moses and the Lamb, sung by the antitypical priests, saying, „Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways thou King of saints. Who shall not reverence thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all peoples shall come and worship before thee, because thy judgments [righteous dealings] are made manifest.” (Rev. 15:3,4.) This is the song which none but

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the overcomers can truly appreciate and sing at the present time, but by and by—when the glory of the Lord shall have filled the Temple—the peoples, the multitudes, shall learn that song, shall learn of the divine mercy, and as a prophecy it shall be fulfilled and all peoples shall bow to the Lord to confess his goodness and his love and to enjoy at the hands of the antitypical Solomon (the Christ), as prophet, priest and king of the new dispensation, the opportunity of full reconciliation to God and full return to the perfect conditions of mind and of body, and to life everlasting, lost by Adam’s disobedience, and brought back by the great Redeemer for as many as will receive it upon God’s terms.

Naturally and properly our chief interest centers in the antitypical Temple, the antitypical Solomon, the antitypical priests and antitypical people. There is a sense in which every member of the New Creation may be said to be individually a temple of the holy Spirit now, a sense in which every individual should build up his own faith and character from the divine promises and by compliance with the divine requirements, but this is not the larger antitypical view of the Temple. In its antitypical sense Solomon’s Temple certainly represented the glorified Christ, head and body, built up of living stones, as the Apostle Peter explains. Under the supervision of the anointed the work of gathering the various stones for the Temple has been in progress throughout the Gospel age. As

not any and every stone was taken for Solomon's Temple, but only those of specific dimensions and peculiar pattern, in accordance with the plan, so it is with the antitypical, the living, stones. Only a certain class are approached at all, and only those which being cut out are first roughly quarried out and found suitable in character and dimensions are tooled at all, and only those which under the tool yield proper results and become conformed to the intended pattern will ultimately find their place in the glorious Temple which our Lord as the great master-builder is constructing. As before intimated, this accounts for the fact that various agents, even Satan himself, may be used of the Lord as servants for the chiseling and polishing and fitting and preparing of these living stones for their future glorious position. Viewed in this light what a satisfaction may come from the trials and difficulties which all the Lord's people are sure to experience, and without some of which they would be justified in fearing that they are not sons but bastards. (Heb. 12:8.) Only those who have some such insight into the divine program can ever reach that position to which the Apostle Paul attained, who claimed that he could also rejoice in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience and patience experience and experience hope, which will not be put to shame, but which will be rewarded eventually in the glorious joint-heirship in the kingdom promised by our Lord to his faithful.

To our understanding of the teaching of Scripture, the fact that the materials for Solomon's Temple were prepared before its construction began, and were so perfectly fitted that no iron tool needed to be used in the construction, indicates that the antitype, this Gospel age, has seen the preparation of the various living stones, which when ready were marked of the Lord to their positions in the Temple, and fell asleep in Jesus until the time for the first resurrection, the time for the construction of the Temple. To our understanding we are now living in that time and have been in it since 1878. The living stones of the past have been brought together and the Temple is merely waiting for the few living stones which are still under process of trial and disciplining, chiseling and polishing. The resurrection

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„change” coming to each of these in turn places him with the fellow-members of the grand Temple of the Lord. The picture of the bringing of the Ark would seem to be another illustration of the same lesson—the bringing of the members of the body of Christ from the Tabernacle or earthly condition to the heavenly or Temple condition. Soon the Ark will be in place, and priests and Levites and people are generally learning to sing of the Lord's mighty love and that his mercy endureth to completeness—to the full limit to which mercy could be of service, benefit or advantage, to the completion, when every ear shall have heard, every eye shall have seen and every heart shall have shown appreciation, shall have come to a knowledge of the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us, as day after day rolls by, remember our threefold relationship then to this Temple: (1) We are still in process of preparation as living stones. (2) As members of the Royal

Priesthood carrying the Ark we are marching from the Tabernacle into the Temple condition; some of our number have already entered in and some are still on the way. (3) As the Lord's people the time has come for us to know, to sing with the spirit and understanding, the new song of divine mercy, justice, love and truth. Let us be faithful in each of these respects, fulfilling our parts, and ere long our course will be ended and the glory of the Lord will fill the Temple. It will be after this that the people will take up the refrain,—for his mercy endureth forever—to completeness.

Our Golden Text is in line with the foregoing. Those who hear the invitation to become members of the house of God, the house of sons, the antitypical Temple, and who receive the invitation into good and honest hearts, are indeed made glad, „Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound.” We couple with this a similar expression by the same poet prophet, who declares, „I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Not in earthly houses, not in earthly temples, do we hope to dwell forever; but those who become members, living stones in the spiritual house, the heavenly Temple now under construction, will indeed dwell in the house of the Lord forever. For them to go out would mean the destruction of the house, for of it they will be members in particular; as the Lord declares they will be pillars in the house of the Lord,

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and the ministers of his grace and truth to all the people. This text will be true also of the world during the Millennial age. All mankind will then be invited to approach the Lord in worship, to approach the spiritual Temple, the Christ, and through the Christ to approach the Father; and all who shall hear that message and who shall obey it will be glad indeed, even as the message brought by the angels at the birth of Jesus intimated that eventually the tidings of great joy shall be unto all people.

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