

I remember one day when we were following Jesus, and as He left the temple someone mentioned how impressive the magnificent buildings were, and considered the massive stones that made it up¹. Someone else mentioned the associated gifts dedicated to God that adorned the structure². Jesus surprised us by stating that the huge structure with these incredible building blocks would not endure – it would be taken apart. Naturally, we all wondered when this would happen, but the Teacher gave us no exact date, just a warning for the future.

In returning to Jerusalem years later, I recalled that time. Though the temple was still intact at that time, I knew the history of it well. I began to ponder the meaning of the temple and its actual effectiveness in providing contact with our Holy God.

God created mankind in the Garden of Eden on the sixth day, and first dwelt with his people there³. In a sense, this garden was the first temple⁴, where man interacted directly with the presence of God. After the fall of man, God brought forth a people for Himself, and Moses was given instructions for the creation of a tabernacle to promote His relationship with them. It took about nine months in the wilderness to finish, and incorporated contributions from many people.

Later, Solomon built a fixed temple in Jerusalem⁵, where the Name of God was meant to dwell. This took about seven years with over a hundred thousand workers. It was rebuilt after the fall of Judah⁶, taking a bit over four years to finish. Herod the Great later enlarged this second temple, which required forty-six years of effort⁷.

The connection between man and God in times of the tabernacle and temple was through human priests⁸. I thought about all of the labor and time that it took for man to try to maintain the connection with God! And I knew that none of these physical structures will endure!

Then I thought about what occurred in only three days and eliminated the need for a physical place to support this connection and the ineffectiveness of man's involvement. Jesus Christ was crucified, "and the curtain of the physical temple was torn in two"⁹, thus opening the way back into God's presence¹⁰. He rose from the dead so that His people could live in the presence of God. Jesus hereby accomplished the purpose of the temple: he restored fellowship between mankind and God. Jesus is the true and final temple¹¹, and its great High Priest¹². All of those united to Him become part of it¹³ too¹⁴.

This temple that once meant a sort of connection to God would someday be destroyed, but it had already been given the fatal blow by His Son.

1. Matthew 24:1-4; Mark 13:1-4; Luke 21:5-7.

2. Luke 21:5.

3. Genesis 1.

4. From Mark: A 12-Week Study (Knowing the Bible Book 3); Ortlund, D.; p.64.

5. 1 Kings 6-8.

6. Ezra 6

7. This temple was also eventually destroyed by the Romans.

8. But, as Stephen said, "“However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? Or where will my resting place be?” says the Lord. Acts 7:48-49

9. Mark 15:38.

10. From Mark: A 12-Week Study (Knowing the Bible Book 3); Ortlund, D.; p.66.

11. Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. John 2:18-21.

12. Hebrews 4:14-15

13. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus

himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22.

14. From Mark: A 12-Week Study (Knowing the Bible Book 3); Ortlund, D.; p.66.

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