

TEMPLE OF THE LOST ARK

CONTENTS

Preparations For A Temple.	2
The Spiritual Significance Of The Temple	8
<i>The Need For A Sacrificial Death</i>	11
<i>The Need For Regular Spiritual Cleansing</i>	12
<i>The Need For Daily Dependence On God</i>	14
<i>The Need For Mercy On God's Terms</i>	19
<i>The Need For The Presence Of God.</i>	23
The First Two Temples.	25
The Future Temple	27
God In Us.	30
What To Watch For	32

The title “Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark” is one that is recognized by most people. But it is unlikely that many of our generation understand the real-life events that inspired the fictionalized account of this adventure film. The real story of the ark, and the temple Solomon built to house it, is far more amazing than fiction.

With the help of former Jerusalem resident, journalist, prophetic specialist, and *Day Of Discovery* cohost Jimmy De Young, we have attempted in the following pages to capture the unfolding story of a temple that will one day become the focus of our universe.

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Cover Photo: Sarah Stone/TSW

Printed in USA

PREPARATIONS FOR A TEMPLE

Micha and Shoshana Harrari are harpmakers credited with making the first harps in Jerusalem in almost 2,000 years. When a local rabbi saw their work, he said he knew the coming of the Messiah was near. The Harraris believe it could be their destiny to make as many as 4,000 harps for a future temple orchestra.

Shoshana says, “This is important [that harps are being made] because these were instruments of a very expressive kind of joy, a divine joy. And they’ve been missing. They’ve been silent since our ancestors hung their harps upon the willow trees and went into exile.”

The making of harps is only one example of the preparations being made for

a future temple. For such a worship center to operate, it will need thousands of qualified men to perform temple duties. In anticipation of this need, one rabbi in the Old City has developed a computer database with the names of Jewish men descended from priestly families. Many have been contacted and are studying in training centers all over Jerusalem.

The Temple Institute located in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem has a group of scholars and artisans who are now making priestly garments and implements, which they hope will be needed in temple services. Many garments and utensils, including a “mizrack” used to transport the blood for the sacrificial ceremony and a 24-carat gold crown for the high priest, are already made and in storage.

THE VISION

One of the most visible and outspoken advocates for a future temple is Gershon Salomon, leader of the “Temple Mount Faithful.” Salomon was among the Israeli defense forces who went onto the Temple Mount in June of 1967 when Israel unified Jerusalem for the first time in almost 2,000 years. Salomon was given a tour of the Temple Mount by a Jordanian guide who told Salomon that he thought the Jews had come to start construction of the Jewish temple.

Several days later, however, Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan gave control of the Temple Mount back to the Muslims. This gesture of peace blocked construction of the temple but not the vision that had been born in Salomon. When asked today about the Temple Mount, Salomon makes it

clear that he sees beyond the site as it now exists. Instead he says, “I see the first temple, I see the second temple, and more than that, I see the third temple, which will be rebuilt in this place. Very soon—maybe tomorrow—you and I and all our generation will have the privilege to come to this place. Then all the nations from all the world will come and pray. As God said, ‘My house will be a house of prayer for all the nations of the world.’ This is what I see.”

THE MUSLIM PROBLEM

Blocking Salomon’s vision is one of the most recognizable sights of the modern Jerusalem skyline. The beautiful Dome of the Rock Muslim shrine has stood on the temple site since AD 691. Standing next to the Dome is the El Aksa Mosque.

To understand the Muslim claim to this site, it's important to remember some of the history of this contested acreage. Prior to the Muslim occupation of Jerusalem, the Temple Mount area had been reduced to rubble by Roman pagans and then later desecrated by Christians. Fourth-century Christians went so far as to use the former temple area as a dung heap.

In their book *Ready To Rebuild*, Thomas Ice and Randall Price quote a 14th-century Muslim description of the Temple Mount, which says, "Now at that time [of Emperor Heraclius] there was over the Rock in the Holy City a great dung heap which completely masked the prayer niche of David and which the Christians had put there in order to offend the Jews; and further, even the Christian women were wont to throw their

[menstrual] cloths and clouts in the place so that there was a pile of them there" (p.36, Harvest House, 1992).

In time, Muslims developed a belief that Muhammad had ascended to God from the rock over which the Dome is now built. It is only right, they insist, for the world to honor the shrine that has stood on that spot for the last 1,300 years.

One Dome-of-the-Rock official expressed the sentiments of many when he said, "I assure you that, if necessary, a million Muslims are ready to sacrifice their lives to defend this holy place. So I hope the rulers of Israel will not interfere. The results wouldn't be good for anyone. There is no Muslim who would allow it. This is the third most holy place for Muslims all around the world."

When the same official was asked what this holy site meant to him personally, he said, “This place is a part of my heart. It is a part of the heart of all Muslims. I feel sometimes that even my own life means nothing to me compared to this place.”

Meanwhile, religious Jews offer prayers at the base (rather than at the top) of the Temple Mount. At a section of the Western Wall, sometimes called “the Wailing Wall,” devout Jews continue day after day to ask God to send His long-awaited Messiah and to restore their temple.

During the Gulf Crisis of 1991, these prayers reached a new intensity. Many stood at the Western Wall praying that God would cause one of Saddam Hussein’s Scud missiles to hit the Dome of the Rock and thus remove a major obstacle.

A HOUSE FOR ALL NATIONS

In spite of the regional nature of this conflict, it is important to realize that many Jews do not see their longing for a future temple as a purely nationalistic interest. According to Old Testament prophets, the rebuilding of the temple offers hope for all peoples of the earth. In the 8th century before Christ, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of

*Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord
from Jerusalem. He shall
judge between the nations,
and rebuke many people;
they shall beat their
swords into plowshares,
and their spears into
pruning hooks; nation
shall not lift up sword
against nation, neither
shall they learn war
anymore (Isa. 2:2-4).*

As an indication that such a prophetic future is possible, a spokesperson at the Temple Institute tells visitors that for 40 years after the dedication of Solomon's temple, and for the only time in history, the whole world was at peace.

THE TEMPLE MOUNT SITE

If religious Jews want peace as much as they say they do, some wonder why they don't show good faith by selecting another site. In this regard, the Jews, like the Muslims,

point to the prior history of the Temple Mount. It was on Mount Moriah that Abraham was asked by God to offer his son. It was this location that Abraham named "Jehovah-jireh" (lit. "God will see and provide").

It was on Mount Moriah that David later bought a "threshing floor" on which to offer a sacrifice. It was on this site that Solomon built the first temple, which remained for 500 years. It was on this exact location that a second temple was built, and then rebuilt by Herod. It was finally torn down in AD 70 by Titus and his Roman soldiers. And it was on this site that the ark of the covenant was housed until 586 BC when Babylonian armies sacked Jerusalem and her temple.

MYSTERY OF THE LOST ARK

Where is the ark of the covenant, the golden chest

that was once housed in the temple's Most Holy Place? Does the real story of this ark bear any resemblance to the fictional adventure of Indiana Jones? Is this gold box still filled with dreaded curses for those who might try to capture it? (1 Sam. 5). Is it hidden in an African cave? Have Jerusalem rabbis found it in a hidden chamber under the Temple Mount as they claim? Or has God taken this symbol of His presence into heaven? (Rev. 11:19).

***Finding the ark
isn't as important
as discovering
what it means.***

As of this writing, the mystery remains unsolved. It is interesting to note, however, that the Bible tells

us, “[Nebuchadnezzar] cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said” (2 Ki. 24:13). This does not prove that the ark was among the articles cut up. But it does raise the possibility that when God was finished with the ark He allowed it to be captured and destroyed by the Babylonians. We do know that the ark did not show up when the temple was rebuilt. Even more significantly, the ark is not mentioned in a future temple described by Ezekiel (Ezek. 40–43).

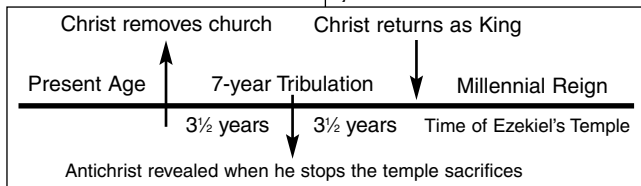
For such reasons, our interest is not in a magical artifact sought for its treasures or feared for its mystical powers. Our interest is in the timeless and intensely practical implications of the temple that was built to house it.

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE

An understanding of the significance of Israel's temple has many practical benefits. The anticipation of a rebuilt temple, for instance, can help to keep us from "falling asleep" as we wait for the any-moment return of Christ. Preparations for a temple are part of a wider movement of history that appears to be setting the stage for the fulfillment of endtime events predicted by the Scriptures. Old and New Testament prophets have long spoken of an endtime restoration of Israel and temple worship. With the establishment of a

Jewish homeland in 1948, with the reunification of Jerusalem in the war of 1967, with the freedom and return of hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews "from the north," and with preparations for a future temple, our thoughts turn easily to the day when a powerful political leader will break a peace treaty with Israel and "bring an end to sacrifice and offering" (Dan. 9:27; 12:11; Mt. 24:15).

This prophetic backdrop, which includes a future temple, has a much-needed message for those who are heading for an endtime encounter with God while clinging to the opinion that it doesn't really matter what you believe about God.



While the spirit of the age encourages people to feel comfortable with whatever religious beliefs work for them, the temple has a very different message.

In its day, the temple said to its world, “God must be worshiped on His terms—not yours.” While surrounding nations worshiped on top of any hill or under the shade of any convenient tree, while they developed fertility cults that allowed them to “worship” with sexual abandon, the temple of Israel declared that God must be worshiped with a clean heart.

The temple has always been a picture of the timeless terms on which God lives among His people. It says that the manner in which we approach God *is* important. What we believe and do *does* matter. This “pattern of truth” was ultimately fulfilled in the person of Christ, who

claimed to be our one and only mediator with God.

This message of worship on God’s terms is most clearly seen in the design and detail of a temple prototype known as the tabernacle.

THE TABERNACLE (EX. 25–40)

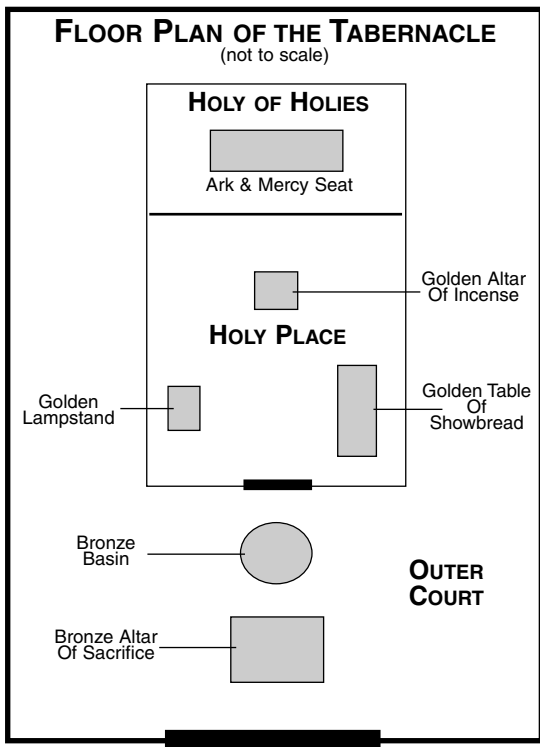
The design of past temples can be traced back to a sacred, collapsible, transportable place of worship whose carefully detailed specifications were given to Moses from the top of Mount Sinai. When God gave the Ten Commandments, He also gave Moses detailed plans for a sacred structure designed to be a companion to the moral law.

The design of the tabernacle showed God’s merciful provision for people who could not live up to His rules. It was a picture of the timeless and essential terms

by which God lives with His people, and by which God's people could in turn prepare to meet and live with their God.

The pattern of the tabernacle shows the need

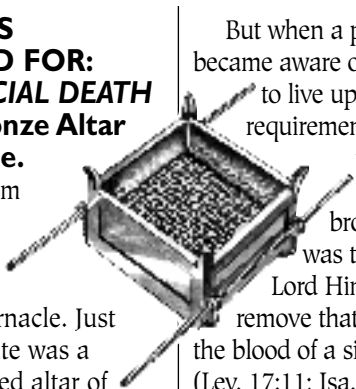
for (1) a sacrificial death, (2) regular spiritual cleansing, (3) daily dependence on God, (4) all-encompassing mercy, and (5) the Presence of God Himself.



IT SHOWS THE NEED FOR: A SACRIFICIAL DEATH The Bronze Altar Of Sacrifice.

As the diagram on page 10 shows, there was one gate into the tabernacle. Just inside this gate was a bronze-covered altar of sacrifice. On this altar, innocent animals were sacrificed in a ritual that symbolically transferred human guilt to the head of a lamb, ox, or dove.

It's important to keep in mind that this altar of sacrifice was not about social and civil justice. It did not address a person's debt to society. If a man stole his neighbor's donkey, he could not satisfy justice by offering an animal on the altar of sacrifice. Under the law of Moses, a thief had to make generous restitution for his crime.



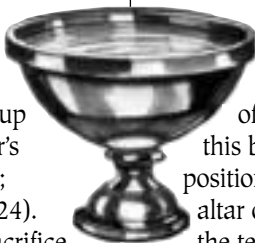
But when a person became aware of his inability to live up to the requirements of God, then the good news of the bronze altar was that the Lord Himself would remove that guilt through the blood of a sin offering (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 53:6).

The conditions of this offering were highly symbolic. The person offering the sacrifice brought an unblemished, nondefective animal to the priest, identified with the sacrifice by placing his hands on the animal's head, and then slit the animal's throat. The priest collected the blood and disposed of the carcass in a prescribed manner.

Many years later, the New Testament would explain the significance of the bronze-altar sacrifice. The letter to the Hebrews says that the blood of bulls

and goats could never take away sin (10:1-14). It says that animal sacrifices were merely “shadows” of another sacrifice that *could* take away sin. They were symbols of an unblemished, nondefective Sacrifice who, under the Judean governor Pontius Pilate, would be offered up on an executioner’s cross (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:17-20; 2:24).

This human sacrifice is what the prophet Isaiah had in view when he said, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity [sin] of us all” (Isa. 53:6). The King of the future temple first became the sacrificial Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29).



IT SHOWS THE NEED FOR: REGULAR SPIRITUAL CLEANSING

The Bronze Basin.

A second condition for God to live among His people is illustrated by a large

bronze basin of water. In the God-given design of the tabernacle, this basin was positioned between the altar of sacrifice and the tent of the Holy

Place. According to Exodus 38:8, this basin of cleansing was made from bronze mirrors donated by the women of Israel. Here the priest, as a representative of the people, washed his hands and feet before offering a sacrifice or entering the Holy Place (Ex. 30:17-21).

This basin illustrated God’s attitude toward spiritual defilement. The repeated washings pictured

a principle expressed throughout the entire Bible: To have a close relationship with God, the people of God must learn to share His attitude toward sin. For this reason, the New Testament author James wrote:

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:8-10).

None of us would accept service at a restaurant if we had seen the waiter drop and then scoop up our food off the floor. We'd think twice before walking into a friend's house with tar or mud on our shoes. Yet we are inclined to try to come into God's presence with

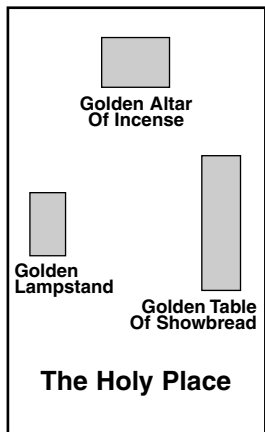
hands, hearts, and feet covered with the filth of our disobedience, lust, or lukewarmness.

Such spiritual cleansing has prophetic implications as well. Prophecy indicates that before Israel's Messiah will be honored on His temple throne, His people

***Believing in God
means believing
what He says
about sin.***

will experience a day of personal and national cleansing (Ezek. 11:17-21). God will not live among His people without showing us that He loves us too much to leave us in our sin.

IT SHOWS THE NEED FOR: DAILY DEPENDENCE ON GOD



The Holy Place.

The joys of God's presence are a secret known only to those who (1) take action against sin, and then (2) enter into the place of dependence. This dull-on-the-outside-beautiful-on-the-inside secret is visualized by the design of the tabernacle. Outwardly, the Holy Place looked uninviting. The

exterior was draped with drab-looking animal skins. The interior, however, was rich with color, embroidery, and gold. In this way the tabernacle told the story experienced by everyone who by faith comes into the presence of God.

To the outsider, the godly life doesn't look appealing. But to the person who gratefully shows faith in the God of his salvation by separating from sin and by obediently entering into the holy place, there is a wonderful discovery. The pleasures of drawing near to God can be known only by those who enter in.

The Golden Lampstand. The first article in the Holy Place was a lampstand of gold (Ex. 25:31-40). Like other elements of the tabernacle, this lampstand was to be made exactly according to the pattern given to Moses. It was a picture of the rich

and valuable source of light that God is to His people.

The seven-in-one design of this lampstand also suggests the way in which the people of the Lord are to depend on Him for enlightenment. The multiple design symbolizes the fact that God is not only a source of light to His people but *through* them as well. Throughout the Old Testament, God made it clear that His people would receive His enlightenment as long as they remained open to the prophets, priests, kings, judges, counselors, parents, and friends who spoke in His behalf.

This principle of “body light” was later taught by the apostle Paul when he explained to the Ephesians the many ways in which the Spirit of God speaks to His people (Eph. 4:1-16).

Through apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers, God builds up the body of His people in truth.

The most direct evidence that God sees *His people* as a lampstand, however, is found in the last book of the Bible. In the second and third chapters of Revelation, seven first-century churches are likened to “seven golden lampstands.”

With this overall emphasis of the Bible in view, the actual design and symbolism of the lampstand can be appreciated. The seven-branched lampstand was hammered out of one piece of gold. Six branches (three on each side) extended out of a center shaft. All were carved in the image of almond branches and blossoms. The elements of this design suggest a



shared oneness and a shared interdependence, as well as the light and life that are found in God.

The fulfillment of this lampstand and focus of our ultimate dependence is found in the One who called Himself the Light of the world (Jn. 1:1-3; 8:12), in the One who is light through the people to whom He has joined Himself (Mt. 5:14), and in the One who will one day be light to the world from His temple throne in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:1-5).

The Golden Table Of Showbread. The second article in the Holy Place also spoke of dependence on God. To the right of the lampstand in this 30-by-15-

foot room was a golden table on which 12 flat loaves of bread were stacked. This bread represented the daily provisions that God had promised those who trust Him.

In the East, bread had more significance than in the West. Viewed as the staff of life, bread symbolized the nourishment, provision, and increase upon which life depended. The 12 loaves were a reminder to the 12 tribes of Israel that as they separated themselves to God, and as they relied on Him for their needs, they could count on being able to eat at the table He prepared for them.

Many years later, Israel's



King David would pray, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Ps. 23:5-6).

Moses emphasized the same truth of God’s provision as he prepared his people to enter the Promised Land. Realizing how easy it was to forget God’s faithfulness, he said:

You shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might

make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord (Dt. 8:2-3).

“Our daily bread” includes everything we need to live one day at a time from the hand of God our Provider. It includes God’s provisions of time, health, relationships, and housing. It includes His gifts of food, happiness, and spiritual encouragement. Ultimately, the bread of God points to the One who said:

Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. . . . I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger (Jn. 6:32-33,35).

He is the One who from His millennial throne in Jerusalem will finally be acknowledged not only as the Provider of Israel but as the Provider of all nations.

The Golden Altar Of Incense.

The third article of the Holy Place that speaks of dependence on God was a golden altar of incense. This altar was positioned next to the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies. Most important, it was to be lit from the bronze altar of sacrifice.

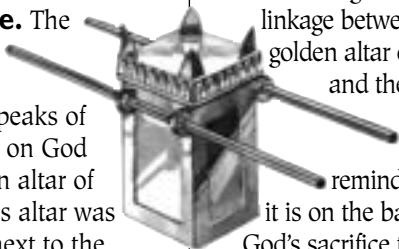
As with the bread, incense had a significance in the East that is foreign to the West. Incense was often burned as an expression of honor and recognition for a king or dignitary. Facing the Holy of Holies, it signified the need for the child of God to honor God continually

with dependent expressions of praise, requests, and thanksgiving.

The fact that the incense was to be lit from the bronze altar of sacrifice provides additional insight. The

linkage between the golden altar of incense and the bronze altar of sacrifice reminds us that

it is on the basis of God's sacrifice that we are able to come into His presence with our prayers. From a New Testament perspective, our prayers are lit from the fires of Christ's sacrifice for us. It is on the basis of Christ's life and death that we can "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). The King who will rule the world from His temple throne in Jerusalem has first been our sacrifice and intercessor.



IT SHOWS THE NEED FOR: MERCY ON GOD'S TERMS

The Ark Of The Covenant. With rich imagery, the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle gives some additional details that show the conditions on which God lives among His people. Here in the Holy of Holies is the real story behind the fictional account of “Indiana Jones And The Raiders Of The Lost Ark.”

The ark of the covenant was a gold-covered “treasure chest” made to house the two stone tablets of the law. On top of the chest was a golden cover called the mercy seat. Attached to ends of the cover were golden images of heavenly creatures called “cherubim of glory” (Heb. 9:5; see illustration on page 23).



Each object was rich in symbolic meaning. Together they represented the only

conditions by which God would live with His people. As we will see,

these objects spelled out the timeless need for human surrender on one hand and divine mercy on the other.

The Tablets Of The Law. The stone tablets Moses brought down from Sinai remind us that God is a God of principle. The laws of His heart are as sure and reliable as the laws of nature.



These laws don't make God's actions predictable. To test our trust, He always

reserves the right to act in ways that are beyond our ability to understand. But His laws and words do tell us as much as we need to know about His desires and character. They do define His expectations of us. His laws do make the *reasons* for His actions clear. His words reveal His desire to bring us into a relationship with Himself, and to enable us to enjoy Him forever.

***God's laws don't
make His actions
predictable, but
they do reveal His
character.***

This link between God and His Word is expressed throughout the entire Bible. Over and over we are reminded that what God says reflects who He is, and that to reject His

teaching is to reject the God from whom it has come (1 Th. 4:3-8).

Yet God does allow us the freedom to reject His principles. He is a God who has given us freedom to worship other gods, to create Him in our own image, or to take His name in vain. As a result, we can say, "Oh, my God!" in frivolous or profane ways. We can dishonor our parents, lie, cheat, kill, and covet. We can break free of all sexual restraints and declare the principles of God null and void. But if and when we do, we will not just be breaking the laws of God—they will have broken us.

Ironically, it is in such brokenness that the higher purpose of the law is discovered. By reflecting on the laws of God, we see not only what is right about God but what is wrong with ourselves. It is by taking

God's laws seriously that we see the need for the truths of sacrifice, purification, dependence, and mercy, which the tabernacle illustrates.

The Mercy Seat.

This is the most deeply moving truth of all. Attached to the top of the golden chest was a golden lid called the mercy seat or atonement cover. Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest of Israel sprinkled on this cover the blood of a sacrificial animal.

By this symbolic ritual, God showed us that He

would live among His people on the basis of mercy. He

Three Treasures Of The Chest

In addition to the stone tablets of the law, Hebrews 9:4 links to the ark of the testimony a golden bowl of manna and Aaron's staff that budded. These objects remind us of the value God puts on His *principles* (Dt. 28), on the *persons* who lead and speak in His behalf (Num. 16–17), and on His strategy of daily *provision* (Ex. 16).

The history of Israel and the church is an ongoing illustration of these terms of God's presence. To accept or reject God's Word is to accept or reject Him (Ps. 78:56-61; 1 Th. 4:1-8). To accept or reject those who speak for Him is to accept or reject Him (Mt. 10:40-41). And to accept or reject His plan to lead and provide for us one day at a time is to accept or reject not only His hand but also God Himself (Ex. 16:1-8).

knew that His people would sin against His values and ways. He knew that His people would break His laws, doubt His provisions, and ignore His leaders and prophets.

History tells the story. Our forefathers did resist the prophets. They grumbled and complained about what God had provided for them. They got tired of the manna, of

God's laws, and of those He empowered to lead them.

We do the same thing.

After a while, God's provisions become old to us. In time, our appreciation begins to wear thin. We start to see things just with our eyes rather than with our hearts. We are fooled by the appearance of things. We find it hard to believe that our God is as ready and able to provide for us as He did for His people in the wilderness—one day at a time.

Yes, we too have broken God's principles. We have resisted His servants and His provisions. How thankful we can be, then, that He has also provided the blood on the mercy seat for us. The sacrifices of Israel's bulls and goats have been fulfilled in the Lamb of God for us. Christ died to pay for these sins and rose from the dead to prove that His death was enough. That's why God can patiently invite us again and again into His holy

presence, even though we have violated over and over again the grounds and conditions on which He will walk with us.

The Cherubim. The final object related to the ark of the covenant also emphasizes God's mercy. We are told in both the Old and New Testaments that at each end of the mercy seat were golden cherubim. These cherubim are a reminder of those living creatures who were stationed at the gate of the Garden of Eden to keep a fallen Adam and Eve from re-entering their garden paradise.

But now, according to God's instructions, the eyes of the golden cherubim were to look down upon the cover on which the atoning blood was sprinkled. The eyes of the guardians of God's holiness were now to be fixed not on the sinner but on the blood of God's atoning sacrifice.

Imagine yourself to be the priest going in to this Most Holy Place. As you approach what symbolically

themselves were not important. What was important is what all the design and details were



stands for the presence of God, you can see that the eyes of the creatures are not on you. They are on the mercy seat! Their eyes are on the blood shed for sinful man.

IT SHOWS THE NEED FOR: THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The book of Exodus gives chapter after chapter of details for the tabernacle. Yet the details in and of

pointing to. It was when all of the tabernacle was arranged and in place that Moses said:

On the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony; from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. Whenever the

cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. At the command of the Lord the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of the Lord they would camp; as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped. Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle, the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord and did not journey. So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the Lord they would remain encamped, and according to the command of the Lord they would journey.

So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey. Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey. At the command of the Lord they remained encamped, and at the command of the Lord they journeyed; they kept the charge of the Lord, at the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses (Num. 9:15-23).

THE FIRST TWO TEMPLES

King David wanted to build a house for God to replace the curtained tent in which the ark of the covenant was housed. But in spite of being a man after God's own heart, and in spite of the fact that he built a lavish royal palace for himself, David was not allowed to build "a dwelling place for God." David was a man of war. The temple was to be a place of prayer for the nations.

God chose David's son Solomon, a man of peace, to build the temple. Entrusted with enormous resources for the project, Solomon employed a huge workforce and took 7½ years to build a magnificent "dwelling place" for the ark of God. This temple stood for 400 years before it was destroyed by

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

According to the prophets of Israel, the temple and the freedom and peace of Israel were eventually lost because God's chosen people didn't honor the spiritual principles pictured by "God's house of symbols."

The spiritual lapse didn't take long to begin. After building this temple that honored the greatness and goodness and faithfulness of God to His people, Solomon himself violated God's standards (Dt. 17:14-20). After he had built a temple that honored the one true God, and the one place and one way in which God was to be honored, Solomon's heart was turned aside to the pagan gods of his many wives (1 Ki. 11:1-10).

His spiritual lapse would be repeated by those who followed him. Time after time, the kings and priests

and congregation of God dishonored the sacrifice (altar), and refused to wash themselves (basin) from the filth of the surrounding nations. They didn't depend on the light of God (lampstand) and tried to provide for themselves by their own efforts (table of bread). Their prayers (altar of incense) became empty. They didn't surrender to God's terms of mercy (mercy seat). They didn't honor the laws (table of the law) nor depend on God's daily provisions (jar of manna) nor obey the leaders God gave them (staff of Aaron). As a result, they lost the protection and provisions of their Shepherd and God.

First it was the great temple of Solomon that fell to the Babylonians. Later the temple of Herod (which took 46 years to build) fell to the Romans. In both cases, the reasons for defeat

were the same. God's people became more preoccupied with the temple itself than with the spiritual principles it illustrated.

***When God's people
fall, it is because
they ignore the
principles God gave
in the temple.***

It was Herod's temple that was the pride of Israel when Jesus came on the scene and predicted that the day would come when "not one stone [of the temple] shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mt. 24:2). That prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 when Titus and his Roman army sacked Jerusalem and took the temple apart stone by stone to recover its gold.

THE FUTURE TEMPLE

Prophecies of the last days show that a temple will be standing and temple sacrifices will be occurring when a great and terrible time of tribulation shakes the world. A time of unprecedented trouble will begin when an arrogant and blasphemous world leader breaks a treaty with Israel and causes the daily sacrifice to cease (Dan. 9:27; 12:11; Mt. 24:15).

This future tribulation temple, however, will not be the last temple built. The prophet Ezekiel gave us a picture of another temple, which will mark the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

In 202 verses of detailed description (Ezek. 40–46), it is apparent that there are some significant differences between this temple of the last days and those that

have preceded it. Ezekiel's vision eliminates several items that were a part of both the tabernacle and the earlier temples. These three differences include a missing (1) ark, (2) veil, and (3) wall of partition.

There is an explanation why the ark of the covenant does not show up in Ezekiel's temple. During the millennial kingdom, Jesus Christ Himself will be seated on the throne, ruling and reigning over the world. Jeremiah 3:16 indicates that during this period the ark will not be needed. With the physical presence of God in the temple, the ark, which was only a symbol, will not be needed.

The description of Ezekiel's temple doesn't say anything about a veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. At the time of the crucifixion of Christ, the veil of the temple was torn from top to

bottom. Ever since that time, the people of God have had access into the presence of God as a result of Christ's death. Because Ezekiel's temple is future, it reflects the victory of the Lamb that will one day be understood not only in Jerusalem but throughout the world.

Because of the significance of Christ's death for all nations, it is appropriate that the temple in Ezekiel's vision is also missing the wall of partition that created segregated areas for Jews and Gentiles. In the first two temples, this wall of partition denied Gentiles access to the temple proper. Ephesians 2:11-22 says that through Christ's sacrifice on the cross He has done away with the "middle wall of separation" that used to exist between Jew and Gentile. Through the saving work of Christ, both have

access to the presence of God as He dwells among His people.

The focus of Ezekiel's vision represents the temple that will be built when Jesus Christ returns to establish His promised kingdom on earth. There is reason to believe that it can be built only after dramatic topographical changes occur when Jesus Christ returns.

But if Ezekiel saw a temple that is still future, then why does he describe animal sacrifices being offered in this temple? (43:18-27). The New Testament book of Hebrews makes it clear that it would be a great insult to God to go back to the sacrifice of bulls and goats now that the real Lamb of God has paid for the sin of the world once for all (Heb. 9:1-28).

What Ezekiel's vision tells us, however, is that after God makes it clear to

the whole earth that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and that He was the Lamb sacrificed once for all, God will require sacrifices as a memorial and reminder of the suffering and death of Christ for our sins. Just as the church now remembers His death through the sharing of the Communion elements, it appears that Israel will be reminded of Christ's death on the cross for them.

Imagine the impact that these animal sacrifices will have in that day! When Jesus Christ is glorified among His people, when He reigns over the earth from His capital and throne in Jerusalem, this ritual will take on enormous significance. These re-instituted sacrifices will point back to that dark day under the rule of Pontius Pilate. These sacrifices will bring to mind the cries of a

mob calling out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" These renewed sacrifices will remind the earth of the all-powerful One who willingly died like a sacrificial animal to take our punishment and make us right with God.

Sacrifices in the future temple will have the same purpose as our partaking of Communion.

Certainly, all the earth will know on that day that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. But what a reminder it will be of what our Lord and King has done for us!

GOD IN US

This booklet has developed the theme of a God who has, from the beginning of time, expressed His merciful desire to live among His people. We have seen how the design of the tabernacle, which was

Few things enraged Jesus' countrymen as much as His comments about their temple.

later incorporated into the temples of Israel, reflected the conditions upon which God was willing to live among His chosen people. We have seen how unwilling our race has been to accept the terms of God's mercy.

But we have also described in these later pages a glory far greater than the architectural accomplishments of Solomon or Herod. We have moved to One who infuriated His countrymen by saying that if the temple of God were destroyed, He would raise it up in 3 days (Jn. 2:19-20).

Few comments enraged His countrymen as much as when He said He could raise up God's temple in 3 days. In fact, that comment was used at Christ's trial (Mt. 26:59-61) to mobilize the anger of the court. And later, as Jesus hung on a cross, the crowd again mocked the One who said He could raise the temple in 3 days. They were oblivious to the fact that the greatest and most glorious Temple of Israel was at that very moment hanging on an executioner's cross. Only after His resurrection would

anyone begin to understand what God among them had been talking about.

When God “tabernacled” or “templed” among us in the body of Christ, He gave us a new view of the temple. The new perspective of God living among His people can be described as *God in Christ* and *Christ in us*.

These temples are described in the New Testament as:

- God in the temple of Christ’s earthly body
- God in the temple of the body of His church
- God in the temple of individual believers

This is the story of our present age. The apostle Paul taught us to view as “temples of God” all those who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah. The temple, then, applies to us both individually and collectively.

To the Corinthians, Paul described the church (the people of God) as a temple

when he wrote, “You are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (2 Cor. 6:16).

What is true of the church is also true of the individual believer in Christ. In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians he wrote:

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Cor 6:19-20; see also 1 Cor. 3:16).

This gives profound and practical meaning to the way we act in the house of God.

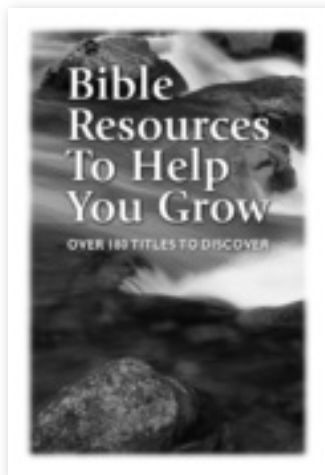
WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Every believer in Christ is an individual “temple of God” as well as part of the “temple of the church.” This means that above all, we should be watching ourselves to make sure that we are honoring the timeless principles of the tabernacle, the house of God. Are we honoring the death and sacrifice of Christ by the way we are living? Are we taking seriously the sin that caused our Savior to suffer and die? (altar). Are we washing our hands and hearts of that which pollutes our relationship with God? (basin). Are we walking in the light of God’s Word, in the light of Christ’s teaching and example, and in the light of the advice and counsel of wise people? (lampstand). Are we depending on God our

Father to meet our needs one day at a time? (table). Are we interceding for others and waiting on God with prayers? (altar of incense). And are we relying continually on the mercy of God as we seek His presence through obedient surrender to His Word, His provisions, and the leaders He has put in our lives? (the ark and its contents).

This is what we need to watch for as we move toward the end of the age. The hope of the church is not a coming temple but the return of Christ to remove the “temple of His spiritual body” from earth. We must be ready for the any-moment return of Christ for His church (1 Th. 4:13-18). It is when this temple of His spiritual body is out of the way that Israel and her temple, and the judgment that is to come, will once again become the focus of God’s program (2 Th. 2:1-7).

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