

THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

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In this article we want to study about the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem. History records that this started about 536 B.C. and was completed in 516 B.C.. But we want to look at what this means spiritually for the Church, which is now the temple of God. In 1 Corinthians 10:11 we are told that the things that happened to Israel (such as the rebuilding of the temple) are examples for our instruction.

THE PURPOSE FOR CAPTIVITY

The Israelites went into Babylonian Captivity, and this is an experience that the Church has also passed through. Like the Children of Israel, the Church has lost the power that it knew at the beginning. The Children of Israel knew the tremendous power of God in Egypt under Moses, and they knew the glory of God which filled the temple at the time of Solomon, but they became a backsliding people until God judged them with captivity.

The captivity was necessary to purify them. The Israelites had lost their first love, were not keeping the commandments of God, and had filled the nation with idolatry. In Deuteronomy 28:47 the Lord warned them that if they would not serve Him with joy and gladness, then He would have to send them into captivity. This is similar to when the Lord Jesus Christ said to the Ephesian church in Revelation 2:5, "Because you have lost your first love, if you do not repent I will have to remove your candlestick." We must never forget that the relationship that God has desired for His people and Himself was to be like the relationship of a bride and a bridegroom. It is to be a relationship of joy and love. If we lose the joy of the Lord and our first love for Jesus, then indeed our spiritual life becomes dead.

So their captivity was necessary to restore that love relationship between Israel and their Heavenly Bridegroom. The purpose for God leading His people into captivity is always remedial, it is to help them. It is very interesting to consider who went into captivity. It wasn't all the Children of Israel who went into captivity. Israel was divided into two groups, those who went into Babylonian captivity and those who did not. You would perhaps say, "surely those who were living in obedience to God did not go into captivity." No, it was the opposite. Those who were living in obedience were the ones who went into captivity so that their love could be purified and so that they could be drawn closer to the Lord. The Lord calls them the "good figs" in Jeremiah 24:5-7. The "bad figs" stayed in the land, Jer.24:8. God was no longer working in their lives! So often we think, "if we walk in obedience then we shall not suffer." On the contrary, if we walk in obedience, we will often enter into the school of suffering! This is because God wants to purify our love and work His righteousness within our lives. We have the example of Job, who suffered so greatly, yet Ezekiel 15:14 tells us that he was one of the three most righteous men in the Old Testament!

The purpose for their going into captivity was that they were to be redeemed from their iniquities, and their old sinful adamic nature was to be removed. As an example, wine has to be purified by pouring it from vessel to vessel, in order to remove the dregs or sediment that settles to the bottom of the vessel. In Jeremiah 48:11 we are told of when the nation of Moab had become lazy and full of mixture. They were like impure wine that had not been poured from vessel to vessel, who had never gone into captivity. God said, "Their scent (or their old sinful nature) remains in them." It is a terrible thing when a person does not yield to God, because what happens is the scent of the old nature grows stronger. Their anger, or jealousy, or hatred, grows stronger! Therefore it is very important to yield to God when He needs to discipline us, that we qualify to go into captivity, trials, or suffering so that we might be purified.

LEAVING OUR CAPTIVITY

God knew when the captivity would complete the work of cleansing the Children of Israel, so He prophesied through the lips of Jeremiah that after 70 years the Israelites would be released from captivity to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Solomon wrote that there is a time for everything. There is a time to go into captivity (as Jeremiah had prophesied in Jeremiah chapters 27 & 28) and there is a time to come out of captivity, as he also prophesied in Jeremiah 29:10-14. That is why it is so important for us to be like the men of Issachar in 1 Chron.12:32, because they had understanding of the times and knew what Israel should do.

It is very important that we understand, that although God had declared that He was going to restore Israel after 70 years, only the people whose spirit had been stirred up by God actually left Babylon (Ezra 1:5). That is very interesting. When God is going to do something He openly declares it. God reveals it to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7). And yet, though God clearly declared His will and even the time when He would move, it was only those whose spirits were stirred up who actually left Babylon. The others stayed behind. Ezra chapter 2 shows us that it was a relatively small company that left and went into the new move of God.

I think that is true of all revivals, and of everything that God does. God declares to everyone what He is going to do. God is declaring throughout the world in our day, that revival is coming. But I wonder how many of us will actually enter into that revival? Only those whose spirit is stirred up by God, who have prepared their hearts! We cannot sit down and say, "I will wait and see what happens." If you wait and see what happens, then you will be like those in Babylon who waited to see what happened, and they saw the others going on while they stayed behind! No- when God speaks, we are to listen and obey. When God says, "Revival is coming! Restoration is coming!" Then we are to say, "Oh God, early will I seek Thee. Oh God, stir up my spirit so that I will be prepared to enter into that which You are about to do."

REBUILDING THE ALTAR

Let us begin to look at some of the steps that we must take to build the Temple of God and see full revival. In Ezra 3:1-6 we see that when the Israelites returned to their land, they first rebuilt the altar. This is what we first must do when we are called upon to build or establish a work. We must first institute worship. Why worship? Because when we worship, the Lord makes His habitation there. Through our worship, the Lord is building us up to be a spiritual temple inhabited by the Lord of Glory! This is because who we worship, we become like.

This truth was made very real to us when we went to Bangkok for the first time, and the prince of Thailand (the fallen angel who rules over the nation) came into our hotel room. This fallen angel looked just like the Thai people. This is because he had imparted his character to the Thai people, because they worshipped him and they had become like him. But beloved, we want to worship the True God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! This will cause us to become more and more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and together we will be built up to be the holy Temple of the Lord.

So we should first concentrate on worship, just as the Israelites did. We must first build in the spiritual before we can build in the natural. When the Lord sends us to a new place of ministry, we must begin to worship and build an altar. Perhaps your new work will begin with only your own family. Then start to have times of worship with your wife and children, and then begin to build the work by gathering others who will also learn to worship and pray with you.

BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS

The next thing that the Israelites did in Ezra 3:7-13 was that they laid the foundation of the temple. There are two truths we must understand when we are laying a foundation to a spiritual work. First, we must lay good

doctrinal foundations in the hearts and lives of the believers. These foundations are written for us in Hebrews 6. Second, we must have strong foundation stones. The Word of God is very clear that the strong foundation stones speak of mature ministers. You cannot build a glorious temple upon the foundation of spiritual children, you have to build on mature ministers. Ephesians 2:20 tells us that Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone of the holy temple which is the Church. This verse goes on to say that the temple is also built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, or other mature ministries. We must send mature ministries to be the foundation stones upon which the work of God is built in new locations. It takes time for mature ministries to be formed, and it is also interesting that the greatest spiritual foundation stones are formed through captivity and trials.

Let us consider a few of the great leaders from the Word of God who were used by God to start a strong foundation. One was Joseph, who laid the foundations for the Israelites to live in Egypt for over 400 years. Look at the formation that he went through. He was betrayed by his brethren, sold as a slave, tempted, accused, and then he was wrongly imprisoned for a number of years. But what a foundation stone came forth! The foundation laid by Joseph carried the Israelites along until Moses came. Then when we consider the formation of Moses's ministry, we can remember the 40 years he spent in Pharaoh's household and also his 40 years in the wilderness. But look what foundations Moses established- he established the law for all generations! What an impact his teaching has had! Even the Church is built upon the teachings of Moses. This is because the New Covenant that has been given to us is that we are to have the laws of God (which were first given to Moses) written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. The teachings of Moses have lasted about 3,500 years and will carry on into the millennium! David is another man who has built foundations that will continue on into the 1000 year reign of the Kingdom of God on the earth. He laid the foundations for the kingdom of Israel, and David's kingdom and the house of David will last right into the millennium. But David was prepared in the wilderness like Moses, and he was persecuted and went through many trials. If we are going to be chosen by God to raise up spiritual houses, beloved, we have to be formed by God so that we don't crumble or break when the pressures come.

BUILDING WITH A VISION

When the Israelites started to build the foundations for the temple, then we see in Ezra Chapter 4 that the adversaries came. They said that they worshipped the same God and they wanted to help build the temple. But they did not qualify because they were not true Israelites. Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the other leaders said "you will have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God." Many times, those who oppose you are the ones who seek to build with you but they do not qualify. We should only build with those who qualify and have the same vision, the same purpose. This is because when you are building, you are actually building a vision. Those who join with you must have the same vision. Even the secular world acknowledges that. There have been investigations about why some businesses are successful, and why other businesses are not. When they examined IBM and many other large and long-lasting companies, they said the businesses that succeed are the ones who keep their original vision. The investigators said, "lose the vision and you lose the company". This truth can also apply to nations. The nation that loses it's vision will meet with disaster. This is shown to us by the nation of Israel.

I have been in many organizations in my life, and I have seen that this is the main reason why many organizations end up failing. They begin by making alliances with the wrong people, mixture comes in, and the vision becomes lost. Many times the organization becomes democratic, with everybody adding in their own ideas. But if we are going to build and complete the works that God entrusts to us, we have to be very careful not to have alliances with the wrong people.

We can only succeed if we keep the vision that God gives us for our life and ministry. When you go into the ministry or when God gives you something to do, make sure that you understand the vision that God has for that place. Your success depends upon holding on and staying true to that vision. That is why God spoke to Moses "You make all things according to the pattern that I showed you in the mountain."

As I look back on my life, I have been in the ministry for over 40 years, and in the beginning of my life God gave me a vision that He has continued with and increased. And I don't leave that vision. That is the vision of Zion.

THE REBUILDING IS HINDERED

Because of their enemies, the leaders of Israel were blocked from continuing to rebuild the temple by a royal law that was proclaimed against them (Ezra 4:6-23). They stopped the work and the result was that the people of God settled down. Their innermost thought was expressed in Haggai 1:2, "The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built." How often we find that when opposition begins to hinder us, we grow discouraged, accept these hindrances as the hand of God, and we stop pressing on. We say, "Oh, things are not flowing, obviously it is not God's time." That can sound very spiritual. When there is a problem, if we say it is not really God's time to do this, then we can settle down and have every excuse for not obeying what the Lord told us to do! We can say like these Israelites "We will build our own houses," or can say like Peter did in John 21:3, "I am going fishing." We can go back to our former activities and we lose the move of the Spirit. It was 16 years that the work of God stopped until the Lord moved afresh. The Lord then stirred them up through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah with messages such as, "Consider your ways! Is it time for you to build your own houses and leave the house of God in ruins?" When the prophecies started to stir up the leaders and the people, they rose up to rebuild the house of God.

JOSHUA AND SATAN

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied about some important keys concerning leadership. In Zechariah 3 there are the prophecies concerning Joshua, who was the High Priest of Israel at that time. Satan was standing against Joshua to accuse him. As leaders, we will have to face all kinds of accusations, none of us will escape this. This will especially happen when we are beginning a fresh work for God, or a new move of God is ready to start!

Now, how do we handle these accusations and criticism? We have to handle it through the spirit of meekness. We must not let these accusations get into our own spirit and cause such things as bitterness, self-justification, and unforgiveness. Above all we must ask God to give us grace, forgiveness, and forgetfulness, as Joseph had. There is always the danger of being preoccupied with the enemy instead of moving forward. This was what happened in the United States under President Jimmy Carter. President Carter paralyzed the country when he concentrated so completely on the 50 American hostages that Iran held for 400 days. As a leader, you cannot be preoccupied with the enemy. You cannot be preoccupied with the situations that would seek to take away all your strength. You have to keep going forward with the vision that God gave you to accomplish.

Leadership must also seek God for a fresh cleansing, like what Joshua the High Priest received in Zechariah chapter 3. We then see how Joshua received new garments. There was a fresh anointing given to Joshua for the new work he was to do. In a similar way, we also need to have a fresh anointing, a fresh mantle, to do a new work for God. After these things, we see that Joshua was given a plumbline. It is so important that we have a plumbline, so that we can build straight. We need to know God's plans for each new work, so that we build according to His pattern.

ZERUBBABEL AND THE MOUNTAIN

The prophecies of Zechariah chapter 4 concern Zerubbabel, who was the governor of the Israelites that had returned from the Babylonian captivity. He needed to have an understanding of how the work of God was to be accomplished. He was told that it was "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts." He was told that by the anointing he was going to bring down the mountain of opposition that was facing him. That great mountain actually was the might of the Persian Empire, because the enemies had obtained a royal law against the Jews so that they would not rebuild. Perhaps you have a mountain of opposition against you,

perhaps there are even government laws that your enemies want to use against you to hinder the work you are doing for God. You will not succeed by might, by money, or by having a large number of people on your side. You will not build it by your own will-power or determination. The way that the temple is going to be rebuilt is by the anointing! And that opposition, that high mountain, is going to fall down before you by the grace of God!

We must realize that we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against satanic principalities and powers in heavenly places, as Paul says in Ephesians 6:12. We must win our battles in the spiritual realm, and break the power of the enemy by the anointing of the Spirit of God. In New Zealand a friend of ours became the pastor of a church, that for 15 years had not been able to grow larger than 150 people. Sometimes it would go up to 150 members, then go down to perhaps 30 members, it was up and down many times but could not go beyond 150 people. But when this new pastor was seeking the Lord, the Lord said "come to the church every morning at 6:00 A.M. and pray." As he was praying there, the Lord gave him a vision. The Lord showed him a huge demon that ruled over the city, that was keeping the church from being able to grow any bigger. The pastor kept praying at the church every morning, and some of the church members started to join him until a large group was praying. As they continued to pray, the Lord gave the pastor a vision that the demon was no longer standing in the heavenlies, but had been partly cast down to where only about 1/2 of him was above ground level. The church continued to pray until another person had a dream, that only the head of the demon was still to be seen. As they continued to pray, the demon was then cast completely down, and after that a revival broke out. The church grew to be about 1500 people, which was about 10 times bigger than it had ever been able to grow. But that church first needed deliverance from the enemy that was hindering it. The mountains of opposition that face us must be brought down by the Spirit of God as we enter into spiritual warfare. By the grace of God, may we each get the key for victory that we need to release our churches and cities so that revival can flow.

It only took Zerubbabel about four years, from 520 B.C. to 516 B.C., to complete the rebuilding of the temple. The great obstacles that had risen up against the work of God were removed. In our day, the Lord is also going to do a quick work in rebuilding the temple which is His Church. We must also be ready to quickly accomplish the work that God has given us to do, not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God.

REVIVAL IS COMING!

I want to ask you these questions, brothers and sisters. Is God starting to stir afresh in your own heart and life? Do you want to meet with God in a new way? Do you want to have a clear vision and a fresh equipping for the ministry? The Lord is building His Church, and is preparing the greatest revival that the world has ever seen. The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. Leaders are being commissioned and equipped by God for this great work- what about you? We need a deeper cleansing, like Joshua the High Priest, so that we can gain new authority. We need to experience the grace and the promises of God that were given to Zerubbabel, so that by the anointing we can both begin and complete the work that God has called us to.

Is the Lord starting to stir your heart afresh? Do you know that God is saying that revival is coming? Do you hear the Lord saying "Yes, I have ordained you for this time of restoration. I have ordained you for this time when I am bringing back all the things I have promised for My Church."

"For the Lord your God is speaking specifically to you, that He has a place for you. The Lord will reveal that place to you and make it clear as you yield your doubts to Him. For the Lord your God has called you and placed His hand upon you, and He can bring to pass the things that seem impossible. The Lord declares that He is the Creator, and He creates things which are not and brings them into being. Only yield yourself to Him, and doubt not, and He will bring to pass what He has spoken to your heart."

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