

Solomon's Temple (2)

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness is a picture of the Church on **earth** during the present dispensation of grace. It is seen as **man** views it. The Temple of Solomon, however, is a picture of the Church in **heaven** as associated with the risen Christ. It is seen as **God** views it. WW Fereday notes: *'If the Church is to be God's holy temple eternally... Solomon's Temple will show us something pictorially of our future state.'*

The Temple Stones

1 Chronicles 29.2: Now I (David) have prepared with all my might for the house of my God... marble stones in abundance. 1 Kings 6.7: And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

These verses refer, not to the foundation stones (covered in last Bible Class), but rather the stones of the Temple building itself. They were made of white marble and picture believers of the Church age which are called 'living stones' by the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 2.4-7).

Marble is very rarely white. It often has attractive shades of brown and green, but these are caused by impurities within the stone. As such, no coloured marble was used in the construction of the Temple. Rather a 'white marble' (from a root word meaning 'to bleach') was used (1 Chronicles 29.2). White speaks of purity (Isaiah 1.18, Daniel 12.10). This is our position and standing before God; we are justified. Purity characterises the living stones. It should be no different today. Believers must be marked by purity. Paul gives some practical advice about purity in Philippians 4.8. He relates thinking to doing, i.e. our actions are governed by our minds. These can be defiled by contaminating thoughts from what we see and read. Let us think upon 'pure' things such as the Word of God (Psalm 1.2, 119.140).

Every stone for the Temple was 'made ready' or 'perfected' for its appointed place before it was brought to the site (1 Kings 6.7). This meant there was no need for hammer, axe or iron tools to be used at the Temple site. Every stone was fitted together **closely** and **silently**. *Ephesians 2.21-22: In whom (Christ) the whole building closely joined together grows into a holy inner sanctuary; in the Lord, in whom also you are being built together into a permanent dwelling place of God by the Spirit (silently).*

First, believers are like these stones. We have been hewn out of the rock and are currently being 'perfected' so that we might be the right shape and form for the glorious heavenly temple. The preparatory work shall soon be over. We shall become part of the eternal structure very soon (Romans 8.18)! An example of this is given in the words of the Lord Jesus to the church at Philadelphia. He explained that those believers who showed reliability in their testimony on earth would be honoured as 'pillars' in the temple of God and the Lamb. This is an eternal position of glory and blessing. The experiences and trials of life for the believers at Philadelphia were fitting them for a position in the eternal temple. **Alexander MacLaren** has said: *"Life is the chipping and hewing. The unnecessary pieces are struck off with heavy mallet and sharp chisel. Pain and sorrow are thus explained, if not wholly, yet sufficiently to bring about submission and trust. The Builder has His plan clearly before Him, and works accurately to realise it. He perfectly knows what He means to build, and every stroke of the dressing-tool is accurately directed. There are no mistakes made in His quarrying."*

Second, the construction site of the Temple was silent. This is typical of the 'still small voice'; the work of the Holy Spirit today (cf. Ephesians 2.22 'through the Spirit'). Much of God's work is done inconspicuously and silently (Isaiah 42.2, Luke 17.20). As MacLaren notes: *'Destructive work is noisy, constructive work is silent'*. We should not necessarily look for great, outward signs in the work of God. More likely there is a silent, slow progression and working of God in the hearts of men.

It is interesting that Psalm 118.22 speaks of one of the Temple stones. *Psalm 118.22-23: The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.* Christ as the 'Head Stone' is also spoken of in Matthew 21.42, Mark 12.10, Luke 20.17, Acts 4.11 and 1 Peter 2.7. It is thought that the Psalmist was referring to a well-known Jewish tradition regarding the 'head stone' of Solomon's Temple:

"According to Jewish tradition a huge rock was quarried and shaped to the exacting dimensions and sent to the temple. When it arrived at the temple site the builders could find no place to use it. It didn't seem to match any of their blueprints, so they placed it to one side. Some time passed and it was always getting in the way so workers pushed it over the edge of the bank and it rolled down into the Kidron Valley and was lost. However, when time came to hoist the cornerstone into place, the great rock that held everything in place, could not be found. The builders sent word to the quarry that they were ready for the cornerstone. The masons sent word back that cornerstone had already been delivered. Then someone remembered the huge "extra" rock that had been pushed over the cliff. When the workers retrieved the stone and hoisted it into place it fit perfectly as the cornerstone of the temple."

Scripture places great importance on the Lord Jesus as Head. Here He is seen as 'The Stone' which was set aside and rejected by the builders (chief priests, elders, Pharisees etc.) as unsuited to their plans. But God has performed a marvellous wonder. He whom they despised and rejected has now been exalted to the 'Head Stone of the corner' in a glorious temple of a new dispensation; the Church. As the Head Stone He holds His rightful place in relation to all other stones. He is the most important stone in the structure and holds the place of honour. Note. Christ is also the Head of all principality and power (Colossians 2.10), the Head of the Church (Colossians 1.18, 2.19) and the Head of every man in the local church (1 Corinthians 11.3). In a coming day He will be Head over Israel (Hosea 1.11) and rule as Governor in a position of authority (Matthew 2.6). He will also be Head of the nations (Psalm 18.43) and Head of all (Philippians 2.10-11). Why? *Colossians 1.18: And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

The Walls

Despite the beauty of the stones, no stone was seen in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6.18)! The stones were covered over with a plaster of refined silver (1 Chronicles 29.4). In turn this was overlaid with carved cedar wood (1 Kings 6.15, 18, 29), which was overlaid with gold, which finally was garnished with precious stones (2 Chronicles 3.5-9). Glory indeed! All of this beautifully pictures the fact that in God's spiritual temple, no living stone can be seen. Rather they are all covered with the glory and beauty of those things which speak of Christ.



Silver

The walls were overlaid with silver both within and without. As silver speaks of atonement and redemption (Exodus 30.11-16) this is a picture of the fact that **in Christ** we have salvation and forgiveness of sins. It may also picture the fact that our souls (silver within) have already been redeemed from the penalty of sin (Colossians 1.13) but we await the redemption of our bodies (silver without) from the present bondage of corruption (Romans 8.23).

Cedar Wood

The cedar wood (which overlaid the silver) was carved with figures of cherubim, palm trees and open flowers (1 Kings 6.32). The cedar is typical of a number of things:

- **Resurrection.** The mighty cedar grew in Lebanon, not Israel. Consequently it had to be cut down, floated down the coast to Joppa, then raised back up and placed in position in the Temple (1 Kings 5.9, 2 Chronicles 2.16). This pictures the fact that we have been raised to newness of life and are now seated in heavenly places **in Christ** (Romans 6.4-5, Ephesians 2.6).
- **Incorruption.** Cedar wood is indestructible and incorruptible (cannot decay or perish). The sap of the cedar wood was 'death to the worm' so that instead of 'the worm destroying the cedar, the cedar destroys the worm' (Newberry). It speaks of the Lord Jesus who was not subject to the bondage of corruption (Acts 2.31). Praise God, **in Christ** we have inherited that which is incorruptible. We have an incorruptible redemption (1 Peter 1.18-19), an incorruptible nature (1 Peter 1.23) and an incorruptible inheritance (1 Peter 1.4) which includes an incorruptible crown (1 Corinthians 9.25). Furthermore, we shall enjoy all the glories of heaven with incorruptible bodies (1 Corinthians 15.52).
- **Sovereignty.** The word 'cedar' comes from a root word meaning 'something superior and therefore majestic'. The cedar was often applied to the reign of kings or kingdoms (cf. 2 Kings 14.9, Ezekiel 17.23, 31.3). The Lord Jesus is certainly superior. He is greater in quality than Jonah, Solomon, Moses (Hebrews 3.3) and all the burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mark 12.33). He has a more excellent name (Psalm 8.1, 148.13, Hebrews 1.4), a more excellent ministry (Hebrews 8.6) and has offered a more excellent sacrifice (Hebrews 11.4). His countenance is 'excellent as the cedars' (Song of Solomon 5.15). As believers we are now accepted in all the excellence of Christ. We are now kings who shall reign with Christ over the earth (Revelation 5.10).

1 Kings 6.18 emphasises that in the Temple, no stone was seen, but 'all was cedar'. We should ever remember that the local assembly should seek to exalt the majesty of Christ, not itself. The cedar was carved with cherubim (declarers of divine righteousness, willing and intelligent service), palm trees (rest, peace, victory, rejoicing) and flowers (fragrance and fruitfulness). This is the majesty of Christ which we shall exhibit eternally, and should also seek to demonstrate here on earth.