

# The Temple

## Israel's Place of Worship

Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger, D.A.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>FORWARD</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 IMPORTANCE OF THE TEMPLE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2 PURPOSE OF THE TEMPLE</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 THE TABERNACEL &amp; TEMPLE</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4 THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 TEMPLE PERSPECTIVES</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6 MONEY CHANGES EXPELLED</b>	<b>33</b>

## FORWARD



**AS YOU STUDY THE TEMPLE OF ISRAEL  
EVEN AS IMPORTANT AS IT WAS, IT NO LONGER  
TAKES  
THE PLACE OF GOD'S SPIRIT DWELLING IN YOU.**

## Chapter 1



### Why the temple was so important to Israel

#### **Chron. 5:1**

When Solomon had finished all the work related to building the Temple of the Lord, he brought in the gifts dedicated by his father, King David, including all the silver and gold and all the utensils. These were stored in the treasuries of the Temple of God.

Reuben's sin of incest was recorded for all future generations to read. The purpose of this epitaph was not to smear Reuben's name, but to show that painful memories aren't the only results of sin. The real consequences of sin are ruined lives. As the oldest son, Reuben was the rightful heir to both a double portion of his father's estate and the leadership of Abraham's descendants, who had grown into a large tribe. But his sin stripped away his rights and privileges and ruined his family. Before you give in to temptation, take a close look at the disastrous consequences sin may produce in your life and the lives of others.

## **Why God didn't want David to make plans to build the temple**

### **2 Samuel 7:5**

"Go and tell my servant David. 'This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a temple to live in?'"

In this message from Nathan, God is saying that he doesn't want David to build a "house" for him. Why didn't God want David to build the temple? God told David that his job was to unify and lead Israel and to destroy its enemies. This huge task would require David to shed a great deal of blood.

In 1 Chron. 28:3, we learn that God did not want his temple built by a warrior. Therefore, David made the plans and collected the materials so that his son Solomon could begin work on the temple as soon as he became king (1 Kings 5-7). David accepted his part in God's plan and did not try to go beyond it. Sometimes God says no to our plans. When he does, we should utilize the other opportunities he gives us.

### **Duties of priests and Levites in.**

#### **1 Chron. 23:28-32**

The work of the Levites was to assist the priests, the descendants of Aaron, as they served at the house of the Lord.

They also took care of the courtyards and side rooms, helped perform the ceremonies of purification, and served in many other ways in the house of God.

They were in charge of the sacred bread that was set out on the table, the choice flour for the grain offerings, the wafers made without yeast, the cakes cooked in olive oil, and the other mixed breads. They were also responsible to check all the weights and measures.

And each morning and evening they stood before the Lord to sing songs of thanks and praise to him.

They assisted with the burnt offerings that were presented to the Lord on Sabbath days, at new moon celebrations, and at all the appointed festivals. The proper number of Levites served in the Lord's presence at all times, following all the procedures they had been given.

And so, under the supervision of the priests, the Levites watched over the Tabernacle and the Temple and faithfully carried out their duties of service at the house of the Lord.

Priests and Levites had different jobs in and around the temple. Priests were authorized to perform the sacrifices. Levites were set apart to help the priests. They did the work of elders, deacons, custodians, assistants, musicians, moving men, and repairmen.

Both priests and Levites came from the tribe of Levi, but priests also had to be descendants of Aaron, Israel's first high priest (Exodus 28:1-3). Priests and Levites were supported by Israel's tithes and by revenues from certain cities that had been given to them. Worship in the temple could not have taken place without the combined efforts of the priests and Levites. Their responsibilities were different, but they were equally important to

God's plan. No matter what place of service you have in the church, you are important to the healthy functioning of the congregation.

**Even its construction of the temple showed respect for God.**

### **1 Kings 6:7**

The stones used in the construction of the Temple were prefinished at the quarry, so the entire structure was built without the sound of hammer, ax, or any other iron tool at the building site.

In honor of God, the temple in Jerusalem was built without the sound of a hammer or any other tool at the building site. This meant that the stone had to be "dressed" (cut and shaped) miles away at the quarry. The people's honor and respect for God extended to every aspect of constructing this house of worship. This detail is recorded not to teach us how to build a church, but to show us the importance of demonstrating care, concern, honor, and respect for God and his sanctuary.

## Chapter 2



### Purpose of the temple

#### **1 Kings 6:13**

I will live among the people of Israel and never forsake my people."

This verse summarizes the temple's main purpose. God promised that his eternal presence would never leave the temple as long as one condition was met: the Israelites had to obey God's law. Knowing how many laws they had to follow, we may think this condition was difficult. But the Israelites' situation was much like ours today: they were not cut off from God for failing to keep some small sub point of a law. Forgiveness was amply provided for all their sins, no matter how large or small.

As you read the history of the kings, you will see that lawbreaking was the result, not the cause, of estrangement from God. The kings abandoned God in their hearts first and *then* failed to keep his laws. When we close our hearts to God, his power and presence soon leave us.

“Sea”.

### **1 Kings 7:23**

Then Hiram cast a large round tank, 15 feet across from rim to rim; it was called the Sea. It was 7 1/2 feet deep and about 45 feet in circumference.

The “Sea” was an enormous tank. Designed and used for the priests’ ceremonial washings, it was placed in the temple court near the altar of burnt offering. There the priests washed themselves before offering sacrifices or entering the temple (Exodus 30:17-21).

## **Basins**

### **1 Kings 7:27-39**

Hiram also made ten bronze water carts, each 6 feet long, 6 feet wide, and 4 1/2 feet tall. They were constructed with side panels braced with crossbars.

Both the panels and the crossbars were decorated with carved lions, oxen, and cherubim. Above and below the lions and oxen were wreath decorations.

Each of these carts had four bronze wheels and bronze axles. At each corner of the carts were supporting posts for the bronze basins; these supports were decorated with carvings of wreaths on each side.

The top of each cart had a circular frame for the basin. It projected 1 1/2 feet above the cart's top like a round pedestal, and its opening

was 2 1/4 feet across; it was decorated on the outside with carvings of wreaths. The panels of the carts were square, not round.

Under the panels were four wheels that were connected to axles that had been cast as one unit with the cart. The wheels were 2 1/4 feet in diameter and were similar to chariot wheels. The axles, spokes, rims, and hubs were all cast from molten bronze.

There were supports at each of the four corners of the carts, and these, too, were cast as one unit with the cart. Around the top of each cart there was a rim 9 inches wide. The supports and side panels were cast as one unit with the cart.

Carvings of cherubim, lions, and palm trees decorated the panels and supports wherever there was room, and there were wreaths all around. All ten water carts were the same size and were made alike, for each was cast from the same mold.

Huram also made ten bronze basins, one for each cart. Each basin was 6 feet across and could hold 220 gallons of water. He arranged five water carts on the south side of the Temple and five on the north side. The Sea was placed at the southeast corner of the Temple.

These 10 “movable stands” held basins of water. The basins were used for washing the various parts of the animal sacrifices. The basins were movable so they could be used where needed.

## Chapter 3



### **Difference between tabernacle and temple**

#### **1 Kings 8:1**

Solomon then summoned the leaders of all the tribes and families of Israel to assemble in Jerusalem. They were to bring the Ark of the Lord's covenant from its location in the City of David, also known as Zion, to its new place in the Temple.

Solomon gathered the people not just to dedicate the temple, but to rededicate themselves to God's service. Solomon could well be speaking these words to us today: "But your hearts must be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time" (1 Kings 8:61).

What was the difference between the tabernacle and the temple, and why did the Israelites change from one to the other? As a tent, the tabernacle was a portable place of worship designed for the people as they were traveling toward the Promised Land.

The temple was a permanent place to worship God after the Israelites were at peace in their land. To bring the ark of the Lord's covenant to the temple signified God's actual presence there.

## What gatekeepers did

### **1 Chron. 9:17-18**

The gatekeepers who returned were Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their relatives. Shallum was the chief gatekeeper.

Prior to this time, they were responsible for the King's Gate on the east side. These men served as gatekeepers for the camps of the Levites.

Gatekeepers guarded the four main entrances to the temple and opened the gates each morning for those who wanted to worship. In addition, they did other day-to-day chores to keep the temple running smoothly—cleaning, preparing the offerings for sacrifice, and accounting for the gifts designated to the temple (1 Chron. 9:22-32).

Gatekeepers had to be reliable, honest, and trustworthy. The people in our churches who handle the offerings and care for the materials and functions of the building follow in a great tradition and we should honor them for their reliability and service.

### **1 Chron. 26:1**

These are the divisions of the gatekeepers:

From the Korahites, there was Meshelemiah son of Kore, of the family of Asaph.

There were 4,000 gatekeepers (1 Chron. 23:4-5). They were all Levites and did many other jobs as well. Some of their duties included

- (1) Checking out the equipment and utensils used each day and making sure they were returned,
- (2) Storing, ordering, and maintaining the food supplies for the priests and sacrifices,
- (3) Caring for the furniture,
- (4) Mixing the incense that was burned daily, and
- (5) Accounting for the gifts brought. (For more on gatekeepers, see the note on +1 Chron. 9:17-18.)

David gave from his personal fortune for the temple. He encouraged others to follow his example, and they willingly did. Both the tabernacle (Exodus 35:5-36:7) and the temple were built from the voluntary gifts of the people.

Like David, we can acknowledge that all we have comes from God (1 Chron. 29:14-16). We may not have David's wealth, but we can develop his willingness to give. It is not what we have that counts with God, but our willingness to give it.

### **David gave his personal fortune for the building of the temple**

#### **1 Chron. 29:3-5**

And now because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for his holy Temple.

I am donating more than 112 tons of gold from Ophir and over 262 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the buildings and for the other gold and silver work to be done by the craftsmen. Now then, who will follow my example?

Who is willing to give offerings to the Lord today?" The temple was built from people's voluntary gifts.

### **Why were foreign craftsmen used to build it?**

#### **2 Chron. 2:7**

"So send me a master craftsman who can work with gold, silver, bronze, and iron; someone who is expert at dyeing purple, scarlet, and blue cloth; and a skilled engraver who can work with the craftsmen of Judah and Jerusalem who were selected by my father, David.

Why use foreign craftsmen? The Israelites had great knowledge of agriculture, but knew little about metalworking. So they found people who were experts in this area. It is not a sin to obtain secular expertise for God's work. He distributes natural talents as he chooses, and he often decides to give skill to non-Christians.

When we hire secular contractors to build or repair our church buildings, we are recognizing that God gives gifts liberally. We may also be gaining an opportunity to tell the workers about God.

Why use foreign craftsmen? The Israelites had great knowledge of agriculture, but knew little about metalworking. So they found people who were experts in this area.

It is not a sin to obtain secular expertise for God's work. He distributes natural talents as he chooses, and he often decides to give skill to non-Christians. When we hire secular contractors to build or repair our church buildings, we are recognizing that God gives gifts liberally. We may also be gaining an opportunity to tell the workers about God.

## Why was the temple decorated so ornately?

### **2 Chron. 3:1**

So Solomon began to build the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to Solomon's father, King David.

The Temple was built on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the site that David had selected.

Solomon built a permanent temple on Mount Moriah to replace the movable tabernacle (now at Gibeon) that had accompanied Israel in the desert. Mount Moriah was also the place where God had stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18).

David purchased the land when it was a threshing floor (see 2 Samuel 24:15-25 and the note on +1 Chron. 21:22-24).

Why was the temple decorated so ornately? Although no one can build God a worthy home (2 Chron. 2:6), this temple was going to be the best that humans could design. The care and craftsmanship were acts of worship in themselves. Although a simple chapel is an adequate place to pray and meet God, it is not wrong to want to make a beautiful place of worship.

### **2 Chron. 4:6**

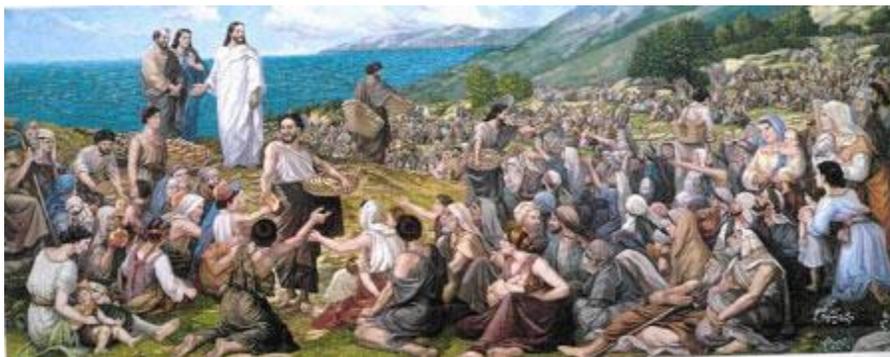
He also made ten basins for water to wash the offerings, five to the south of the Sea and five to the north. The priests used the Sea itself, and not the basins, for their own washing.

Why was everything in the temple built on such a grand scale?

The great size and numbers were necessary to accommodate the huge crowds that would visit for the feasts, such as the Passover (2 Chron. 30:13).

The numerous daily sacrifices (2 Chron. 5:6) required many priests and much equipment.

## Chapter 4



**People are more important than the temple**

### **1 Kings 8:15-21**

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept the promise he made to my father, David. For he told my father, 'From the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have never chosen a city among the tribes of Israel as the place where a temple should be built to honor my name. But now I have chosen David to be king over my people.' "

Then Solomon said, "My father, David, wanted to build this Temple to honor the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. But the Lord told him, 'It is right for you to want to build the Temple to honor my name, but you are not the one to do it. One of your sons will build it instead.'

"And now the Lord has done what he promised, for I have become king in my father's place. I have built this Temple to honor the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. And I have prepared a place there for the Ark, which contains the covenant that the Lord made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt."

For 480 years after Israel's escape from Egypt, God did not ask them to build a temple for him. Instead he emphasized the

importance of his presence among them and their need for spiritual leaders. It is easy to think of a building as the focus of God's presence and power, but God chooses and uses *people* to do his work. He can use you more than he can use a building of wood and stone.

Building or enlarging our place of worship may be necessary, but it should never take priority over developing spiritual leaders.

### **Dedicating ourselves to God.**

#### **2 Chron. 7:4-5**

Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices to the Lord. King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. And so the king and all the people dedicated the Temple of God.

In the temple was dedicated to God, and Solomon and the people prepared to worship him. Dedication means setting apart a place, an object, or a person for an exclusive purpose. The purpose of this dedication was to set apart the temple as a place to worship God. Today, our bodies are God's temple (2 Cor. 6:16).

Solomon's dedication of the temple shows us that we should dedicate ourselves to carry out God's special purpose (Ephes. 1:11-12).

## **Ransacked.**

### **1 Kings 14:25-26**

In the fifth year of King Rehoboam's reign, King Shishak of Egypt came up and attacked Jerusalem. He ransacked the Temple of the Lord and the royal palace and stole everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made.

When Rehoboam came to power, he inherited a mighty kingdom. Everything he could ever want was given to him. But apparently he did not recognize why he had so much or how it had been obtained. To teach Rehoboam a lesson, God allowed Shishak of Egypt to invade Judah and Israel.

Egypt was no longer the world power it had once been, and Shishak, possibly resenting Solomon's enormous success, was determined to change that. Shishak's army was not strong enough to destroy Judah and Israel, but he weakened them so much that they were never the same again.

Just five years after Solomon died, the temple and palace were ransacked by foreign invaders. How quickly the glory, power, and money disappeared! When the people became spiritually corrupt and immoral (1 Kings 14:24), it was just a short time until they lost everything.

Wealth, idol worship, and immorality had become more important to them than God. When God is gone from our lives, everything else becomes useless, no matter how valuable it seems.

## **The Temple had fallen into disrepair.**

### **2 Kings 12:4-5**

One day King Joash said to the priests, "Collect all the money brought as a sacred offering to the Lord's Temple, whether it is a regular assessment, a payment of vows, or a voluntary gift.

Let the priests take some of that money to pay for whatever repairs are needed at the Temple."

The temple needed repair because it had been damaged and neglected by previous evil leaders, especially Athaliah (2 Chron. 24:7). The temple was to be a holy place, set apart for worship of God. Thanks to Joash's fund-raising program, it could be restored. The dirt and filth that had collected inside over the years were cleaned out; joints were remortared; pagan idols and other traces of idol worship were removed; and the gold and bronze were polished. The neglected condition of the temple reveals how far the people had strayed from God.

## **Cyrus returned its artifacts to Jews.**

### **Ezra 1:7**

King Cyrus himself brought out the valuable items which King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his own gods.

When King Nebuchadnezzar ransacked the temple, he took many of the valuable furnishings with him. What he did not take, he

burned (2 Chron. 36:18-19). Most of the captured items were made of solid gold (1 Kings 7:48-50), and Cyrus kindly returned them to the Jews for the temple they would soon rebuild.

### **Zerubbabel's contrasted to Solomon's.**

#### **Ezra 2:69**

And each leader gave as much as he could. The total of their gifts came to 61,000 gold coins, 6,250 pounds of silver, and 100 robes for the priests.

### **Why did the Jews build it before they built the city wall?**

#### **Ezra 3:8**

The construction of the Temple of God began in midspring, during the second year after they arrived in Jerusalem.

The work force was made up of everyone who had returned from exile, including Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jehozadak and his fellow priests, and all the Levites.

The Levites who were twenty years old or older were put in charge of rebuilding the Lord's Temple.

Why was the Lord's temple begun first, even before the city wall? The temple was used for spiritual purposes; the wall, for military and political purposes. God had always been the nation's protector, and the Jews knew that the strongest stone wall would not protect them if God was not with them. They knew that putting their spiritual lives in order was a far higher priority than assuring the national defense.

It took from September (Ezra 3:1; September was the seventh month because the year began in March) to June just to *prepare* to build the temple. The exiles took time to make plans because the project was important to them. Preparation may not feel heroic or spiritual, but it is vital to any project meant to be done well

## **Chapter 5**



## Judah's false perspectives of the temple

### Jeremiah 7:9-11

Do you really think you can steal, murder, commit adultery, lie, and worship Baal and all those other new gods of yours, and then come here and stand before me in my Temple and chant,

"We are safe!"—only to go right back to all those evils again? Do you think this Temple, which honors my name, is a den of thieves? I see all the evil going on there, says the Lord.

There are several parallels between how the people of Judah viewed their temple and how many today view their churches.

(1) *They didn't make the temple part of their daily living.* We go to beautiful churches well-prepared for worship, but often we don't take the presence of God with us through the week.

(2) *The image of the temple became more important than the substance of faith.* The image of going to church and belonging to a group can become more important than a life changed for God.

(3) *The people used their temple as a sanctuary.* Many use religious affiliation as a hideout, thinking it will protect them from evil and problems.

**We are now God's temple.**

## **Ezekiel 5:11**

"As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I will cut you off completely. I will show you no pity at all because you have defiled my Temple with idols and vile practices.

It was a serious sin to defile the temple, God's sanctuary, by worshiping idols and practicing evil within its very walls. In the New Testament, we learn that God now makes his home *within* those who are his. Our bodies are God's temple (see 1 Cor. 6:19).

We defile God's temple today by allowing gossiping, bitterness, love of money, lying, or any other wrong actions or attitudes to be a part of our lives. By asking the Holy Spirit's help, we can keep from defiling his temple, our bodies.

### **Ezekiel's vision of the temple**

## **Ezekiel 40:1**

On April 28, during the twenty-fifth year of our captivity—fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem—the Lord took hold of me.

This vision came to Ezekiel in 573 B.C. Ezekiel 40-43 give the temple's measurements and then describe how it would be filled with God's glory. Because Ezekiel was a priest, he would have been familiar with the furnishings and ceremonies of Solomon's temple. As in Rev. 11:1-2, the command to "measure" defines the areas God has marked out for special use.

As you read all these details, remember that God is sovereign over all our worship and over the timetable for restoring the faithful to

himself.

The building of the temple envisioned a time of complete restoration to the exiles, a time when God would return to his people.

The temple was built in 520-515 B.C. (see Ezra 5-6), but fell short of Ezekiel's plan (Haggai 2:3; Zech. 4:10). This vision of the temple has been interpreted in four main ways:

(1) This is the temple Zerubbabel should have built in 520-515 B.C. and is the actual blueprint Ezekiel intended. But due to disobedience (Ezekiel 43:2-10), it was never followed.

(2) This is a literal temple to be rebuilt during the millennial reign of Christ.

(3) This temple is symbolic of the true worship of God by the Christian church right now.

(4) This temple is symbolic of the future and eternal reign of God when his presence and blessing fill the earth.

Whether the temple is literal or symbolic, it seems clear that this is a vision of God's final perfect kingdom.

This gave hope to the people of Ezekiel's time who had just seen their nation and its temple destroyed with no hope of rebuilding it in the near future. The details given in this vision gave the people even more hope that what Ezekiel saw had come from God and would surely happen in the future.

**What the temple was like in Jesus' day.**

**Matthew 24:1-2**

As Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, his disciples pointed out to him the various Temple buildings. But he told them, "Do you see all these buildings? I assure you, they will be so completely demolished that not one stone will be left on top of another!"

Although no one knows exactly what this temple looked like, it must have been beautiful. Herod had helped the Jews remodel and beautify it, no doubt to stay on friendly terms with his subjects.

Next to the inner temple, where the sacred objects were kept and the sacrifices offered, there was a large area called the court of the Gentiles (this was where the money changers and merchants had their booths).

Outside these courts were long porches. Solomon's porch was 1,562 feet long; the royal portico was decorated with 160 columns stretching along its 921-foot length. Gazing at this glorious and massive structure, the disciples found Jesus' words about its destruction difficult to believe.

But the temple was indeed destroyed only 40 years later when the Romans sacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

### **Background and history to.**

#### **John 2:19-20**

"All right," Jesus replied. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

"What!" they exclaimed. "It took forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can do it in three days?"

The Jews understood Jesus to mean the temple out of which he had just driven the merchants and money changers. This was the temple Zerubbabel had built over 500 years earlier, but Herod the Great had begun remodeling it, making it much larger and far more beautiful. It had been 46 years since this remodeling had started (20 B.C.), and it still wasn't completely finished. They understood Jesus' words to mean that this imposing building could be torn down and rebuilt in three days, and they were startled.

### **Main parts of the temple**

#### **Matthew 27:51**

At that moment the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart,

The temple had three main parts—the courts, the Holy Place (where only the priests could enter), and the Most Holy Place (where only the high priest could enter, and only once a year, to atone for the sins of the nation—Leviticus 16:1-35).

The curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two at Christ's death, symbolizing that the barrier between God and humanity was removed. Now all people are free to approach God because of Christ's sacrifice for our sins (see Hebrews 9:1-14; Hebrews 10:19-22).

### **What priests did at the temple**

## **Luke 1:5**

It all begins with a Jewish priest, Zechariah, who lived when Herod was king of Judea. Zechariah was a member of the priestly order of Abijah. His wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron.

This was Herod the Great, confirmed by the Roman Senate as king of the Jews. Only half Jewish himself and eager to please his Roman superiors, Herod expanded and beautified the Jerusalem temple—but he placed a Roman eagle over the entrance.

When he helped the Jews, it was for political purposes and not because he cared about their God. Herod the Great later ordered a massacre of infants in a futile attempt to kill the infant Jesus, whom some were calling the new “king of the Jews” (Matthew 2:16-18).

A Jewish priest was a minister of God who worked at the temple managing its upkeep, teaching the people the Scriptures, and directing the worship services.

At this time there were about 20,000 priests throughout the country—far too many to minister in the temple at one time. Therefore the priests were divided into 24 separate groups of about 1,000 each, according to David’s directions (1 Chron. 24:3-19).

Zechariah was a member of the Abijah division, on duty this particular week. Each morning a priest was to enter the Holy Place in the temple and burn incense. Lots were cast to decide who would enter the sacred room, and one day the lot fell to Zechariah.

But it was not by chance that Zechariah was on duty and that he was chosen that day to enter the Holy Place—perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

God was guiding the events of history to prepare the way for Jesus to come to earth

### **The temple school.**

#### **Luke 2:46-47**

Three days later they finally discovered him. He was in the Temple, sitting among the religious teachers, discussing deep questions with them. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

The temple courts were famous throughout Judea as a place of learning. The apostle Paul studied in Jerusalem, perhaps in the temple courts, under Gamaliel, one of its foremost teachers (Acts 22:3).

At the time of the Passover, the greatest rabbis of the land would assemble to teach and to discuss great truths among themselves. The coming Messiah would no doubt have been a popular discussion topic, for everyone was expecting him soon. Jesus would have been eager to listen and to ask probing questions. It was not his youth, but the depth of his wisdom, that astounded these teachers.

### **The temple treasury.**

## **John 8:20**

Jesus made these statements while he was teaching in the section of the Temple known as the Treasury. But he was not arrested, because his time had not yet come.

The temple treasury was located in the court of women. In this area, 13 collection boxes were set up to receive money offerings. Seven of the boxes were for the temple tax; the other six were for freewill offerings. On another occasion, a widow placed her money in one of these boxes, and Jesus taught a profound lesson from her action (Luke 21:1-4).

### **The temple tax**

## **John 2:14**

In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; and he saw money changers behind their counters.

The temple area was always crowded during Passover with thousands of out-of-town visitors. The religious leaders crowded it even further by allowing money changers and merchants to set up booths in the court of the Gentiles. They rationalized this practice as a convenience for the worshipers and as a way to make money for temple upkeep. But the religious leaders did not seem to care that the court of the Gentiles was so full of merchants that foreigners found it difficult to worship. And worship was the main purpose for visiting the temple. No wonder Jesus was angry!

The temple tax had to be paid in local currency, so foreigners had to have their money changed. But the money changers often would charge exorbitant exchange rates. The people also were required to make sacrifices for sins. Because of the long journey, many could

not bring their own animals. Some who brought animals would have them rejected for imperfections. So animal merchants would do a flourishing business in the temple courtyard. The price of sacrificial animals was much higher in the temple area than elsewhere. Jesus was angry at the dishonest, greedy practices of the money changers and merchants, and he particularly disliked their presence on the temple grounds. They were making a mockery of God's house of worship.

### **Pharisees missed its purpose.**

#### **Matthew 12:6**

I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple!

The Pharisees were so concerned about religious rituals that they missed the whole purpose of the temple—to bring people to God. And because Jesus Christ is even greater than the temple, how much better can he bring people to God. God is far more important than the created instruments of worship. If we become more concerned with the means of worship than with the One we worship, we will miss God even as we think we are worshipping him.

### **Why Jesus paid the temple tax.**

#### **Matthew 17:24-27**

On their arrival in Capernaum, the tax collectors for the Temple tax came to Peter and asked him, "Doesn't your teacher pay the Temple tax?"

"Of course he does," Peter replied. Then he went into the house to talk to Jesus about it.

But before he had a chance to speak, Jesus asked him, "What do you think, Peter? Do kings tax their own people or the foreigners they have conquered?"

"They tax the foreigners," Peter replied. "Well, then," Jesus said, "the citizens are free!"

However, we don't want to offend them, so go down to the lake and throw in a line. Open the mouth of the first fish you catch, and you will find a coin. Take the coin and pay the tax for both of us."

All Jewish males had to pay a temple tax to support temple upkeep (Exodus 30:11-16). Tax collectors set up booths to collect these taxes. Only Matthew records this incident—perhaps because he had been a tax collector himself.

As usual, Peter answered a question without really knowing the answer, putting Jesus and the disciples in an awkward position. Jesus used this situation, however, to emphasize his kingly role. Just as kings pay no taxes and collect none from their family, Jesus, the King, owed no taxes. But Jesus supplied the tax payment for both himself and Peter rather than offend those who didn't understand his kingship. Although Jesus supplied the tax money, Peter had to go and get it. Ultimately all that we have comes to us from God's supply, but he may want us to be active in the process.

As God's people, we are foreigners on earth because our loyalty is always to our real King—Jesus. Still we have to cooperate with the authorities and be responsible citizens. An ambassador to another country keeps the local laws in order to represent well the one who sent him. We are Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). Are you being a good foreign ambassador for him to this world?

## **Chapter 6**



## **Why Jesus drove out money-changers.**

### **Matthew 21:12**

Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the merchants and their customers. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the stalls of those selling doves.

This is the second time Jesus cleared the temple (see John 2:13-17). Merchants and money changers set up their booths in the court of the Gentiles in the temple, crowding out the Gentiles who had come from all over the civilized world to worship God. The merchants sold sacrificial animals at high prices, taking advantage of those who had come long distances. The money changers exchanged all international currency for the special temple coins—the only money the merchants would accept. They often deceived foreigners who didn't know the exchange rates. Their commercialism in God's house frustrated people's attempts at worship. This, of course, greatly angered Jesus. Any practice that interferes with worshiping God should be stopped.

## **Cleansing the Temple**

## **Mark 11:12-19**

The next morning as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus felt hungry. He noticed a fig tree a little way off that was in full leaf, so he went over to see if he could find any figs on it. But there were only leaves because it was too early in the season for fruit.

Then Jesus said to the tree, "May no one ever eat your fruit again!" And the disciples heard him say it.

When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the merchants and their customers. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the stalls of those selling doves, and he stopped everyone from bringing in merchandise.

He taught them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a place of prayer for all nations,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves."

When the leading priests and teachers of religious law heard what Jesus had done, they began planning how to kill him. But they were afraid of him because the people were so enthusiastic about Jesus' teaching. That evening Jesus and the disciples left the city.

There are three common views about the meaning of this verse.

(1) Jesus may have been referring to a vast movement toward God, the momentum that began with John's preaching.

(2) He may have been reflecting the Jewish activists' expectation that God's kingdom would come through a violent overthrow of Rome.

(3) Or he may have meant that entering God's kingdom takes courage, unwavering faith, determination, and endurance because of the growing opposition leveled at Jesus' followers.

Throughout the study of the temple, it becomes evident that God lives in the praises of his people.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.

Additional comments and charts are taken from:

*Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print