

## Building the House of God

**HEB 12:22-24** We are come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. We've heard it from God's Word, and read it with our own eyes – so we **see** it and **believe** it (**PSA 48:8**). We've come to God the Judge of all, to an innumerable company of angels, to Jesus the Mediator: we've walked in through the gates of pearl along the streets of gold, in the light like a jasper stone, clear as crystal: we've seen the walls and the palaces, and the rivers of living water, and the tree of life, and the throne of God and of the Lamb in the midst, But WHY are we in Jerusalem? What are we here for? Do we see our calling?

**1 PET 2:9** We're to show forth the praises of God, for the great works He has done. This is what He expects **in Zion: PSA 65:1**. We stand in His presence, in His courts, with praise and thankfulness: **PSA 100:4**

**PSA 122:1-2,9** We should be glad (of course) to be in Jerusalem, singing praises before God's throne –and that is what makes Jerusalem so special: it is **where God dwells**, where His house is: **PSA 132:13-16**.

**PSA 84:1-4, 7, 10** So here we are in the presence of God, dwelling in His courts, always praising Him.

But there is more to it than this, as the next scriptures show:

**1 COR 3:16** This is something we ought to know: WE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, for HIS SPIRIT DWELLS IN US. **Chapter 6:19** and **2 COR 6:16** tell us the same thing. The Comforter has come, and Jesus and the Father have made their abode with us (**JN 14:17&23**). This tabernacle of God is with men (**REV 21:3**). The kingdom of God is within us (**LK 17:21**). So we ought to be yielding ourselves, body and all, to the will of the Father, letting Him dwell in us and walk in us, letting the increase of His government and peace upon His kingdom be without end, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from hence forth even for ever (**ISA 9:7**).

We are, after all, in Jerusalem, the holy city, and the whole limit thereof round about is **most** holy (**EZ 43:12**). But let's not be thinking only of ourselves: we've come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, many members, yet but one body – "*Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together*" (**PSA 122:3**). We have become the people of God (**1 PET 2:10**), not by works or by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the precious blood of Christ (**1 PET 1:19**) – so He says "*SEE THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER WITH A PURE HEART*" (**1 PET 1:22**).

**HEB 10:22-25** As we come boldly before the throne we remember that we stand there not as many individuals but as one body, the general assembly and church of the firstborn – so we **consider one another** to provoke and exhort and comfort in the work.

- 1 PET 2:4-5** When we do consider one another and come together in love, this is what happens – the Spirit of God builds us up together into a spiritual house, lively stones fitted and cemented onto Jesus Himself.
- EPH 2:19-22** We are built **together** as a holy **temple** in the Lord, a habitation of God through the Spirit: so that the temple is not just our individual bodies but the **whole body** of Christ. THIS is why we are in Mount Sion – so that we can be made a part of the house of God, fitted into place with the foundation and the chief corner stone, Jesus Himself, made a part of Him.
- REV 3:12** *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem...”* The building is permanent: we’re to be fitted into place, and no more go out!
- 1 COR 1:10** We’re to submit to one another in love, being **perfectly joined together** in the same mind and in the same judgement. This is another meaning of the word ‘perfect’, as in **2 COR 13:9,11**; **HEB 13:21**; **1 PET 5:10** and some other places –in all these, and here it means “fitted into place.”
- EPH 4:11-16** As we come together the various ministries set by Jesus in His body work together for the good of all, for the **perfecting** or fitting together of the saints, and the building up of the body, until we all come to a perfect (here ‘complete’) man, until we all walk as one body, as Jesus walked. This is achieved as every member plays his or her part in the body, letting the Spirit work effectually in everything for the edifying of the church. The end result is that we grow up into the head in all things: that the body grows into the stature of the fullness of Christ.
- ISA 28:16-22** The foundation stone is laid, Jesus Christ Himself. We as lively stones are to be fitted onto Him, each one laying down his own life and being made an integral part of **His** body, living only **His** life. Any other masters, any covenant with death, any hypocrisy and lies will be discovered and put to shame: the LORD has a strange and glorious work to perform, but only those wholly given to Him can be used. Let’s make sure we don’t become tied up with the world, lest we be judged with the world.
- PSA 118:22-24** Jesus, rejected by the world, is now become in our sight precious and honourable, so we rejoice – but there are also those who will not obey and will stumble: **1 PET 2:6-10** – make sure you **see** your calling into the glorious light of God, into Jerusalem.
- PSA 84:1-2** What else is there? Where would we rather be than in Jerusalem, in God’s house? **PSA 27:4**.
- PSA 122:6-9** We lay down our lives for the brethren, and for the brethren’s sake build ourselves into the temple and seek their good.

So there is a work to be done, a house to be built for God’s glory. We could learn much by studying the preparation of the first tabernacle of God (in **EX chapters 35-40**) or the building and dedication of the first temple by Solomon (In **1 KIN chapter 5 and 6**; **2 CHR chapter 2**) but we shall concentrate at the moment on the parallel: the new temple that was built by Zerubbabel, recorded in the first six chapters of **EZRA**.

- EZRA 1:1-8** The temple built by Solomon had been destroyed with the rest of the city and all the people taken captive to Babylon. But after seventy years a new king, Cyrus, came to power, and through him the LORD caused a new work to begin. The commandment went forth that all who were willing should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the house of God: those who could not take part in this particular ministry helped in such a way as they could with gifts and goods. The prince, Zerubbabel or Sheshbazzar, the son of

- Shealtiel, a grandson of one of the last kings of Judah, was set over the work.
- EZRA 2:64, 68-70** Everyone took part in the work, willingly, after their ability.
- EZRA 3:8-13** For some reason it was not until the second year that the foundation was laid. They had set up an altar and kept the feast of tabernacles (**3:1-7**), and no more. But when the time did come, what a time it was! The noise of their rejoicing was heard afar off, by all those had dwelt about them.
- EZRA 4:1-5** These different people then became the enemies of the work. Their origins are significant: they were idolaters, brought to the land of Israel by the king of Assyria and taught after a fashion to worship, as they thought the LORD (**2 KIN 17:24-41**). Their descendants were the Samaritans, despised by the Jews even in Jesus' time. In any case, these people asked to join in and help in the work, and were flatly refused, as was proper: there can be no compromise with unsaved people in the ministries of the church of God. So these men in their spite then turned against the Jews and troubled them so as to frustrate their purpose, until the reign of Darius some fifteen years later. In fact for a time the work was stopped altogether by a new king who did not know of what Cyrus had planned: see **verses 6-24**. It seems that Zerubbabel was not altogether right in letting the building slow down and then stop, for it became clear later that if they put their heart to the work and trusted the LORD He would confound their enemies.
- EZRA 5:1-2** In the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia (something like fifteen or sixteen years after they originally came to Jerusalem) the LORD stepped in and through His prophets started the work up again. We can read of what was said in the books of the prophets **Haggai** and **Zechariah**:
- HAG 1:1-15** This prophecy was given in the first day of the sixth month that year, the day on which Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest were shaken out of their complacency. The LORD put them all 'on the mat': there they all were, living in their own houses, proper houses with ceilings, while God's house lay still in ruins. The whole people from the governor down seemed to have forgotten their calling: each was living only for themselves, and the LORD was rewarding them accordingly, by sending them leanness and shortage and drought. We ought, like them, to "consider our ways": what are we living for? Is our chief joy serving the LORD, building in His temple, or are we living firstly for ourselves? Has the LORD been prospering, or is He perhaps trying to tell us something? Zerubbabel and Joshua obeyed the LORD and feared Him, and began again to build up the temple of God: straight away the LORD replied with comfort and exhortation: *"I am with you, saith the LORD."*
- ZECH 1:1-6** Zechariah also prophesied: this piece in the eighth month, just reminding the whole people of what the LORD had done with their fathers and grandfathers, that were taken to Babylon. But His word stands sure, and anyone who turns to Him will be blessed. *"If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him."*
- EZRA 5:1-6,14** Naturally the enemies would not sit idle once the work recommenced. The governor of the province and his officers came down to investigate, and were told quite plainly why the temple was being built, and how it had been authorised by Cyrus himself: then, when search was made, the witness was found to be true. Why Zerubbabel had not spoken up sooner we don't know: we can't help wondering whether he was just looking for an excuse to abandon the work on the temple so that everyone could look after himself. In any case, the LORD had now stirred up his spirit and he stood firm on the Word of the LORD, with the result that the work was again

blessed and helped forward, this time by king Darius. The prophets, of course, continued to minister encouragement and help.

**HAG 2:1-9**

In the seventh month Haggai spoke these words of comfort and encouragement. Those who had seen the temple built by Solomon would realize the days when Solomon and David ruled over great empires. Yet the LORD says it doesn't matter: they had their calling, and the LORD was with them, keeping His covenant. Yet He tells them more: the time is coming when all nations shall be shaken, and the desire of all nations will come. We who have Jesus in our hearts might look around from time to time and be discouraged if we set our eyes on the bigger assemblies around us, or on the great numbers we read of in Acts. Time will come (soon) when the LORD will work again that way, but in the meantime He has His purpose for us: we should be strong in the sure knowledge that He has called us to the particular assemblies and the particular ministries which we now have. There is a glorious promise here, that no matter what appearances tell us, the LORD is working all things, and *"the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts."*

**HAG 2:10-23**

In the ninth month, on the same day of the month in which the foundation had been laid so many years before, Haggai spoke again, with a warning and a reminder. First, the law is clear that if something holy touches something else, it does not sanctify it, whereas if something unclean touches something else, it makes it unclean. Then the LORD says, that is what this people were like, working in the temple but not with their heart. The fact that they were building the house of God couldn't sanctify them; rather, the fact that their hearts were not in the work meant that it was not acceptable with God, and He had to turn and blast them to cause them to repent. But now, He says, now that they have left off running to their own houses and have given themselves willingly and wholly to the work of God, that all enemies of God will be overthrown and destroyed. Zerubbabel himself, the servant of God, will be taken and made, as a signet, (the smaller seals that were used to stamp out patterns): in other words, Zerubbabel is for all time the pattern of a man chosen by God and helped against all enemies as he gave his heart to the work for which he was called.

**ZECH 1:7 to 6:15**

Finally, in the eleventh month, Zechariah had a long series of visions from the LORD. Firstly (1:7-11) the horses of the LORD, that walk to and fro through the earth, watching all things; then (1:12-21) the promises to Jerusalem, that the times of trouble were over, that the LORD had returned to Jerusalem with mercies and blessings, that the adversaries would be broken down and removed, that the city would be rebuilt and prospered (2:1-13). The two leaders are then singled out: first Joshua the high priest that stands before God (3:1-10), then Zerubbabel the prince (4:1-14). The message to Zerubbabel in particular is clear: if the work goes on it's not by might or the power of men, but solely by the Spirit of God. The lamp of God burns brightly as he feeds the oil in through the golden pipes: not striving or struggling, but **flowing**. **Chapters 5 and 6** are concerned mostly with the judgment of the whole world, but Joshua receives more promises in 6:9-15.

**EZRA 6:14-22**

Strengthened by such glorious promises the men worked with a willing heart, and within five years the house was completed and dedicated with joy. So the promises work: if we will give ourselves over wholly to Him then He can build us into His temple and strengthen the work, no matter what the enemies try. For sure they will gather against Him and try all sorts of things, but in the end they will be laughed to scorn (**PSA 2:1-5**). For example see **ACTS 4:1-31** and **5:17-42**.

- 2 PET 3:7-14** The whole world is now under sentence of a fearful and fiery judgement, which is surely coming: so we must be constantly examining ourselves, asking ourselves, *“what manner of persons ought ye to be?”* GOD says, *“Be ye holy; for I am holy.”* (1 PET 1:16). The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.
- EZ 9:1-11** We are living in Mount Zion, as a part of the temple of God. So we **must** understand how strict the standard is, for there can be no compromise. Here there was abomination in the church in the very sanctuary of the temple (see **chapter 8**) and God had no choice but to destroy them all, all but those who **cares** and who sighed and cried for the sad state of God’s so-called people. All the rest were slaughtered, **beginning** with the senior men in the sanctuary itself. Judgment starts here. **ISA 52:11**.
- MK 11:15-18** The temple must be clean, and all who serve in it: but here people were **using** it for their own interests, as some in the church body still live for themselves. They turn it into a den of thieves by serving their own bellies.
- PHIL 2:21 & ROM 16:17-18** It still goes on, even in the church of the temple of the living God!
- PHIL 3:17-21** They serve only themselves, thinking only of earthly things. Rather we must see ourselves **in Jerusalem**, setting our affection on things above.
- 1 COR 3:9-17** We are **God’s building**, built by Him through various ministries. Each of us is now taking His place in the work, building on what has gone before: but TAKE HEED. The foundations laid for all time, and cannot be changed: anything that does not line up with Jesus, with God’s Word, must be destroyed. The temple is holy, and will be kept holy.
- JER 7:1-30** The people who lived in Jerusalem at this time were living only for themselves, stealing and murdering and worshipping idols, yet coming before the LORD in His temple. They were saying to themselves that the Lord would not let His city or His temple be destroyed, and so they thought they were safe, just as some saved people now think that because they have received the Holy Spirit they can do as they please and still be saved. But the LORD said otherwise: He had destroyed Shiloh, where the tabernacle had been pitched, for their wickedness, and He was prepared to do the same with Jerusalem. Every one of them was corrupt, serving other Gods: they were not provoking God to anger, but provoking themselves to more abominations and to more shame. The LORD has never required anything but obedience from the heart: these people wouldn’t receive correction or instruction, so they were rejected.
- AMOS 7:1-8** Amos in an earlier time saw this vision: the LORD stands by His people with a plumbline, lining up the wall, making sure everything fits into place. Those who resist His will and **won’t** be built as He wishes will be removed and destroyed. **9:9-10**.
- MATT 21:33-46** If a nation or a church or a people will **not** line up to their calling, then the kingdom will be taken from them and given to others who will bring forth the fruits.
- 1 COR 12:21-31** We must let God set us as He pleases, and give our lives for the brethren in whatever ministry the Lord calls us to. Any other works are in vain.
- 1 JN 3:16** We **must** lay down our lives for the brethren.
- PSA 127:1-2** If **we** try to set ourselves or to perform **any** work of ourselves, we’re wasting our time. Only God can set us together and get it right.

- EZ 37:1-14** It's all of him: we MUST see that we are nothing but skeletons of carcasses, animated by His Spirit alone. We surely know that He is God when we let Him work mightily in our bodies. See also **36:25-28** and **37:24-28**.
- JN 6:63** Only the Spirit can set the work in motion.
- ROM 12:1-2** So we must offer ourselves up, completely holy to God, for Him to work His will in us: nothing left for us, the whole must be slaughtered before God, everything given to Him for His glory and the edification for the brethren.
- PSA 137:5-6** God must come first in all things: Jerusalem preferred above all.
- ISA 56:1-8** Let's make sure we keep ourselves holy, keeping judgement and laying hold on it, so that we can take our full part in his work, the house of prayer for all people. There are others still to be brought, and it is only proper that the church shall be perfectly established to minister eternal life to them, by teaching, by prayer, and by fellowship.
- ISA 2:1-5** This house will be the joy of the whole earth, the perfection of beauty. Many nations will flow into it and be taught. All it requires is that we walk in the light of the LORD and give our lives as Jesus did.

**Particularly concerning those going overseas for the LORD's work:**

As we saw in **EZRA 1:4 and 6**, it is not possible for everyone to do every work in the church: at the moment some are being called to go overseas, some to stay home and help the work in Australia. The work is a glorious one: *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"* (**ISA 52:7**). And everyone has a part to play in it, by prayer, by encouragement and exhortation, and by helping with various needs. There are several other examples of this:

- EX 35:20-35** Two men in particular were called to supervise the work, and given the special wisdom and cunning they needed, but the whole people joined in with their gifts and talents, so much that they had to be restrained (**36:1-7**).
- 1 CHR 12:38-40** The best fighting men of Israel came to make David king, and only the best fighters would have been of use to him at this time and for this particular need. But all of Israel were of one heart with him (**verse 38**), and those nearby helped in such a way as the LORD gave them, with meat and meal and fruit and so on. Thus everyone had a part to play in helping the LORD's work.
- 1 SAM 17:13-20** In earlier times when David was still too young to fight, his ministry was to stay at home and keep his father's sheep. Later he was sent on an errand to help his brethren, and as he gave himself faithfully the LORD called him to something higher, and he slew Goliath by the help of God.
- 2 COR 8 & 9** These chapters show how all the churches can help one another by the cheerful and willing ministry of goods, comforting and provoking one another in love. Certainly those who are forsaking all to preach the Word overseas will need help from time to time, and as we supply their needs God will be glorified.
- ACTS 2:44-45 & 4:34-37** Here we see the whole church living together, seeing that none lacked for anything.
- 1 CHR 29:1-22** Just as Jesus set the example for us by dying on the cross, so David set the example by giving lavishly for the temple that Solomon was to build. Then the people responded with a perfect heart, willingly, causing great joy to all. David's prayer is wonderful: whatever abilities we have, whatever

ministry we perform, are given to us by the Father and performed by the Father as well: if one preaches well, it is God that does it; if one gives out many leaflets, God has done it; if one gives liberally, according to his ability, then God receives the glory. ALL THINGS come of Him: all there is for us to do is to give ourselves back to Him, giving Him what is already His, to be used as He wills. (see also **ROM 11:33; 1 COR 4:6-7**).

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