

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE AND THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID

The following is my response to a series of questions that arose during the readings in the early chapters of 1 Kings. The questions were:

In 1 Kings 6 we have Solomon building the Temple; it does say he prepared the oracle "to set the ark of the covenant of the Lord" in verse 19, then we read in verses 23-28 he constructed Cherubims ((larger than the first ones?). We realize this is a type or pattern of things belonging to the Kingdom age. Now, in 1 Kings 8:4-7 we read that elders of Israel came and brought up the Ark of the Lord from the Tabernacle, and then set "the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most Holy place, even under the wings of the Cherubims." The "original" Ark had the two Cherubim, so now do we have two sets of Cherubims? It doesn't say (that we can find) that they stored away all the items from the Tabernacle when they brought them to the Temple.

ANSWERS

IN RELATION TO THE FURNITURE OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

1 Kings 6:23 – **“And within the oracle he made two cherubims of olive tree, each ten cubits high.”** These cherubim were in addition to the cherubim that adorned the Ark of the Covenant. Their proportions half filled the Most Holy Place (“the oracle”) while the cherubim on the Ark were proportionally consonant with the size of the mercy seat (2.5 cubits long). The purpose of Solomon's cherubim was doubtless for the same reason cherubim were first introduced, namely, to guard and preserve the way to eternal life (Gen. 3:24). Solomon's cherubim overshadowed and 'protected' the Ark of the Covenant with all that it represented for the future purpose of God.

1 Kings 7:23-50 records a list of 'furniture', tools and vessels that were installed in the completed temple of Solomon. Nothing is said in the record about the existing furniture and vessels of the tabernacle of Moses. However, it needs to be remembered that the latter was now nearly 500 years old. Even though items of gold, silver and brass may not be subject to corrosion they are susceptible to wear and tear through use. It seems the Divine directions given to David included a renewal of much of the furniture and equipment of the tabernacle.

IN RELATION TO THE LARGER QUESTION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE AS A TYPE

There is no doubt that the temple of Solomon and indeed his reign of peace provide a type of Christ's reign and a foreshadowing of the House of Prayer for all nations. But that said it must be recognized that there are very real limitations to the type. Solomon's temple belongs to the era of the Law of Moses. Accordingly, there are a number of statements made about it that reflect the fact that it is a limited type. Let us review a few of these by quoting the Scriptures concerned together with a brief explanation.

1 Kings 8:9 – **“There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when**

they came out of the land of Egypt.” Only the tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments, written with the finger of God, remained in the Ark. The golden pot of incorruptible manna and Aaron's rod that budded were absent. The latter were the symbols of new life (particularly eternal life – Rev. 2:7), while the tables of stone pointed to the Mosaic Covenant, which though glorious, was a temporary system and is called by Paul “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones” (2 Cor. 3:7). Law cannot give life – Gal. 3:21. Immediately, the deficiency of Solomon's temple arrangements becomes evident.

1 Kings 6:36 – “And he built the inner court with three rows of hewed stone, and a row of cedar beams.” This court is referred to again in **1 Kings 7:12 – “And the great court round about was with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the LORD, and for the porch of the house.”** This inner court was designed to add another space providing defence against things deemed unholy. Ultimately, it was to exclude Gentiles with the erection of what Paul describes as “the middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14) that separated Jew from Gentile in the temple. Ironically, the Temple was dedicated during the Feast of Tabernacles, the very feast that prophesied the inclusion of Gentiles in the purpose of God, hence Zech. 14:16.

2 Chron. 8:11 – “And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come.” Significantly, Solomon's Egyptian wife was shifted away from holy things, in particular the place where the Ark was housed for over 35 years in “the tabernacle of David” near the king's palace. This was a major signal of things to come. When the Ark was finally moved from the tent that David had pitched for it (1 Chron. 15:1; 16:1) into the “oracle”, i.e. the Most Holy place of Solomon's temple, the staves were apparently seen projecting through the veil (Smith's Bible Dictionary comments, “The ends of the staves were visible without the veil in the holy place of the temple of Solomon, the staves being drawn to the ends, apparently, but not out of the rings.”). This in a sense brought the Ark even closer to the court outside the house. The sensitivity to maintain the holiness of the temple and its furniture seems to have been the purpose of this inner court. Consider also 2 Chron. 7:7 where additional space was required for sacrifice, thus extending the ‘holy’ area.

Acts 7:44-48 – “Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Joshua into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet.” Stephen's testimony is very revealing:

- The Ark of the Covenant remained in the Tabernacle constructed at Mt Sinai until the days of David, but then things changed;
- The requirement to eradicate all Canaanites from the land inherited by the tribes of Israel (Deut. 20:16-17) was maintained (albeit unsuccessfully) for 450 years until the reign of David. What changed then was that David set about converting Gentiles to the Hope of Israel. It is also evident that David did not require converted Gentiles to be circumcised.

- David's approach was approved by God. When David placed the Ark in his own tent (*ohel*) his aim was to circumvent the law concerning circumcision that prevented Gentiles from approaching the tabernacle of Moses. The Law of Moses kept Gentiles at arm's length, so David invoked the Melchizedek order to overcome the problem. He understood that the Melchizedek order which preceded the Mosaic would ultimately supersede it. Melchizedek met Abram's victorious company with bread and wine and shared a fellowship meal with home born Hebrews and converted Gentiles (Gen. 14:13-14,18), none of whom were circumcised (for that came 14 years later - Gen. 17:10-14).
- The word "But" that begins verse 47 demonstrates that there was a drastic change when the temple of Solomon superseded the tabernacle of David. Solomon's temple reversed the policy of David and restored the dominance of the Mosaic system again.
- Stephen's assertion that "the Most High" does not dwell in physical buildings made by man is illuminating. His use of the title "the Most High" reveals the source of David's approach for it is from Gen. 14 where it is used four times in relation to Melchizedek.

Acts 15:14-18 – "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." The intervention of James at the Jerusalem Conference in circa AD 51 brings all the preceding considerations into clear focus. The issue was whether Gentile converts should be circumcised. Some 'converted' Pharisees asserted "That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). The debate raged with no resolution despite the personal accounts of Peter, Barnabas and Paul recounting their involvement in Gentile conversions. Personal testimonies were inadequate to turn the minds of the Judaistic element in the community. Only Scripture had the power to change thinking on such a crucial question. James cites two Scriptures that bring a speedy end to debate and the issuance of a decree to all believers rejecting the claim that Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the law. What could achieve such a settled outcome?

- James first reminds conference delegates that Peter's role in the conversion of Cornelius and his house received the imprimatur of God by the Holy Spirit descending upon them before their baptism in water (Acts 10:44-47). That was an outstanding fact that could not be denied, but James knew it needed to be supported by Scripture.
- His first brief citation is from Jer. 12:15 – "After this I will return..." The context is illuminating. Jer. 12:14-17 is a prophecy of Yahweh dealing with the nations involved in the coming captivity of Judah. He foreshadows the release of the remnant of Judah from Babylonian captivity and then an opportunity provided to those Gentile nations to embrace the true religion of Yahweh's people, saying, "**And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, Yahweh liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people**" (Jer. 12:16). The clear indication in this prophecy is that post-exile there would be a Divine initiative to convert Gentiles to the Faith. This second subtle but important plank in his argument led to James bringing out the most powerful prophecy that for anyone who understood Israel's history was incontrovertible.

- James next cites Amos 9:11-12 – "...and will build again the tabernacle of David." This citation from Amos proved to be an end of all debate and so deserves careful analysis.
- **Amos 9:11-12 – "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old; That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this."** Firstly, it is important to consider the context in which this prophecy is found. It is preceded by Yahweh's protest against His Baal worshipping people in verse 7 – **"Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians (Cushites) unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?"** The ISV translates the phrase "children of the Ethiopians" as "the people of Cush"; i.e. spiritual descendants of Cush the father of Nimrod and founder of the doctrinal fabric of Babylon that has come down to our day. God's point in this verse is that while fulfilling His promise to Abraham in bringing Israel out of Egypt (Gen. 15:13-14) He was at the same time bringing the uncircumcised Philistines from Caphtor (Crete) and the Syrians from Kir (Mesopotamia) to be Israel's immediate neighbours. Yahweh is suggesting He would have had more success with them than with Israel if He had focused on converting them to Israel's hope. Then verses 11 and 12 foreshadow the restitution of "the tabernacle of David" "that is lying prostrate" (Roth.). Solomon's temple brought an end to the 35 year era of the tabernacle of David. As time went on, the whole point of David's tabernacle, namely, the ability of uncircumcised Gentiles to access the presence of Yahweh without the restrictions of the Law was progressively "breached" until a "middle wall of partition" was erected.
- Reference to "Edom" in Amos 9:12 is clearly an inspired reference to David's actions after the tragic death of Uzzah prevented the Ark from arriving in Jerusalem. "David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?" (2 Sam. 6:9). So David took the Ark aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. He was in fact a Kohathite living in Gath-rimmon a town granted to the tribe of Dan - Josh. 19:40,45. Gath-rimmon was later ceded to the Levitical family of Kohath – Josh. 21:20,24. This was a deliberate strategy by David. He believed he was correct in taking the Ark to Zion in order to place it in his own 'tent' so that uncircumcised Gentiles could have access to Yahweh the God of Israel, but the death of Uzzah was an unexpected tragedy that brought a degree of doubt to David's mind. He needed confirmation that Yahweh was not unhappy with his objective in taking what many would have viewed as pretentious and un-Scriptural. He sought this sign in the house of a very unusually named Levite. Obed-edom means 'the slave of Edom'. What Levite would call his son a slave of Edom? Yet many did, because it was the practice to perpetuate family names (Luke 1:59). There were at least five Levites who bore this Gentile name. Within three months David had his answer from God. The house of Obed-edom was blessed by Yahweh in ways obvious to all and David immediately interpreted this as confirmation that his intention of placing the Ark in his own tent rather than the Tabernacle of Moses which was at Gibeon at the time (1 Chron. 21:29) was approved by Yahweh. It seems a Levite with a very Gentile name was the vehicle to clear the way for the Ark to be removed to Zion on the shoulders of Kohathites.
- "The remnant of Edom" finds its way into Acts 15:17 as "the residue of men" and this agrees with the prophecy of Jer. 12:14-17 explained above. Similarly, the phrase "all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called" demonstrates that God had a purpose with

Gentiles from the very beginning – **“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”**

- David acted as a Melchizedek king-priest when the Ark was brought into Jerusalem. He removed his kingly robes and donned a priest's linen ephod (2 Sam. 6:14). He then distributed to all the people – men and women, Jew and Gentile (the phrase “every one” occurs twice in V.19), bread and wine after the example of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18).
- Before this act David acknowledged that though approved by God, his resort to the Melchizedek order was premature and really belonged to the Millennial era. This was demonstrated by having the Kohathites who bore the Ark take six steps and making sacrifice before taking the seventh (2 Sam. 6:13). David understood from Gen. 1 the framework of God's seven thousand year plan.
- While David operated as a Melchizedek priest his reluctantly restored wife Michal (the daughter of Saul) looked down with contempt upon her husband rejoicing among the common people. The relationship completely broke down so that Michal remained childless for the rest of her days. This too was a type. Michal represents the Judaistic approach to the Law of Moses which could not give life (Gal. 3:21).
- The profound citations by James from Jer. 12:15 and Amos 9:11-12 brought a successful end to the divisive issue that had necessitated the Jerusalem Conference. The conference then turned its attention to writing a decree that could be carried back to ecclesias all over the Roman world. The key to this outcome was the tabernacle of David.

SUMMARY

Though Solomon's reign and the temple he built according to the design delivered to David were clear types of greater things to come. The promises made to David concerning his greater son Christ were modelled by Solomon, but the temple ultimately led to the breaching of the intention of the tabernacle of David. David's aim was restored when the Gospel went to the Gentiles in the first century and through the mission of Christ and the apostles (particularly Paul) a light was given to the Gentiles (Isa. 49:6), and the “middle wall of partition” was taken down.

It is highly significant that the future “house of prayer for all nations” (Isa. 56:7) is called “the tabernacle (*ohel*) of David” in Isa. 16:5 – **“And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.”**

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