

## KING SOLOMON AND THE FIRST TEMPLE

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with Pastor Dan Betzer

It is no secret in this church that your pastor loves Jerusalem! I was in awe of the city before I ever visited it; and, upon that first visit in March of 1971, my love for God's city has grown each year.

To walk the streets where Jesus, Paul, David and so many others walked is a thrill beyond measure. Our plan is to revisit the holy city next February if authorities once again open Israel to guests (due to the reports of virus).

During its early centuries, God was the sole government of Israel. After clamoring for a king ("as other nations have") God told Samuel the prophet (and at that time the true leader in Israel) to go ahead and anoint a king, after warning them of the dire happenings to nations because of human leadership. The first king was Saul; the second was David; and the third was Solomon (who would be followed by his ne'er-do-well son Rehoboam who would split the nation in two over the issue of taxes in 932 BC).

The crowning achievement of King Solomon's reign was the erection of the magnificent Temple in the capital city of Jerusalem. Solomon's father David had wanted to build it a generation earlier as a permanent resting place for the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments. God intervened and forbade David from doing so:

***I Chronicles 28:3 - But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.***

We have a concept of the size of this building:

***II Chronicles 3:3-4 - Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits after the first measure was threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty***

1 ***cubits. [4] And the porch that was in the front of the house, the length***  
2 ***of it was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the***  
3 ***height was an hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure***  
4 ***gold.*** In physical terms with which we are familiar, the inside ceiling was  
5 180 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 50 feet high. (This will give you some  
6 idea of the size and heft of the great veil that secluded the Holy of Holies,  
7 which was torn in two, top to bottom, the moment Jesus died on the cross.)  
8 The highest point on Solomon's Temple was about 20 stories - over  
9 200 feet.

10  
11 Solomon spared no expense in the construction. He ordered vast quantities  
12 of cedar wood from King Hiram of Tyre (present-day Lebanon):

13  
14 I Kings 5:10 - ***So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees***  
15 ***according to all his desire.*** To pay for all that expensive wood, Solomon  
16 paid Hiram by handing over twenty towns in Galilee. I Kings 9:11 (***Now***  
17 ***Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and fir***  
18 ***trees, and with gold, according to all his desire,)* ***that then king Solomon***  
19 ***gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee.*****

20  
21 Solomon had huge blocks of the choicest stone quarried and commanded  
22 that the foundation of the Temple be laid with hewn stone. (There is a  
23 huge quarry under the old city of Jerusalem with some believing that at  
24 least some of the stone of the Temple came from there. However, there is  
25 no accurate history to verify this, although some truth is there concerning  
26 the Second Temple built by King Herod centuries later).

27  
28 To complete this massive creation, Solomon imposed forced labor on all  
29 his subjects, drafting people for work shifts that sometimes lasted for a  
30 month at a time. Over 3,000 officials were appointed to oversee the  
31 Temple's building.

32  
33 When the Temple was completed, Solomon inaugurated it with prayer and  
34 sacrifice, even inviting some non-Jews to come and pray there. His plea  
35 to God was for the Lord to pay heed to their prayers:

1 I Kings 8:43 - *Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according*  
2 *to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth*  
3 *may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they*  
4 *may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name.*

5  
6 The Temple was carefully attended and used by Israelites for  
7 centuries until it was destroyed by the invading Babylonians and King  
8 Nebuchadnezzar (yes, the same king who would later be influenced by the  
9 prophet Daniel).

10  
11 An interesting footnote to the Temple construction was this: While most  
12 construction means a whole lot of noise, there was no such noise at the  
13 Temple site. The material was prepared before it was brought to the  
14 building site. So, no sounds of hammers, axe or any iron tool while it was  
15 being built:

16  
17 I Kings 6:7 - *And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone*  
18 *made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither*  
19 *hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was*  
20 *in building.*

21  
22 As glorious and elaborate as the Temple was, its most important room  
23 contained almost no furniture at all. Known as the Holy of Holies, it  
24 housed the two tablets of the Ten Commandments inside the Ark of the  
25 Covenant. Unfortunately, the tablets disappeared when the Babylonians  
26 destroyed the Temple.

## 27 28 **JEROBOAM'S MAJOR MISCALCULATION**

29  
30 On the next page you will see a picture of an altar built by Jeroboam in  
31 the northern tribe of Dan. It has sat there for 3,000 years, virtually  
32 untouched in all those centuries.

33  
34 The Tribe of Dan was located in northern Galilee and is gorgeous. While  
35 rain is scarce in much of Israel, such is not the case in Dan. Rain plus the  
36 melt-off of snow on nearby Mount Hermon makes this area verdant and

1 beautiful. I have hiked that trail through the area many times, as recently  
2 as May of 2018. It is not a particularly easy trek, but more than  
3 worthwhile - especially when suddenly you are looking at the site depicted  
4 by the picture on the next page. For there it is - Jeroboam's altar (minus  
5 the golden calf).

6



7

8 *This is a picture of the golden calf pagan altar built by Jeroboam centuries ago. Our*  
9 *group always stops here - the folks can sit in those stone stands to the right of the*  
10 *picture and I lecture from the altar area, where the false god golden calf was located.*

11

12 Jeroboam got to thinking that a large portion of his northern kingdom of  
13 Israel would start remembering Jerusalem and the great Temple built by  
14 Solomon. He resolved to provide a religion the practice of which would  
15 not take the people away from his dominion. He determined to make it  
16 both easy and convenient for them. His earlier stay in Egypt had provided  
17 him with ready knowledge of their worship of the live bull and all Israel  
18 was already acquainted with the old Canaanitish practice of worshiping

1 the image of the calf or bull as a symbol of strength, endurance and  
2 productivity.

3

4 I Kings 12:2 - *Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves*  
5 *of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem:*  
6 *behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land*  
7 *of Egypt.*

8

9 One of the golden calves was lifted to its pedestal and an altar placed  
10 before it in Bethel, but the other was right in Dan. Jeroboam proclaimed  
11 both cities as official, national, religious shrines and both were strongly  
12 fortified as military centers. Priests were ordained and religious feast days  
13 appointed. Then the idolatry got underway:

14

15 II Kings 17:16 - *And they left all the commandments of the Lord their*  
16 *God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove,*  
17 *and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.*

18

19 Repeating this vital information: this northern kingdom of Israel existed  
20 for only a little over two centuries and was almost continually troubled  
21 from within and without. From Jeroboam to the diabolical King Ahab,  
22 a period of only 66 years, there were six kings, three of whom  
23 were assassinated.

24

## 25 **WHAT HAPPENED TO SOLOMON'S TEMPLE?**

26

27 Over the ensuing years, the great prophet Jeremiah (650-570 BC) did his  
28 utmost to turn the hearts of Israel back to God.

29

30 Jeremiah 5:1 - *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and*  
31 *see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find*  
32 *a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth;*  
33 *and I will pardon it.*

34

35 Jeremiah 5:4 - *Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish:*  
36 *for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.*

1 But, the die was cast. Jeremiah became the most unpopular man in  
2 Jerusalem. The priests derided him, the patriots denounced him and the  
3 mobs reviled him. He was publicly struck by a temple priest and placed  
4 in stocks to be taunted by passing crowds. After a stint in prison for  
5 proclaiming repentance, he was released and wrote out his sermons or  
6 warnings which the king cut to pieces and threw in the fire.

## 7 8 **NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND JUDGMENT**

9  
10 In the meantime, hundreds of miles to the east, a new monarch was rising  
11 in Babylon to unprecedented power and might, King Nebuchadnezzar.  
12 (605 to 562 BC) In his quest for global domination, he defeated Jerusalem  
13 and deported the king and some ten thousand others back to Babylon.  
14 Jerusalem was left in the hands of Zedekiah who was putty in the hands  
15 of some of the patriots who told him that Israel could yet defeat the  
16 Babylonians. Jeremiah walked the streets of Jerusalem with a yoke on his  
17 shoulders to illustrate what would happen to the Jews in the near future.

18  
19 The yoke was torn from his shoulders and he was spat upon by his  
20 detractors and yet he continued to warn the people of what was coming at  
21 the hands of the Babylonians. Jeremiah was right!

22  
23 Not long after Jeremiah's words had been spoken, Nebuchadnezzar and  
24 his vast army descended upon Israel, ransacking it from north to south.  
25 At the worst of the third encounter by the Babylonians, Nebuchadnezzar  
26 gave the word and the executioner began his work. The sons of King  
27 Zedekiah were executed before the soon-to-be blinded eyes of the fallen  
28 king and the once-proud king of Judah, the last of the lot, was taken in  
29 chains to Babylon. In the process, the great Temple was destroyed some  
30 400 years or so after its creation.

31  
32 Next week, the fall, the captivity and the payment for the sins of Israel  
33 during 70 years of captivity.