

Building the Temple

It is not our intention to speak about Solomon's or Ezekiel's temples. The temple which we wish to talk about is one that is being built in many cities, towns, and isolated places, not only in this country but throughout the whole world. It is a temple that has to be completed within the time set by the Architect. At the end of that time the Architect will ask His Representative to pass judgment on the temple, whether it is complete or incomplete.

If the work on it has progressed as well as the builder was capable of, then all will be satisfied. If the temple is incomplete because of questionable building methods that were employed, then the wrath and displeasure of the Architect will be felt by those careless builders. In short, the builder of the temple that bears a good resemblance to the one built by Jesus will be accepted. The other will be rejected. The temple that I am speaking of is the one that you and I, and all the household of faith, are building. Let us see what Paul says in 1 Cor. 3:16, 17:

"Know ye not that ye are the TEMPLE OF GOD, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God DESTROY, for the Temple of God is holy, which Temple ye are."

THE ARCHITECT, PLANS, AND REASON

The first parallel which we wish to note is that each requires an ARCHITECT, PLANS, and a REASON for creating the building. We do not have to go beyond the first 2 chapters of Genesis to see that God is not only a Designer, but a Master Builder, as well. Jer. 10:12, says that—

"He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion."

It was through God's great mercy that the plans were made whereby you and I can become the temple of God. After man had fallen in Eden, God foretold Adam that there should be 2 classes of people in the world: the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. It is indicated in Gen. 3:15 that the seed of the woman would ultimately triumph over the seed of the serpent. This seed is the pivot on which God's plan for us revolves. This can be established by referring to Paul's record in Gal. 3:8, 10, 16, 27-29, coupled with the well-known promises made to Abraham and renewed to Isaac and Jacob. That God has completed His plans with which we are told to build our temple, is shown in 2 Tim. 1:9-10 where Paul sums it up beautifully:

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His Own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

This may bring up the question, "Why did God make such plans?" The word 'temple' itself is the key. We have only to think of what a temple is to find out. A temple is built for the purpose of HONOURING AND GLORIFYING GOD. It is God's desire that we should honour Him in ALL that we do. This is little to ask when compared with the reward offered for so doing. Christ said:

"To him that OVERCOMETH will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

It is in the overcoming of our fleshly weaknesses, whether in thought, in word, or in deed, that we glorify God. We wish to couple with this another fact as a word of warning. The architect of any building is the only one who has the power to STOP THE WORK on it. If it is not being built

according to plan, he can cause the work to stop without notice. We have definite proof of a time in which our Architect exercised His authority. In Gen. 6:5 we read—

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

The result is well known. Few, that is, 8 souls were saved. The rest, whose works were unsatisfactory, were destroyed.

THE SITE

Let us look at one or two thoughts that are related to the selection of a SITE. A number of sites are selected and then one of that number is chosen as the most suitable one for the purpose. The same is quite true of our position today. Throughout the world we see millions of people who do not have the Truth and will not learn it till Christ returns to the earth when all shall know the Lord. They will not have the opportunity of building a temple to God because their own lusts and desires have blinded them so that they cannot see the light of the truth.

The second class—those potential, but unchosen sites—represent those people who have come to know the Truth but for some reason have never accepted it. The reason may vary from a love of this present world, right down to the simple, but harmful, fear of the waters of baptism. Regardless of what the reason is, it indicates that a weakness is present which will keep the person from accepting the Truth if it is not rectified. The outstanding feature in the selection of a site is that it is capable of meeting the Architect's requirements for his building. We are in exactly the same position. Have you ever seen a person rise from the waters of baptism who did not possess the necessary faculties, IF EXERCISED, to be a suitable site for a temple of God? I doubt if anyone has ever put on Christ's name who did not have the ability to obey his commands if they would take the trouble to stir themselves and rise above their weaknesses.

THE FOUNDATION

The FOUNDATION is the next feature to attract our attention. We note that it is built to withstand a greater strain than it will ever be asked to carry. Our foundation is more sure than any that man can desire, for Paul says, (Eph. 2:20), we —

“. . . are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

We wish to include Christ's name also, because he was the greatest Prophet of all. This blends with another of Paul's statements (1 Cor. 3:11).

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus."

Where could we hope to get a more solid footing than that? It is a matter of record that their words and works pleased God, and now, nearly all of them are asleep in a timeless grave awaiting that better thing which God has assured them of. We have all these things reserved for our —

". . . reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that we (the sons and daughters of God) may be PERFECT, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

This foundation has been available to all who seek to please God for hundreds of years. Only a comparatively small number have ever started to build upon it.

THE CORNERSTONE

This brings us to another interesting highlight. In a building a certain amount of work is necessary before the CORNERSTONE can be laid. When the cornerstone is laid then the building assumes a definite relationship to the architect and his plans. It is no longer just a construction job, but a building that has been dedicated in public and has taken on the name which its designer has chosen for it. This is one of the most beautiful parts of our life. After we, as potential-temple sites, have built sufficiently on the foundation then we seek to set our cornerstone. If an examination reveals that we have advanced sufficiently for this operation, then we are baptized into Christ, who is also our cornerstone, as Paul says in Eph. 2:20:

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the CHIEF CORNERSTONE."

When we do this, we take on "the only name under heaven, given among men, whereby we may be saved." We are definitely related to God as His sons and daughters, while at the same time becoming connected with the plan of which we spoke in our early remarks, for as Paul says:

"We are become Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The laying of the cornerstone also brings with it a note of warning. Many fine cornerstones have lost their beauty in the public's eye because the rest of the building failed to match its beauty. Would we like to have this happen? Would we like to see Christ, our cornerstone, ignored by our friends and neighbours because our temple was poorly constructed? Would we like to have our neighbours refuse to listen to the Truth because we fail to live it? This not only CAN happen, but it HAS happened. Therefore, brethren and sisters, let us follow Paul's example and be "imitators of Christ," so that our temple will, to some extent, match the beauty of our cornerstone.

THE WALLS

Let us see some of the points suggested in the building of the WALLS. First we note that progress is steady. Closely related to this is the fact that when time is lost due to weather or shortages, the finish of the wall is delayed. In building our temple we, too, have to work steadily. Isaiah 8:9, 10 brings this to our attention:

"Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk (of the Word) and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

Peter exhorts us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The word "grow" suggests steady progress, or to progress steadily. When, for some reason or other, we lose time in our building, that time is lost forever. We may try to deceive ourselves by saying that we will make up for lost time. That is impossible. As long as there are only 24 hours in every day, we cannot waste 24 hours in one day and then serve God for 48 hours the next day to even things up. Time lost will delay the finish of our temple. If delayed sufficiently often, then what will the Architect's Representative find on the day of inspection?

We know the answer to that question. Do you think He will like it? In my opinion, Christ's words to the builder will have the following salutation: "Thou wicked and slothful servant." Do WE want to hear those words?

THE MORTAR

Another thing that slows progress on a wall is untempered MORTAR. Mortar, if unused for a short time, becomes stiff and unfit for use, due to LACK OF WATER in it. It becomes very much like salt which has lost its savour, which is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Untempered mortar suggests that a certain thing should be done regularly. We add water to mortar to keep it fit for use. We should do our Readings regularly, and so keep our building progressing steadily. By so doing we keep Christ, the Living Water, before us at all times. If we are in his company often enough, then surely, we will become more like him every day. If we are not, then that Living Water will gradually leave us, and we will become as useless to Christ as mortar without water is to a builder. It is impossible to overstress this point for neglect of the daily reading of God's Word is the start of decay in a brother or sister in Christ.

How often have we looked at a wall and thought how much nicer it would have been if certain cull or OFF-COLOR BRICKS had not been put in during a careless moment? This shows us that we can never be too careful in our building. Our walk in the Truth may be an example to all in a general sense, but here and there an unguarded word or hasty deed detracts from the beauty of it. God will view the matter in the very same way that a mortal architect does.

THE PILLARS

The COLUMNS or PILLARS are the next items of interest to us. Let us turn to II Peter 1:5-8:

"And beside this, giving all diligence, ADD to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness and to brotherly-kindness love. For IF these things be in you, and ABOUND, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Just as a pillar is a source of support, even so these characteristics will support us if they are in us. One or two will not be sufficient. You never saw a literal temple that only had one or two pillars in it, so why should we think that we will be accepted if we have only one or two desirable features in us? To say that we will, is just pure presumption, which is abomination in God's eyes. Let us take note of that little word "add" and continue to develop these things that are so acceptable to God. We note that great care is taken in a building to construct the pillars to resist the ravages of fire. Should we be less careful? Let us turn to I Cor. 3:12-14:

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble—every man's work shall be MADE MANIFEST, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be REVEALED BY FIRE. And the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

That should show us how necessary it is to protect our temple against this great test. We will not have anything to be afraid of, if the Plan has been closely followed.

As we turn our attention to the putting on of the ROOF, we note one fact that is obvious to all. A poor roof can damage any temple. If you are wondering to what part of our life this can be compared, you only have to think of the roof as it is related to progress made on the Temple. It is not put on until the work is in its final stages. If a literal temple can be spoiled in the final stages of construction, so can a spiritual one. We only have to think of such great men as Solomon and Hezekiah to realize that this is possible. Both men set a fine example in the early part of their lives. Toward the end of Solomon's life it is recorded that outlandish women caused him to sin, so that his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David, his father. We read of this in I Kings 11:4:

"For it came to pass when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father."

Of Hezekiah we read that his heart was puffed up after God extended his life some fifteen years. By simply relaxing for a short time from their determination to serve God, two great men will stand before Christ with a blot marring an otherwise clean sheet. Both of them realized that they had erred and humbled themselves in God's eyes because of it. These things which caused them to fail are left as examples to us, in order that we should avoid them. It is easy for us to make a good start, and even continue to press upward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ for some time, but how many of us will be able to echo Paul's words found in II Tim. 4:7,8:

"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the Faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that LOVE HIS APPEARING."

THE FINAL INSPECTION

This introduces us to the final comparison we wish to make. On completion of the work, a day is set aside in which the Architect with many noted people will come to inspect our building, and if it meets with their approval, it will be accepted and be put into service.

WE look for a great day of inspection, too. OUR temple will be examined by the Architect's Representative, Jesus Christ, in the presence of the faithful of all generations. If we are accepted then, we will enjoy the glories of the Kingdom with Christ and be honoured among the nations. Brethren and sisters, THIS is the day for which we pray—that we read about, sing about, and of which we talk. Are we doing ALL in our power to make sure that we follow the plan that God has laid out for us? If we are, then we will be a temple indeed, built to the honour and glory of God. We will certainly receive that prize, which is the DREAM of all on this earth, but the HOPE of very few—even ETERNAL LIFE.

Let us sum up our remarks by saying that OUR TEMPLE WILL BE ONLY AS GOOD AS THE TIME AND MATERIAL WE PUT INTO IT. The plans which God has drawn up for us are the ones that made Christ such a beautiful temple, because—as we have already said—he followed them exactly. In the day of inspection, will our temple be outstanding in its beauty, or will it be just another building? —R. S. Taken from June 1951 Berean
