



The Purpose of King Solomon's Temple

By Dr. Bing Johnson, 32, KCCH

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The whole system of rituals, legends and allegories in Symbolic Masonry centers around the building of King Solomon's Temple. Nowhere in Masonry is it explained why the Temple was built or what its primary purpose was.

The Temple was only a part of King Solomon's vast palatial complex and was located adjacent to his personal palace. From 960 to 587 BC it functioned as God's palace and as Israel's National Center of Worship.

King David made it clear that his son, Solomon, was to be responsible for building God's house and court. It was intended to be a successor to the nomadic Tabernacle instituted in the wilderness at Sinai by Moses.

The Tabernacle was a tent 15' X 45' surrounded by a courtyard 75' x 150' x 15' and was to provide a resting place for The Ark of The Covenant. The Ark of The Covenant was an oblong box 45" X 27" X 27" and housed the second set of the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses upon Mount Sinai. It became the symbol of God's presence. The Israelites believed that God actually dwelt on the Mercy Seat upon the top of the Ark and was a symbol of His involvement in their lives.

The Temple stood vacant over a year because God wanted it dedicated during the month of Abraham's birth. The dedication was also a tribute to Solomon who brought Israel to nationhood and peace with prosperity. His wisdom and love made him famous throughout the ancient world.

During the dedication, priests carried the Ark of The Covenant, the Holy of Holies, the symbol of God's providence and Israel's salvation, to the most sacred area. In order that the lessons would never be forgotten, King Solomon chose 25 brethren or Elus, and brought them to a secret vault where he conferred his wisdom upon them.

The Temple and faith become one. We need only to recall King Solomon's Temple to realize that God will never forsake men of good will, and that, we too can build mighty temples of spirit.

When the purpose for the building of King Solomon's Temple is clearly understood, it is evident that the purpose for Freemasons in building their personal and individual spiritual temples is that it is symbolic of preparing a place for the essence and presence of God to dwell in the midst of their lives. To be a dynamic force in people's lives, God must dwell in the most holy place, their own personal sanctum sanctorum.

To this day archaeological excavations have not turned up any unquestionable evidence that King Solomon's Temple ever existed. There is evidence of King Solomon's stables. However, authorities agree that it was built near if not upon the sacred rock where David built his altar, which is now occupied by the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of Omar. There are many exaggerated and grandiose descriptions and models. The most accurate descriptions are probably found in 1st Kings and 2nd Chronicles.

Three temples in succession were erected. The building of the first was reportedly begun in 1012 BC and finished and dedicated in 1004 BC. It was said to have been of the Phoenician type, with Egyptian and Aegean features.

Solomon's Temple lasted thirty-three years after which it was plundered and finally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. Zerubbabel rebuilt it between 520 and 516 BC. The third Temple was that of Herod the Great, begun in 20 BC and destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

It is said King Solomon sketched the Temple's symbolic dimensions and planned

its decorations following visions revealed by the GAOTU. The Temple was not large in overall size, but its massive substructure, formed about a mountain, lifted it high above all other buildings and temples, making it the focal point of ancient Jerusalem.

According to 1st Kings and 2nd Chronicles 80,000 hewers in quarries, 70,000 bearers of burden and 3,300 masters of the work, 153,300 in all, completed the Temple in 6 years, 6 months and 10 days.

The ground area occupied by the whole Temple was probably 60' X 150'.

Though it is stated that the Temple was built of stone, the emphasis is placed on cedar, fir and cypress and would indicate that stone was used when nothing else would do.

The outside ornamental features consisted of a 15' X 20' porch. The two columns flanking the porch were Jachin and Boaz and were cast hollow of brass or bronze, 3" in thickness, 27' high and about 6' in diameter and surrounded by metal capitals 7 1/2' high, ornamented by a network, leaf work, and pomegranates. These columns may have supported a porch roof or may have been purely ornamental.

King Solomon's Temple was three stories high and was surrounded on three sides by a sort of "lean to."

The front room was 30' X 60' and the roof was 45' high and was lined with cedar boards and its floor was fir and cypress. The room could not have held more than 300 to 400 people.

The middle chamber is believed to have been the middle story. There seems to have been but one door to the middle chamber. Hence, there was probably only one winding stairway. There is no scriptural account as to the number of steps in the winding stairs, so that has probably been supplied by Masonic ritualists.

The Sanctum Sanctorum was 30' X 30' and was completely dark except for light that might enter through the single door. Inside, the Ark of the Covenant was surrounded by two cherubim whose wings touched and the opposite walls were overlaid by gold.

The symbolism, allegories and legends of King Solomon and his Temple are important parts of our ritual and do not depend on archaeological findings or exact architectural descriptions.

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