

THE LORD'S RETURN, 5 pgs

A study taken from various chapters of the 2 vol. set For the Love of God by D.A. Carson

Ezekiel exiled in Babylon witnessed in a vision the glory of the Lord abandoning the Jerusalem temple and departing from that city (**Ez.10:18-19; 11:22-24**). Twenty years later in another vision he witnessed the Lord's return (**Ez.43:1-9**).

On one occasion **king David** expresses his desire to build a temple (house) in which to place the Ark of the Covenant. He wanted to build something grand and magnificent to replace the small and unostentatious tabernacle to represent God's presence in Israel (**2 Sam.7**). However in a turn-about God sends word to David through **Nathan** the prophet that He intends to build a dynasty (same word as "house") for David – something that will be more enduring than any mere building.^b

the House of David

*The Lord ... declared: I took you from tending sheep in the pasture and selected you to be the leader of my people Israel. **I have been with you wherever you have gone**, and I have destroyed all your enemies before your eyes. Now I will make your name as famous as anyone who has ever lived on the earth! And I will provide a homeland for my people Israel, planting them in a secure place where they will never be disturbed ...*

*Furthermore ... I will make a house for you—a dynasty of kings! ... I will raise up one of your descendants, your own offspring, [Solomon, not Jesus] and I will make his kingdom strong. He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for my name. And **I will secure his royal throne forever**. I will be his father, and he will be my son. If he sins, I will correct and discipline him with the rod, like any father would do. But my favor will not be taken from him as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from your sight. Your house (dynasty) and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever [ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ]. (**2 Sam.7:8-16**)*

Here is something more powerful than a succession of descendants in David's line continually occupying the throne. In the course of time, the prophecies about the coming David or son of David became freighted with much greater promise. Isaiah foresees someone who will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom called **Mighty God** and **Everlasting Father (Isa.9:6-7)**, an heir to David who maintains the Davidic dynasty not by passing it on, but by his own eternal reign.^b

The Temple Solomon Built

Solomon's temple was filled with the glory of the Lord at its dedication.

*Then the priests ... placed **the Ark of the Lord's Covenant** beneath the wings of the cherubim ... When they came out of the Holy Place, a thick cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple ... (**1 Ki.8:6-11**)*

The Temple was meant to serve as a single facility for the United Monarchy, where sacrifices to God would take place. However David's line provided little enduring stability. Within 2 generations the Davidic dynasty lost the northern 10 tribes, and it's history from that point to the exile turned out to

be fickle and repulsively wicked. **Ez.22** condemns the sins of Jerusalem, and particularly the sins of its leaders – the kings, princes, priests, prophets – and shows the ways in which their sins brought ruin to the people as a whole.^d

God Upholds His Glory

God's driving concern for his glory lies behind the judgments upon Israel that have fallen and are about to fall. For the sake of his own name God did what would keep his name *from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight He had brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt*, **Ez.20:14, 22**; see also **Ez.36 & 39**. God's awesome plan of redemption is *to the praise of his glory* (**Eph.1:3-14**). Therefore he will not permit his people **to be comfortable in their sin**. Years of God's forbearance (whether then or now) must ultimately issue either in transformation or in judgment. See **Beyond Moses**

Listen ... the Lord has spoken against ... the entire family I rescued from Egypt: From among all the families on the earth, I have been intimate with you alone. That is why I must punish you for all your sins. (**Amos 3:1-2**)

Reading through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel **we find the same themes repeated**: sin in the covenant community, threatened judgment, then enacted judgment, first for the northern tribes, then for Judah. When **Nebuchadnezzar** king of Babylon first subdued Jerusalem in 605 BC, he had a number of educated people from the aristocracy deported to Babylon. The prophet **Daniel** was among those swept up in this first deportation (**Dan.1:1, 3-4, 6**). In 597 BC Nebuchadnezzar ordered a second deportation and had much of Jerusalem's population (including **Ezekiel**) also deported 700 miles to Babylon. The exiles and many of those remaining in Jerusalem hoped that the Exile would be short, that those who had been deported would soon be allowed to return to the city and that it would be spared further disaster. Impoverished and cut off from Jerusalem and the temple, the exiles dreamed nostalgically of home and begged God to rescue them. They could not conceive that in another decade Jerusalem would be utterly destroyed. Yet in July 586 BC during another siege the Babylonians breached the walls and plundered the city. On Aug.14 they burned the city and temple Solomon built.

Return of the Exiles

When **Cyrus** king of Persia came to power, the Lord moved him to reverse the Assyrian and Babylonian policy of relocating the most gifted, most learned, most noble, most privileged of the aristocracy and leading citizens of subjected territories to some new area far removed from their own land for training and eventual incorporation into government (**Dan.1:1-7**). [See my essay **The Servant of the Lord**]

*In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, the Lord fulfilled the prophecy he had given through Jeremiah. **He stirred the heart of Cyrus** to put this proclamation in writing and to send it throughout his kingdom ... The Lord, the God of heaven ... has appointed me to build him a Temple at Jerusalem ... Any of you who are his people may go to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this Temple of the Lord, the God of Israel ...* (**Ezra 1:1-3**)

... Then all the people gave a great shout, praising the Lord because the foundation of the Lord's Temple had been laid. But many of the older ... leaders who had seen the first Temple wept aloud when they saw the new Temple's foundation [in disappointment because of the contrast between this small beginning and the splendor of Solomon's temple]. The others, however, were shouting for joy. The **joyful shouting and weeping mingled together** in a loud noise that could be heard far in the distance. (**Ezra 3:11-13**)^a

Return of the King

Since the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem, God had been promising new leadership,^b a restoration to the land,^c and moral and spiritual transformation ^b (**Ez.36**). **Ez.37** anticipates the time when Israel [metaphor for the redeemed], under God's servant, David [metaphor for Christ], will live in the land forever. ^b

²⁴My servant **David will be their king**,^b and they will have only one shepherd [the northern and southern tribes of Israel will again be united] ... ²⁵They will live in the land I gave my servant Jacob, the land where their ancestors lived. They and their children and their grandchildren after them will live there forever ^c ... And my servant **David will be their prince forever**. ²⁶And I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. I will give them their land and increase their numbers and I will put my Temple among them forever. ^b ²⁷I will make my home among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Though largely cast in the familiar categories of the old covenant, these and similar prophecies look forward to the glorious messianic future. The NT writers insist that these same categories have a predictive function **fulfilled in Jesus** the son of David and all that he brings.^b The ultimate hope lies at the very end of history (in these last days). With the resurrection of Christ that end has begun. The consummation is not yet but **the kingdom of God has dawned**. This is the return of the Lord to Jerusalem and to the temple that is the ultimate fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision. God will manifest himself among his people once more and abide with them forever.

... And from that day the name of the city will be **The Lord Is There**. (the last words of Ezekiel, **Ez.48:35**)

So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So **you must live as God's obedient children**. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. (**1 Pt.1:13-15**)

² And I [John] saw the holy city, **the new Jerusalem**, coming down from God out of heaven ... ³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people ... ²²I saw no temple in the city,^b for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. **Rev.21:** [see my essay, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, notes **b & h.**]

End Notes

^a This building [aka Zerubbabel's temple] is referred to in literature as **the 2nd temple**. It has a history of being plundered, defiled, and restored. It was expanded and significantly upgraded beginning in 20 BC by the half-Jewish/half-Edumean **Herod**, the Roman-appointed king of Judea. The extravagant edifice stood less than a century before the first Jewish Revolt against Rome began in 66 AD and in 70 AD the Roman general (later to become emperor) **Titus** looted the Temple and leveled it.

Following the destruction of the Second Temple during the First Revolt and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem itself, accompanied by the exile of its inhabitants during the Second Jewish Revolt (132-135 AD) Judaism turned from being a temple-based cult that relied on daily sacrifices to its god. Small utilitarian buildings called **synagogues** were built in many cities to replace the single Temple. In lieu of animal sacrifices every Sabbath prayer and instruction in the law took place.

^b In the symbolism of the OT, David and son of David are metaphorical references to Christ. **The future eternal temple** isn't referring to a building that partitioned off the most holy place from common access by the people, but to **the reality of our final state**, a dwelling place in the very presence of the holy God among his people now sanctified.

*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, **obeyed and went**, even though he did not know where he was going. **By faith** he made his home in the promised land like a stranger [wanderer] in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward [ahead] to the city [promised dwelling place] with foundations [permanent, as opposed to the tents of a nomadic people], whose architect and builder is God. (Heb.11:8-10)*

***You have not come ... [under the strict judgment of the Law where The sight was so terrifying that even Moses exclaimed, I am trembling with fear, Heb.12:18-21] But you have come** to Mount Zion [not the earthly one], to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels **in joyful assembly**, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks [of forgiveness,] a better word than the [vengeance demanded by the] blood of Abel. (v.22-24)*

*[Sure there is judgment against those who refuse God's grace, Heb.12:14-17] Whoever believes in [God's only son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe **stands condemned already** because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light [7:7], and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light ... The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but **whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them** [the matter of salvation has already been adjudicated and settled for both believers and unbelievers], Jn.3:18-19, 35-36*

Therefore the arrival of the great day of God's vengeance precedes the joyous occasion of our gathering at **the wedding supper of the Lamb** [There is no reason for believers to be anxious. This is a time of rejoicing and celebration for them.], **Rev.19:1-9**

¹Then I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City [*combines elements of Jerusalem, the temple, and the garden of Eden*], the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband ... **God's dwelling place is now among the people**, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes [*all sorrows and regrets will be forgotten*]. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for **the old order of things has passed away** ... ⁹One of the seven angels ... said, Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb ... ²²I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple ... ²⁷**Nothing impure will ever enter it**, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, **Rev.21:** [*see also the parables of the Great Banquets, Lk.14:15-24; Mt.22:1-14*]

° There will be no more land belonging to the various tribes descended from Abraham. The land promises of the OT are subsumed under the greater promise that the entire Earth will belong to God's people (ie, Abraham's true descendants, **Rom.4:16-25**).

Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based ... on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. (Rom.4:13)

° **In any declining culture much of the declension** comes about by leaders and preachers who are self-serving or even rapacious, corrupt, and perhaps vicious, people who are far more interested in gaining and retaining power than in serving, who devote their attention to the "spin" they give the public in place of truthfulness. Pretty soon the entire fabric of the culture unravels. **Corruption** is soon tolerated, then expected. **Cynicism** becomes the order of the day. More and more people do more and more of what they think they can get away with. More and more frequently truth and integrity actually come under attack. That is what happened to the ancient kingdom of David and is happening to the US.