

THE LEGACY OF THE TEMPLE (Mk. 11:17)

Mk. 11:17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?

Previously we were studying the scene where Jesus entered the temple and dealt with the moneychangers. They had changed that holy place where once God had been worshipped into “a den of thieves”. How could they have sunk so low, especially a people who had been privileged with the care and protection with which Israel had been blessed? ... Let’s look at this ...

Step out of Jerusalem and stand upon the hill to the east of the city. There from the Mount of Olives, Jesus was looking out over the temple built by Zerrubabel, following the return from the Babylonian exile, and restored by King Herod the Great. Step back further in time until there was nothing on that hill ... it was simply one of the mountains of Judea.

It did not always belong to the Jews. It was built by a man called Jebus, who was a Canaanite, **Gen. 10:15** And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, **16** And the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite, **17** And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, **18** And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad.

Canaan was the son of Ham who was the son of Noah, and the brother of Shem and Japheth. One evening Canaan disgraced his drunken father, Noah, and he incurred a curse, **Gen. 9:24** And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. **25** And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. **26** And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. So, it was prophesied the Canaanites would serve the Israelites ... and this man Jebus belonged to the Canaanites who had occupied and ruled this area, the land of Canaan. There were different local tribes, but overall, they were known as the Canaanites.

When Abraham was instructed to leave his home city in Ur of the Chaldees (Babylon), God promised him, **Gen. 12:1** Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: **2** And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: **3** And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. ...

In the next chapter, Abram was dwelling in Canaan (Gen. 13:12), and the Lord said to him, **Gen. 13:14** Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: **15** For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. **16** And I will make thy

seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. ¹⁷ Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

Two chapters later old Abram was trying to figure out how God would bring about the promise (i.e. concerning his seed), and the Lord explained to him, **Gen. 15:1** Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. ... ⁷ I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. ... Abram asked, ⁸ whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? ... He used the future tense, and God repeated the promise, ¹⁸ Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: ¹⁹ The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, ²⁰ And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, ²¹ And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites. ... God promised the legacy of the land from the River Nile to the River Euphrates.

The problem, though, was the Canaanites. What was to happen to them? ... God had also said to Abram, ¹³ Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years [*i.e. the incarceration in Egypt*]; ¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve [*Egypt*], will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ... ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again.

Another two chapters later, and the Lord spoke again with Abram, **Gen. 17:4** behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations ... ⁶ And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. ⁸ And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

In the meantime, Abraham had a son, Isaac ... who, in his turn, had two sons, Esau and Jacob ... and Jacob would have twelve sons. In the latter end of Jacob's life, he and eleven of his sons and their families moved down to Egypt to be with his other son who had been brought there many years previously. They settled in the land, and enjoyed the green fields of Goshen. Initially, everything was well, but new Egyptian administrations brought suffering and slavery to the Hebrews. After four hundred years of hardship, God appeared to Moses and said, **Ex. 3:8** I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the

Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a *land flowing with milk and honey*; unto the place of the *Canaanites*, and the *Hittites*, and the *Amorites*, and the *Perizzites*, and the *Hivites*, and the *Jebusites*.

Under the leadership of Moses, the people left Egypt and wandered through the vast wilderness of Sinai. During those forty difficult years, the Lord taught the Hebrews many lessons, and throughout their journey He reminded them of their goal, **Lev. 20:24** *Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people. ...* **26** *And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine. ...* Separation and holiness ... the distinctive marks of God's people.

Moses died and was replaced by Joshua. God repeated His promise to him, **Josh. 1:2** *go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.* **3** *Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.* **4** *From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.*

When they arrived at the borders of Canaan, they were awe-struck at Jericho's fortifications, but the Lord gave them the victory, - as He promised He would, - and they took the land of Canaan, - as He promised they would. Originally, they were to destroy the Canaanites, but they failed to do that ... which proved to cause them many problems in the future for the Canaanites would fight with them, and also introduce idolatry. ... The Judges were raised as leaders during those times.

After the judges, Saul became King, and then David. At the beginning of David's reign, Abner, - previously Saul's general, - had made Saul's son (Ishbosheth) king, and he reigned from Gibeon, - a few miles to the north of Jerusalem, **II Sam. 2:10** *... But the house of Judah followed David.* **11** *And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months ...* Hebron was David's capital city ... the city where Abraham, Sarah, Leah, Isaac and Jacob are buried. He was following the directions of the Lord, **II Sam. 2:1** *And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.*

During his time in Hebron he faced conflict with the remaining army loyal to Saul, and he also fought many battles with the Philistines, who were a constant trouble from along the Mediterranean shoreline. Undeterred, he brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem, - the same ark which was built by Moses in the wilderness ... the one which occupied the centre of the camp in the desert ... It had been kept in Shiloh, stolen by the Philistines, retrieved by the Israelites, and it was being carried into Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:12). ... Where was it going to be kept though? David thought it terrible that he had a beautiful palace, but the ark had no such ornate surroundings. Therefore, he decided he would build a 'house' for the Lord to dwell in ... and he bought the land upon which it would be built, - Abraham bought the field of Machpelah in Hebron (Gen. 23:16), Jacob bought a field in Shechem (Gen. 33:19), and David had bought the ground from Araunah/Ornan the Jebusite (II Sam 24:18ff; I Chron. 21:15ff.).

However, the Lord instructed him that his son, Solomon, would build the temple, and he did. It was the most beautiful construction, and at its dedication, **II Chron. 6:12** And he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands: **13** For Solomon had made a brasen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven, **14** And said, O LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth ... **7:1** Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. **2** And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house.

God also blessed Solomon with a peaceful reign, - no wars and no fighting, - **II Chron. 9:26** And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. (cf. **Gen. 15:18** Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates ... **Josh. 1:4** From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea)

After Solomon, his son Rehoboam became king ... and during his reign the nation was divided, - two tribes in the south remained with Rehoboam, while ten tribes to the north gave their allegiance to Jeroboam. ... Because they wandered from the Lord, both nations went into decline, and Jehovah was either forgotten or 'rebranded'. The northern tribes, - who had followed

Jeroboam, - were conquered by the Assyrians in 721 BC, and the southern tribes were conquered by the Babylonians. The temple was destroyed, and the people exiled.

About seventy years later, King Cyrus of Persia sent some Jews back to rebuild Jerusalem. They also built the second temple, - a smaller construction, and less ornate, - under the governance of Zerubbabel, **Ezra 6:19** *And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month ... in their own capital city once again.*

On their return from Babylon, they brought back with them many of the ways of Babylon, and they integrated them into the worship in the temple ... This was not for the good of the glory of Jehovah! ... And over the years their religion declined, in their standing before God. They suffered great injustices and terror, not least at the hands of the Greek Seleucid Antiochus Epiphanes who threw a pig's head on the temple altar. The Maccabees tried to improve the situation, and known as the Hasmonean dynasty, they did maintain a measure of semblance among the people ... The nation, though, was so far away from God ... and that is the background to the history of their temple in Jerusalem! ... And this was a history familiar to the Jewish people in the time of Jesus. Sadly, for many, the years had had stolen the memories of how great God had made them and kept them.

Stand there again, where Jesus was standing ... outside of Jerusalem, beside that wilting fig tree ... and look out over what was now called Herod's temple. It was no longer considered God's temple, but it had come to resemble a building to glorify man.

Jesus entered that temple ... and He fulfilled the beautiful prophecy of Haggai, **Haggai 2:3** *Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory [i.e. Solomon's temple]? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? ⁴ Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: ⁵ According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. ⁶ For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; ⁷ And I will shake all nations, and *the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory*, saith the LORD of hosts. ⁸ The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. ⁹ The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the*

former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts. ... And just as promised, *Jesus* entered this second temple.

In His tirade against the moneychangers and the stallholders, He quoted from the Old Testament, **Mk. 11:17** And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer ... That's a quote from the prophecy of Isaiah, **Is. 56:5** Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. **6** Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; **7** Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in *my house of prayer*: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. ... Notice 'mine house' and 'my walls' (v.5), 'my holy mountain', 'my house of prayer', 'mine altar', 'mine house' (v.7) ... No wonder the Lord Jesus Christ was offended at what was taking place in *His* house! ... The temple was constructed for the purpose of the worship of God, but sadly it had been turned into something else, never intended.

... It was *His* house ... and it was meant to be a 'house of prayer'. Away back in the times of the psalmist, he wrote, **Ps. 27:4** One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. ... Those days were long gone because the religious leaders had taken over the temple and they did not know how to pray, for they were strangers to God. ... This was the house of God, ... but instead, it had turned into a place where the people had to pay to get into! It was supposed to be a meditative place, but it had to become like a market place!

Look again at what Jesus said, **Mk. 11:17** Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer ... That is what it was intended for, - a house of prayer for *all nations* ... From the beginning, - when it was constructed, - *that* was God's intention. ... It was not only intended for the Jews. ... The Jewish leaders believed the Gentiles had no place there, but that is not what God had said! They had convinced themselves God was not interested in anybody else, only them. They were the only people who deserved God's attention! ... But

they were wrong. ... They did not want to have anything to do with the Gentiles. ... They had shut the Gentiles out! ... Let's listen to how the Lord inspired old Simeon in the temple, **Lk. 2:28** Then took he him [*Jesus*] up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, **29** Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: **30** For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, **31** Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; **32** A light to lighten *the Gentiles*, and the glory of *thy people Israel*. ... There was no other way of coming to the light other than by coming to God. The purpose of the temple was to bring both Jew and Gentile to Him ... but if the Jews kept the Gentiles out, they were working against God's plan of salvation ... and that *is* what they were doing!

Look again at Is. 56, **7** ... mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. **8** The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, beside those that are gathered unto him. ... These Jews did not want *others* to be ingathered, *but God did!* ... **II Chron. 6:32** Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched out arm; if they come and pray in *this house*; **33** Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, and do according to all that *the stranger* calleth to thee for; that *all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel*, and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name.

... There was nowhere else to go to worship God, and when Jesus said Jesus, *You* have made it into a 'den of robbers', - He was referring to Jeremiah when Jeremiah accused the false prophets of speaking 'lying words' (v.4), **Jer. 7:11** *Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers*

And because the Jews in Jesus' day continued to lock the Gentiles out, God decided to deal with them, beginning with the destruction of their temple. ... How did He do it? ... He did not 'cast them off', but instead He 'set them aside'. Here is how Paul taught, **Rom. 11:13** For I [*a Jew*] speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles ... **15** For if the casting away of them [*the Jews*] be the reconciling of the world [*the Gentiles*], what shall the receiving of them [*the Jews*] be, but life from the dead? **16** For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. **17** And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou [*the Gentiles*], being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; **18** Boast not against the branches [*the Jews*]. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. **19** Thou wilt say then, The branches [*the Jews*] were broken off, that I [*the Gentiles*] might be grafted in. **20** Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: **21** For if God spared not the

natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee ... **25** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that *blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.* **26** And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: **27** For this is my covenant unto them [*the Jews*], when I shall take away their sins. **28** As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

Do you see what that is saying? ... **Is. 2:2** And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. ... **Zech. 8:22** Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord ... **Zech. 14:16** And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts.

The Church today is 'the temple of the Holy Spirit' (I Cor. 6:19). When Jesus departed this world, the Holy Spirit was sent to take His place (Jn. 16:7) ... The next great event will be when Jesus returns, **Zech. 14:4** And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east and He will welcome all His people into *His* house, for He declares, **Ezek. 20:40** in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them.

Jesus said to the people gathered in the old temple, **Mk. 11:17** My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer ... That is what God *will* bring about, when Jesus comes again. Amen.