

His Hands Shall Finish It

*“The hands of
Zerubbabel have
laid the foundation
of this house; his
hands shall also
finish it; and thou
shalt know that
the LORD of hosts
hath sent me
unto you.”
—Zech. 4:9*

OUR TEXT CONCERNS THE

building of Zerubbabel's temple which took place after the return of the Jews from captivity. This prophecy teaches a much larger lesson than to limit its application to the local events that took place during Zerubbabel's day. Instead, it has a greater significance in the building of the spiritual temple of God that has been underway during the present Gospel Age.—I Cor. 3:16,17

As in Zerubbabel's day, there was opposition to the building of that temple, and so also has there been opposition to the present building work of the spiritual temple. This is spoken of in the prophecy as being a “great mountain” (vs. 7), which in prophetic language illustrates the greater antitypical work. During this age the ‘great mountain’ has in part represented the kingdoms of this world that have wielded their power and wealth to adversely

affect the construction work of the spiritual temple, and the gathering of the little flock. (Luke 12:32) Much has been antagonistic to the success of this work, such as error masquerading as truth and darkness appearing as light; but the heavenly Architect has arranged to providentially care for his children and the building of the temple.

What has God arranged to do for his people? Will he vanquish the enemies of truth and righteousness? Will he erect a protecting fence around them? We answer no, because he permits the enemy to pursue their course, and his people to be tested for their loyalty to him. God ultimately defeats the enemy's purpose by giving his people spiritual vision; and during Zerubbabel's day he sent two of his prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, with a vision. The vision consisted of a candlestick that provides light. The oil that fed the lamps came through seven golden pipes from two olive trees. (Zech. 4:2) The message is particularly meaningful because it was "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." (vs.6) How strengthening this was to the people in that time, and what an encouragement it is to us in our day.

The children of Israel believed that some day they would be the light of the world. God warned them that as the secret of the candlestick's light was in the oil coming from the two olive trees (vs. 3), so also the secret of their success as a nation lay in their having a continual supply of his Holy Spirit. But, to the natural eye, seeing on one side the military might which had gathered against them, and on the other side nothing but the Spirit of God invisibly working, it seemed their chances of success

were remote. The same is true today—the Lord’s people are in a minority as regards numbers and earthly influence. Some may have supposed that success would be ensured if they could count on the support of earthly powers, but the LORD’s message is ‘not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit.’

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

Let us consider the progress of this temple-building work and note how marvelously it has proceeded, even though it is spoken of as having taken place in the “day of small things.” (vs. 10) This ‘day’ began at Pentecost when the foundation of the spiritual house was laid. For thirty years the life and earthly ministry of our dear Redeemer was mostly hidden from the public’s understanding. Mary, and a few other close friends of our Lord, knew of his miraculous birth, and they no doubt pondered over the angel’s message, and the prophecies concerning him.

Wonderful things were foretold concerning the child Jesus, and as the years passed with no apparent sign of the foretold predictions being fulfilled, some perhaps felt that they would never come to pass. His eventual identification with John at the Jordan River, and his baptism, and anointing with the Holy Spirit, were great things. We know how the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus was viewed from a purely human standpoint, and it was considered largely as an apparent failure in the eyes of the worldly-wise. He presented himself to Israel as their Messiah, but because he did not measure up to their perception of what Messiah should be, they rejected him.

A few days before he died, Jesus said to his disciples, "I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) He was an overcomer in every sense of the word, although it did not appear evident when, a few days later, he hung upon the cross dying. There, amidst a fearful darkness, Jesus experienced his greatest triumph over the world. To the average man, it was only the end of a very foolish and fanatical life. The death and burial of Jesus, although it may have been a day of 'small things' in the estimation of those who witnessed the events, it was actually a day of great victory. The results of these events will only be seen when every creature which is upon earth will lift up his voice in praise to him saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."—Rev. 5:13

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

We read that it was a day of small things when Zerubbabel laid the foundation of the house. The foundation was laid by his own hands (Zech. 4:9), and indicates that it was a work which he attended to personally. After our Lord's ascension to heaven, we find that his first work was to lay the foundation of the spiritual temple, and this he also attended to personally, laying the foundation with his own hands. For it was then that he carried into the courts of Divine justice the merit of his sacrificed, perfect humanity, and presented it to the Heavenly Father for us. He laid the foundation of the house of sons (Heb. 3:6), upon the basis of our coming to God and consecrating our lives unto him as acceptable sacrifices.—Rom. 12:1

Looking back to Jerusalem and seeing what was taking place there, we note that the Lord's bewildered disciples were assembled there according to his instructions. He told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they would be endued with power from on high. (Acts 1:4) In that upper room, we may visualize them all gathered together. Perhaps Thomas was wondering whether or not they had understood the instructions of the Lord correctly. Peter may have been reasoning what the meaning of it all could be, while the meditative John questioned why the abiding presence of the Master was not yet with them.

In the city, the tumult which but a few weeks earlier had raged so furiously had now been stilled. The chief priests and elders of the Jews were quiet; the cause of all their anxiety and contention was gone, or so they thought. The Nazarene was dead, his earthly ministry finished, the hopes of his followers were dashed, and the victory was theirs. It was a day of small things on earth, but it was a day of great things in heaven. The risen and glorified Redeemer was laying the foundation of a house that will be the meeting place between God and men when ultimately completed.

PREPARATION OF THE LIVING STONES

What was true of Jesus' ministry and at Pentecost has been true throughout the Gospel Age since, for it has been a day of small things. We know that even before the apostles fell asleep in death, the "mystery of iniquity" had already begun to work in the infant church. (II Thess. 2:7) This developed into a great mountain, opposing all who kept the faith and walked in the footsteps of our Lord. This

mountain has persecuted and opposed with sword, stake, and the scaffold the true saints of God. They have been compelled to flee to dens and caves of the earth before its relentless and persecuting power.

To the human observer, it might appear that the great Architect did not have much interest in his work to allow it to be impeded, or apparently so, but the situation has never been out of God's control, and the work has been grandly going forward. In the midst of this day of small things, the living stones for the temple have been in course of preparation. They have been—one by one—prepared, chiseled and polished in the very presence of their foes, and often at their hands.

It has been a day of great things when viewed from the heavenly standpoint. The prophecy states that the hands of Zerubbabel laid the foundation of the house, and "his hands shall also finish it." (Zech. 4:9) The laying of the foundation was a personal work in which our Lord, with his own hands, presented to God the valuable basis of our acceptance to him. Since we read that his hands shall also finish the work, we must conclude that it will also be a personal work attended to by our Lord. What a wonderful thought it is that we are now living in the days of the Second Presence of the Master. He has come to attend personally to the finishing work of this great spiritual building.—John 14:1-3

THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE SOON TO BE COMPLETED

When he laid the foundation of this spiritual house at Pentecost, he had in his hands the merit by which the house of sons was made acceptable

(Heb. 9:24); but, now that he has come to finish it, we read that he comes with a “plummet” in his hands. (Zech. 4:10) The ‘plummet’ is for the work of putting all things into alignment. Upon his arrival, the greater Zerubbabel, Christ Jesus, with the plummet of Truth in his hands, began to hold it up to the many long-held accepted doctrines. When the plummet was held up, how distorted the teachings were that have come down to us from a darker past. The true saints of God have been gathering around the Truth wonderfully served at the table of their returned Lord (Rev. 3:20,21), that they might learn more of his Truth and enjoy the increasing light of his presence. What has been the result of the use of this plummet? Has the light of Truth shined forth from his presence, and have the Lord’s people quickly sought to put off all that pertains to the old man, and have they endeavored to “put on the new man”?—Col. 3:10

Let it enthuse us to face the trials of our prophetic day by remembering that the finishing work is now taking place, and that it is being performed by our Lord’s own hands, and that he is personally present to attend to it. The great temple is being completed, and, when the last member has passed beyond the veil, he will bring them all together from every corner of the earth. Then the day of small things will be past, and from our future, heavenly home we shall hear restored humanity saying, “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”—Ps. 48:1,2 ■