

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.”
—*Zechariah 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,” the bride of Christ, which has been underway during the present Gospel Age since the Day of Pentecost.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:21,22

In Zerubbabel’s day, there was opposition to the building of that temple, and so also there has been opposition to the present building work of the spiritual temple. This opposition is spoken of in Zechariah 4:7 as being a “great mountain” which attempted to hinder the building work. This, in prophetic language, illustrates the greater opposition which has accompanied the present work.

During this time the “great mountain” has in part represented the man-made kingdoms and religious systems of this world that have wielded their power and wealth to adversely affect the construction work of the spiritual temple and the gathering of Christ’s “little flock,” all those who are striving to follow faithfully in his footsteps. (Luke 12:32) Much has been antagonistic to the success of this work, such as error masquerading as truth and darkness appearing as light. (John 3:19; II Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:12) However, the Great Architect, our Heavenly Father, has arranged to providentially care for his children and the building of the temple.—Heb. 13:5,6; I Pet. 5:7

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 his people? We answer no, because he permits the enemies 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 through his Word of Truth. 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. 4:2,3) 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 someday 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, so also the secret of their success as a nation lay in their having a continual supply of his Spirit, or holy influence, upon them. However, 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 God's message once again is "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit."

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

Let us consider the progress of this spiritual temple-building work and note how marvelously it has proceeded, even though it is spoken of prophetically as having taken place in the "day of small things." (Zech. 4:10) This "day" began at Pentecost when, symbolically speaking, the foundation of the spiritual house was laid. For thirty years the life 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.—Luke 1:26-38; Isa. 7:14; 9:6,7

Wonderful things were prophesied concerning the child Jesus, and as the years went by with no apparent sign of the foretold predictions being fulfilled, some perhaps felt that they would never

come to pass. His eventual identification by John the Baptist at the Jordan River, his baptism and anointing with the Holy Spirit, were great things. Yet, the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus as viewed from a purely human standpoint 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, as a nation they rejected him.—Isa. 53:1-3; John 1:11,12; Acts 2:22,23

The night 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, the next day, 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 “in heaven, and on the 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. Our opening text says that the foundation was laid by

his own hands, indicating 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, symbolically speaking. It was then that he carried into the courts of divine justice the merit, or value, of his sacrificed, perfect humanity, and presented it to the Heavenly Father "for us." (Heb. 9:24) Thus he laid the foundation of the house of sons, upon the basis of our coming to God and dedicating our life unto him as an acceptable sacrifice.—Heb. 3:6; Rom. 12:1

Looking back to Jerusalem and seeing what was taking place, we note that the Lord's bewildered disciples were assembled there according to his instructions. Just before his ascension, 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. (vss. 12-14) 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 perhaps 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 the majority of his followers were dashed, and victory belonged to the religious (Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 30) leaders of the Jews. 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 symbolic meeting place between God and men when ultimately completed.—II Cor. 6:16; Rev. 21:3

PREPARATION OF THE LIVING STONES

What was true of Jesus' ministry and at Pentecost has been true throughout the centuries 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. Over the centuries, and especially during the Dark Ages, 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 to escape 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. However, 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 Christ laid the foundation of this spiritual house at Pentecost, he had placed in his Father’s hands the merit by which the house of sons was made acceptable. (Heb. 9:24) 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. During this ending period of the Gospel Age, the greater Zerubbabel, Christ Jesus, with the plummet of Truth in his hands, has held it up to the many long held, accepted false and unscriptural doctrines of Christendom. As the plummet has been held up, how distorted many of the teachings are that have come down to us from a darker past. The true followers of God have been gathering around the Truth, wonderfully served at the table of their Lord, that they might enjoy the increasing light of his Holy Word. (Matt. 24:45; Luke 12:37; Rev. 3:20,21) What has been the result of the use of this plummet?

Has the light of Truth shined forth, 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. 3:8-14

Let it stimulate us to face the trials of our prophetic day by remembering that the finishing work is now taking place. It is being performed by our Lord's own hands, and he is personally attending to it. The great temple is being completed as each "living stone" is fully chiseled and polished. (I Pet. 2:5, *Revised Version*) When the last of these living stones has passed beyond the veil, they will all be brought together and placed in the "building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Cor. 5:1) Thus God's spiritual temple building will be finished. Then the day of small things will be past, and from our future, heavenly home we shall hear restored mankind 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 ■