

The Symbolism of the Temple
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From 2 Chronicles 5:2-7:3. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TEMPLE
PART 1: FROM SHELL TO SYMBOL 5:1-2.

#1. "Thus all the work that Solomon performed for the house of the Lord was finished. And Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, even the silver and the gold and all the utensils, and put them in the treasuries of the house of God" 5:1

#2. So, the structure of the temple was built. But, at that point, it was a shell. Furnishings and interior appointments were added, but it was still a shell.

#3. The temple was a space. That space indexed (contained) by a revealed architecture. The interior space adorned with valuable materials. It takes more than that to create a symbol.

#4. A dead end was in sight. Human craftsmanship had accomplished a great deal. But it can only build the shell. Another and different element was needed to complete the movement from shell to symbol.

#5. "Then Solomon assembled to Jerusalem the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' households of the sons of Israel, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion" 5:2.

#6. Unless and until the ark of the covenant was in "its place", in "the inner sanctuary", in "the holy of holies, under the wings of the cherubim" (5:7), it would remain only a shell.

#7. Without the presence of God, the approval of God and the power of God, the transition from shell to symbol could not be completed.

#8. This is just how the Lord brings into existence any form of symbolism. The church is a symbol. Individual believers-- their thought, speech and behavior in the world--are consecrated as supernatural symbols.

#9. Such symbols, one example of which was the temple, all lie athwart the horizon separating the invisible and visible.

#10. The temple, being a symbol, signaled the higher reality beyond it and the dependence of men beneath it.

From 2 Chronicles 5:1-7:3. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TEMPLE
PART 2: THE SPIRITUAL ENGINE 5:13, 14.

#1. When the ark of the covenant was put in its place something beyond this world happened. In effect, the temple was turned on. "...and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the Lord saying, 'He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting', then the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud" v.13.

#2. The temple, no longer a shell, was alive. It had become *a spiritual engine*. "So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God" v.14.

#3. Protagoras would later speak for many when he said, "Man is the measure of all things". At the inauguration of the temple, Israel was confronted by something and by someone greater than themselves.

#4. The spiritual engine that appeared before the people dwarfed their immediate mundane experience. It far surpassed the glory of Solomon and his throne.

#5. The Almighty was imposing His presence upon the prepared space and as well, upon the consciousness of the people of Israel.

#6. The temple was a symbol of the One who dwells beyond it. That structure never contained God; nor could it. Therefore, the temple was not the point. The presence of, the actuality of, the power of God was the point.

#7. There is an immeasurable difference between *the Actual and the symbol*. But the way we deal with revealed symbols marks the approach to God.

From 2 Chronicles 5:1-7:3. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TEMPLE
PART 3: THE GREAT CLOUD 5:13, 14; 6:1; 7:1-3.

#1. "Then Solomon said, 'The Lord has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud'" 6:1. The cloud represented "the glory of the Lord" 5:14. But the Almighty prefers to remain cloaked. *Therefore He must be approached through the medium of stipulated symbols.*

#2. The cloud was impenetrable and so we must *learn to trust the One we cannot see*. But the symbolism is not the point. It is the Lord who puts the symbolism that is the point. Revealed symbolism is *a way of knowing*. That, we call an epistemology.

#3. Here is the very antithesis of naturalism; so popular in our time. The presence of the temple in Israel pushed dependence upon human reason, common sense and human experience out of centrality and into the margin of life.

#4. The Axis of the universe established His symbolic presence in Jerusalem. He remains hidden from view, but He is there. "Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from

Heaven and consumed the burnt offerings and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house" 7:1.

#5. The dedication of the temple was supposed to be *the point of no return* for the Israelites. They were called to live in an immediate environment dominated by the reality of God, His power and character. This expectation has never been revoked.

#6. The one who dwells in the great cloud made "a covenant" (5:10) with His people. It was filed and kept in the ark of the covenant, in the Holy of Holies under the wings of the cherubim 5:8. In other words, we can trust the wording and the meaning of the covenant through every human circumstance.

#7. That symbol represented the intentions of the Almighty and the correlative comprehension and confidence of the believer. "All the sons of Israel...bowed down...their faces to the ground...worshipped and gave praise to the Lord, saying, 'Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting'" 7:3.

From 2 Chronicles 5:1-7:3. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TEMPLE PART 4: THE CONDITIONALITY OF SYMBOLISM, 5:1-10.

#1. It becomes apparent that anything or anyone that becomes a symbol has been conditioned by the Lord. During construction, the temple area was traversed by any number of workers yet it was still a construction site. But the Lord *conditioned the space called the Holy of Holies when the ark of the covenant was placed inside of it* 5:7.

#2. By generalization, we know that the Almighty Himself *just so conditions all things, spaces and people who are rated as symbols*. He conditions them by the reality of His presence, by the word of God and by the power of God. All the priests "sanctified themselves" 5:11.

#3. What spaces and people hold in common is that *spiritual conditions were put on to material circumstances*. "Holiness" is a spiritual condition.

#4. We learn from this that symbolism affects or *conditions* circumstances, thought, speech and behavior.

#5. Sin must be a willing forfeiture of biblical symbolism; where what one wants to do overrules the condition of symbolism. When we sin we *push the conditionality of symbolism away from us*. All biblical symbols are constrained.

#5. The implications for contemporary Christians and the churches are significant. It certainly entails living up to the biblical symbolism. It turns out, with alarming frequency, that many churches and believers today refuse to bear the responsibility of revealed symbolism. Without the symbolism, the church and the believer are just empty shells.

