

THE RIGHT TEMPLE

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning June 30th, 1861

By Mister JAMES WELLS

At the New Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road

Volume 3 Number 132

“Rise and measure the temple of God.” Revelation 11:1

THIS, as you are aware, has an allusion to the literal temple of Solomon. The measurement here, of course, must be understood spiritually; and, in order that he might rightly measure it, a golden rod was given unto him, that by that rod he might measure the temple. I should be inclined to think that this golden rod is the word of truth, that is to say a figure of the word of God; that he was by this golden rod to ascertain the length, and breadth, and height, and various quantities, and circumstances constituting the temple. So, it is by the word of God that we ascertain the nature of the temple of God spiritually. And I think that the temple here does not mean the church, because the church, or the people constituting the church, are spoken of a little farther on; upon which matter I shall not touch this morning. I think the temple therefore here means the Lord Jesus Christ. But then the question arises in what respect it means Jesus Christ. We must have a clear understanding of this before, we set out with our subject this morning; and by that I hope we shall be able advantageously, to the good of our souls and to the glory of God, to do as our text commands, “Rise and measure the temple of God.” The temple was the way in which God dwelt with men; and so, Christ is the way in which God dwells with man. And, of course, the other side is equally true, that the temple was the way in which the people by representation, by the high priest, dwelt with God, and the temple was the way by which they dwelt with God in the promised land. There could be no fertility of land without the temple; for when they attempted to do without the temple their attempting to do without the temple was like a Christian attempting to do without Christ; when they attempted so to succeed, it is written of them, “that they sowed much, and brought in little; that they did eat, and had not enough; that they drank, but were not satisfied; and that they clothed them, but were not warmed; and that they earned wages to put it into a bag with holes;” because in all this they were trying to succeed without the temple; the Lord’s house lying waste. Just so spiritually, the sinner that tries to succeed and bring in a harvest without Christ, may sow much, but he will bring in little; yes, he will bring in nothing, for Christ has said, “Without me you can do nothing;” and the man who attempts to feed his soul with something apart from Christ will find out, if he is taught of God, that he is not eating that that is good; and that he is spending his money and his labor for that that satisfies not. But when brought to Christ, there he will find that bread that strengthens man’s heart; he will find that water of life that shall satiate his soul, and find those garments of salvation that shall adorn him before God, and shall find there he

shall not earn wages to put it into a bag with holes. Not only so but in and by Christ Jesus nothing can be lost, all the treasures of eternal love and mercy are safe there. I think, therefore, it is very clear that the temple here taken spiritually, means the Lord Jesus Christ, as God's way of dwelling with man, and the way, and the only way, in which man can dwell with God, and apart from God, in the gospel sense, there is nothing but hell for any one; and therefore, it is that there is no life, no heaven, no happiness, but in and by the Lord. So then to measure this temple spiritually, I think will simply mean to take a particular account of it; so as to understand it, so as to know it so well as to be able to distinguish it from the temple of idols; so as to be able to distinguish the true Christ of God from the false Christs, and to distinguish the gospel of God from the gospels of men, to distinguish God's way of dwelling with men, and the way, and the only way, in which men can dwell with God, to distinguish this way from all human inventions. I am sure if the Lord is pleased to lead us thus to understand this matter, to measure the temple spiritually; that is, to take account of what it is, and what we have thereby, we shall indeed profit by so doing.

And we will set out with the idea that I have suggested, that the Lord Jesus Christ in what he has done as the way in which God dwells with us, and we with God, is the temple that we are thus to measure, that we are thus to take account of. And in so doing, we shall find it in the first place to be *a temple of eternity*: we shall, secondly, find it to be *a temple of plenty*; we shall thirdly, find it to be *a temple of government*; we shall, fourthly, find it to be *a temple of fullness*; we shall, fifthly and lastly, which will perfectly accord with the idea with which we commence, we shall find that *God and the Lamb are indeed the temple*. So it is in one sense taking account of our covenant God; so as to know and to distinguish our God from all other gods, and to rejoice that this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death.

First: First then, we shall find this temple to be *a temple that ENDUERS FOREVER*; a temple of eternity, a house, as the apostle calls it, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Blessed are they that dwell in this temple. And who are they that dwell in this temple, who are they that take such account of it as to understand the eternity of it, the certainty of it, that Christ is indeed a house not made with hands, that he is indeed eternal in the heavens. Who are the persons that shall dwell in this temple? This Book of Revelation will inform us who the persons are. "Him that overcomes, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." I know but one way of overcoming, I know but one way of victory, and I desire to know no other.

Jesus Christ has said in another place in this same book, "Him that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end;" that is an explanation, the warfare is accomplished, he is the end of the law for righteousness, and his atonement is complete; give me precious faith to lay hold of that atonement, if my sins were ten times, ten million times what they are, precious faith would enable me to meet, neutralize, swallow up, overcome, and defy the whole by the victory wrought by the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did the Bible contain ten thousand times more threatening's than it does against sin, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, give me the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, let me lay hold of that, let me make mention of that, and of that only let me be found in that, not one threatening would touch me, and I should there stand as righteous as God the Father is righteous; for this righteousness is nothing else but the contrivance of his infinite skill and the appointment of his boundless love; stand as righteous as Christ is righteous, for this righteousness is nothing else but the work of Immanuel, God with man and man with God: stand as righteous as is the Holy Ghost, for he, all through the Old Testament, sets forth this

righteousness, and assigns it as the reason that no weapon formed against you shall prosper, every tongue that shall rise in judgment against you shall condemn. Let Jesus's victory be your daily hope, your daily life, your daily light, your daily plea, when led to receive the conquest of the blest Redeemer you overcome. Now the Savior says to such, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." See how congenial this is to the feelings of such a man. You ask that man that knows something of the victory that Christ has brought in, do you ever wish to part with that atonement? He answers, No, no, no. Do you ever wish to part with that righteousness? No. Do you ever wish to be severed from this love of God in Christ Jesus? No. The man has found that where he wishes to dwell forever, for he sees an eternity of blessedness there, and in entire accordance with the desires, and feelings, and affections, and hopes, and prayers, and longings, and sighing's, and seeking, and capacities of such an one. "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." Here than in taking account of this temple we find what we can find nowhere else, an eternity of security. Let tribulation come, death come, judgment come, does not matter what may come; the foundation is laid, to be moved no more forever: the temple is eternal can never be shaken, never grow old, never decay, never pass away; it must endure through the endless ages of eternity. And I am sure such an one will also be glad to be in that temple after the order the Savior describes. "And I will write upon him," says the Savior, "the name of my God," of my Father God; I am the Son of God, and you are a son of God, joint heir with me and I will write upon you my Father's name. And so, you read of their appearing on mount Zion, having his Father's name in their foreheads. Here is your confirmation of oneness with Jesus. "I will write upon him the name of my God."

Now suppose a person were to spring up and set forth the doctrine that the time would come when God would part with Christ, when there would be some danger, or some possibility of a separation between God and Christ; no one person feeling reverence for God I suppose would do this. I suppose you, Wesleyans, would not like to do that. No, say you, I could not start such a doctrine as that; I could not hold such a doctrine as that. Well, but you hold one quite as bad; you hold that the man who is one with Christ today may be severed from him tomorrow, and that is quite as bad; for the Bible declares that they are loved with the same love that Christ is loved with; and the Bible declares that they are joint-heirs with Christ. Now then if they be joint heirs, then it follows that his heirship must be invalidated before theirs can be and as his heirship or right of possession cannot be invalidated so theirs cannot be. "I will write upon him the name of my God." And then something else: "And the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God." Why is the New Jerusalem said to come down out of heaven from my God? Why, friends, because everything that makes us new comes from heaven. If I am a new creature I get that newness from heaven: "if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature;" and that newness comes from heaven, it is a new birth from heaven, it is a new state from heaven, brought into the bond of a new covenant, a new heaven, a new earth; old things belonging to the Old Adam, and things belonging to the creature, they all pass away and God becomes all and in all. This is the New Jerusalem, that city that has foundations. "And" says the Savior, "I will write upon him my new name;" and you know what the Savior's new name is. He acquired a new name. He had a name that he were for a certain time, and he would not write upon us that name; he had a name he would not write upon us, and he were that name for a certain time, till he got to the end of it; and so he would not write that old name upon us. Why not? For two reasons: first, because it was already written upon us. What then is our native name? Sin; curse; bond-children; that is our native name. Christ took our sin; but by his suffering he became salvation, and thus acquired a

new name. He was made sin, but he outlived that sin and became salvation; thus, acquired a new name. He was made a curse, but he endured all that curse and became a blessing. He was made under the law, but he became the end of the law for righteousness; he has risen from the dead into eternal freedom. So, he will not write sin upon us, that is blotted out; he will not write curse upon us, that is the substitutional name he took for us; he will not write bondage upon us, he will not write death upon us, but "I will write upon him my new name." And what is that new name, but his resurrection name? I will write life upon them, freedom upon them; I will write that in their hearts that shall accord with the eternity of this temple, with the completeness of the victory I have wrought, with what I have achieved; and this New Jerusalem, and this ultimate destiny. So that Christ's humiliation name was that of sin, curse, sorrow, debtor; to do the whole law; but his resurrection name is a new name, free from all this. It is a beautiful form of speech to show, that while our evil name was written upon him, not indeed so as to defile him: no; I abhor the notion of attributing the possibility; I abhor not only the notion of attributing a spot or a wrinkle to Christ, but I abhor the notion of the possibility of his sinning. There was no more possibility of Christ sinning, than there was of God the Father sinning, because in Christ's manhood there was all the strength of his eternal deity. Talk to me about a peccable Christ, a Christ with whom it was possible to commit sin, why, if this be true, then we have a weak part in our salvation somewhere, a fallible point in our salvation somewhere; and the devil would have found that point out, and have ruined the church in the second Adam as he did in the first. But no, bless the Lord, though Christ was crucified through weakness, it was our weakness that he took upon him; he was omnipotent; and never did he exercise a greater stretch of his omnipotent power than when he accomplished the salvation of the church.

Second: But, secondly, I find this temple to be a temple of PLENTY. See how nicely one thing follows after another. We should naturally say, well, though I have the victory, and though I am thus in Christ, and in Christ forever, and God with me, yet is it a place of plenty? is there plenty of everything there? shall my needs be supplied there? Now, typically, you are aware all the best things of the land were brought to the temple, the finest of the wheat, the purest of the blood of the grape, the finest of the honey, the best of the fruit, and the best of the flock, everything that was good, in order to set forth the excellency of Christ: and not as some people think, some people think and hold too, the Roman Catholic priests do, they hold that all the best things were commanded to the temple because the Lord wished the ministers to live well, and look fat and well, as most of the priests do. This is their idea, but I do not think that was the object, I think the object for commanding all the best of the things to the temple was to set forth the excellency of Christ. And when the Lord had done that, I am sure he would not frown upon our poet, not upon us, for adopting the language, that all excellent as the things were, they, were:

"Too mean to speak his worth,
Too mean to set this great Redeemer forth."

Now I find it to be a temple of plenty. In the 7th of Revelation, John saw the multitude just in the position I have described in effect; having obtained the victory by faith in Christ, palms in their hands; here they were sanctified, justified, exalted, glorified, "therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night, in his temple," in his Christ, in his order of things, "and he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more;" here it is; well might David say he had not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread; the man that is

brought into this house will never go begging, he has the bread of eternal life in infinite sufficiency, “he that shall eat of this bread, shall never hunger,” “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;” no, here is the water of life, you see: neither shall the sun “light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne;” oh, what a variety of positions the same person takes, hence we find in the 10th of John he is the shepherd, and he is the door, and he is the fold; and bless his holy name he is everything, there is no other person can at the same time take such a vast variety of positions as does this Wondrous Person, this Mediator between God and man; “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” I ask this assembly this morning, is not such a temple well worth measuring, that is, is it not worth our while to take account of a temple in which we shall dwell forever, to take account of a temple wherein God wipes all tears from off all faces, and where we are happy, and must be happy, and that forever? And even now the more we can think of the loving kindness of the Lord in the midst of this mystic temple, the happier we are. But I must not forget that I love the Old Testament as well as the New, and I hope you after I am dead, you young ones who will outlive me, will stand hard and fast against that notion abroad, even among some good men, that the Old Testament saints did not know much of these New Covenant matters. Now let us test the point we are upon now. We have seen from the 7th chapter of this book, that this temple is a temple of plenty; let us hear what the Old Testament says about it, let us come to the 65th Psalm, and see how this temple is approached, and see the testimony there borne concerning it, and see how beautifully it accords with this 7th of Revelation. “Praise waits for you, O God, in Zion;” there are the people with a heart to praise him, but no power to do it, there is the soul prepared and formed to praise him, but no power to do it, there is the man waiting for the Lord to come, and when the Lord shall reappear to his disciples, then shall the disciples be glad, and then shall they praise the Lord. “O you that hears prayer,” here is anticipating the temple, the way of access to God, “unto you shall all flesh come. Iniquities prevail against me;” I am glad of that testimony; the man that has felt that, that his iniquities have so prevailed against him that he can no more stand against them before God, than he can stand before the conflagration of the universe, what is to be done? “As for our transgressions, you shall purge them away.” Here is the approach to the temple, here is the poor sinner looking at himself as a sinner, praying to the Lord, seeing what Jesus would do, the brightness of the Father’s glory, that he would by himself purge our sins; “you shall purge them away.” Now comes Christ Jesus who did this; and then comes the recognition of the plenty that is in this temple, “Blessed is the man whom you choose,” to purge our iniquities away, that is, Christ Jesus, that he may not only do so, but “that he may dwell in your courts;” as witnesses the apostle, “ascended up on high, and has sat down forever on the right hand of the majesty of God.” “Caused to approach unto you.”

He approached God by the sacrifice of himself at Calvary’s cross; oh, what a magnificent approach was that, to meet all the demands of law and justice. And that text we had on Friday night at a place where I preach on Friday evenings, (I will not tell you where, for fear you should want to come on Friday nights), “I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.” Christ was under that law, and his own words were speaking to him when he approached to God; his own words met him, as it were, when he was under our bonds and our sins; and as I showed you last Friday night, the sinner in hell cannot pay his debt, because he cannot suffer without sinning; but Christ suffered without sinning, and therefore every agony lessened the debt without by sinning accumulating any more debt, because he suffered without sinning. What a magnificent approach to God was that, secondly, when he approached to God on the ground of

what he had done, and entered, like the high priest in the Old Testament dispensation, on the great day of atonement, with the breastplate, (on the ground of the atonement he made), entered into the Holy of Holies, and represented the people of God in and on that breastplate. And there was something solemn and grand in that. What a magnificent approach to God was that when Christ ascended up on high, having gained the victory, having made reconciliation for the sins of the people, and having wrought this wondrous victory; and when he ascended, all his people virtually ascended with him. And what a magnificent, equally indescribable approach to God will that be at the last day, when Christ at his right hand, with a number that no man can number, shall say, "Here am I, and the children you have given me." What an approach that is, "Blessed is the man whom you choose, and cause to approach unto you." I know this will apply to every Christian as well in a subordinate sense. "That he may dwell in your courts;" that is, Christ. Then what will be the result of Christ's approach to God, of his dwelling in heaven, and dwelling in the church? It is there described: "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple." Ah, God the Father is well pleased, Christ is satisfied with the travail of his soul; and "we" poor sinners saved by your mercy, brought out of eternal privation into this eternal plenty, "shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple;" a temple from which sin and death are forever excluded; a temple into which sin and death cannot enter. Sin, and Satan, and death, and ruin, and destruction, and desolation, entered into the earthly temple; but none of these things can enter into this heavenly temple. Rise and measure, take account of this temple, see its eternity, see its abundance, see its plenty; here we have bread and to spare; here we may indeed rejoice that the Lord does bless the provision, and satisfy Sion's poor with bread.

Thirdly: Third, it is *a temple of GOVERNMENT*, as you may see in the last verse of this chapter: "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." Now heaven here means the New Testament dispensation, and there will never be another dispensation after the one we have now. Some people tell us there will: nonsense; what for? I don't see the necessity of that; not another after this. But will there not be glorification? That will not be another dispensation; that will be only a continuation of the present. It is true preaching will end, the ordinances of the present dispensation will end; but we shall always have the same Jesus Christ, and the same God, and the same covenant, and the same life, and the same sanctification, and the same everything. People think by-and-bye, in the course of a few hundred years, we are going to have some wonderful Christians upon earth. Why, if you could lift up your heads at the end of a thousand years, if the world should last so long, you would see Christians just what they are now; that is, believers in Jesus Christ, lovers of the truth, and followers of the Lamb. We get all we need on this side Jordan, and we have grace enough to keep us now, and take us to heaven at last; that is all the saints ever had, and all the saints ever will have on this side of heaven. Christ's kingdom shall reign through all ages, and never be moved; and everything must be subservient to the government of Christ's kingdom. And hence it is said that when this temple was opened, "there were lightnings, and voices, and thundering, and an earthquake, and a great hail." Nothing difficult about this. What are the lightnings? Why, God's word. His arrows shall go forth as lightning, whether it be to strike an Ananias and Sapphira dead, or to pierce the hearts of three thousand sinners, and make them cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do;" whether it be for judgment or for mercy. These lightnings are God's word; and when the temple is opened, that is when Christ is revealed, then these lightnings come. When the minister preaches the gospel, he works with the lightnings of heaven. There is the sinner, he cannot see that the stroke is coming: conviction enters his conscience and strikes his fleshly hopes dead; and he feels there is something

the matter with him, but he does not know what it is. The lightning also would signify not only judgment but mercy; there is a poor sinner, or rather a real Christian, cold, dead, and dark; presently the minister, who is working with the lightnings of heaven, some sweet flash, I may call it, will enter into; that man's soul, and set it all on fire, burn up his sorrows, and doubts, and fears; and he will rejoice in these heavenly lightnings. Hence the people of God in Ezekiel's vision are compared to lightning; they went to and fro like lightning, to show the activities of the soul when awakened by the Holy Ghost. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Aminadab."

And there were "voices." There is the voice of salvation: the voice of election, the voice of predestination: there is the voice of "I will never leave you nor forsake you." There is the voice of deep soul trouble; there are the various voices of all the experiences of the people of God. But then these are nothing else but the testimonies of the Old Testament. Go to the 102nd and 103rd Psalms as samples. In the 102nd Psalm you have all the plaintive voices of soul trouble: in the 103rd Psalm you have all the rejoicing and glorious voices of exaltation, triumph, victory, and satisfaction. And then there are thundering: and what are they? Why, God's word. Ministers are called sons of thunder. The child of God sometimes gets rather sleepy, some thundering scripture will come into his mind, create fears, and doubts, and trembling. This is what one calls being called into the secret place of thunder, but it does the soul good, no doubt about it. And an earthquake. Why, regeneration is an earthquake. It swallows up what you were before; swallows up your former hope, and makes you fear that you yourself will be swallowed up in hell. Many a sinner when God begins his work in this earthquake-like way has exclaimed with the Psalmist, "Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." "And a great hail." What is that? Storms of persecution and tribulation. If the lightning seem to be against you, yet your God holds the lightnings in his hand, and though the thundering's may seem to be against you, yet the Lord governs those thundering's, and though revolutions and changes try you and alarm you, yet the Lord governs these changes, and though you may be persecuted, and storms and persecution may fall upon you, yet the Lord has his way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. Indeed, if I lay these things together, they appear to form a complete body of divinity. Here I have eternity of dwelling with God, here I have the government of God, as manifested in the various trying experiences of his people.

IV. I meant, fourthly, to have noticed this temple as *a temple of FULNESS*. In the 15th chapter; "The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. There is much meant in that; no one can approach God but on the ground of the curse of the law being entirely terminated, and that is terminated by Jesus Christ.

Now to show that we are right in our view, and lest we should take a carnal view of it, John, in his 21st chapter says, "I saw no temple therein," nor have we this morning, that is, not a literal temple; "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Mark that expression, "Almighty;" why is the omnipotence of God brought in in connection with this temple? To show the strength of it, to show the eternal certainty of it; to show that those that dwell in this temple may defy all their foes; no plague can come nigh your dwelling; a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your righthand; but no evil shall befall you.

“The Lord God Almighty;” here is God’s omnipotence exercised in a way it is nowhere else; “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof.”

May the Holy Ghost help us more and more to understand these deep things, for his name’s sake.

We do not want to drop our Sunday morning circulation of our sermons if we can help it. Now there is a letter in the “Gospel Times” I see this week, from a Wesleyan minister, at least he was a Wesleyan, but the Lord has turned him upside down, and our Sunday morning sermon has reached the man, and he certainly has written a very nice letter, and you would do well to spare a penny for the “Gospel Times,” and read it. And also, as I have sometimes said, we reckon our Sunday morning sermons a sort of a little tract society; and we hope, therefore, those of you that say, well, but I have heard the sermon, and I do not want to read it, well then, those that have not heard it, will like to read it, and we hope you will send it about all you can. I am speaking simply for the truth of God, not for myself. We have had many instances of their usefulness about the country.