

# A MAGNIFICAL TEMPLE

A SERMON – Preached on Wednesday Evening July 17th 1867, by

MR. JAMES WELLS

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET

"Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory."-Zechariah vi. 13.

IT is the custom of the Hebrew language, which we have a sample of in this verse, to enunciate a principle, then by several words explain that principle, and then afterwards refer back to it. Men, for want of knowing this, have tried to make out that the counsel of peace being between them both-that the word "both" means the royalty and priesthood of Christ; that the counsel of peace was between those two offices which he bore. You have, in the first part of this verse, two persons: you have the Lord, and the servant of the Lord. "He," that is one; "shall build the temple of the Lord." Here, there is the Lord, and the servant of the Lord; and the counsel of peace, as we well know, was, and is, and ever must be between the Father and the Son. But that solemn, and yet delightful and important matter, of course, we have to treat of when we come to that part.

Our text presents itself in a twofold form. Here is, in the first place, the temple of the Lord which the Savior builds. Secondly, His bearing the glory.

First, then, we notice here the temple of the Lord. By the temple of the Lord, I understand here, of course, the church of the blessed God. And I may just make a few remarks, by way of introduction, as to how the Savior doth build the temple of the Lord. The first thing for him to do was to lay the foundation-his mediatorial work is the foundation- that is to say, he was to bring in perfect righteousness; so that the church was to rest upon divine righteousness; to rest upon everlasting righteous; to rest upon infallible righteousness. We have sometimes substituted the word "righteousness" for the word "stone," as in the 28th of Isaiah: "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, and a sure foundation." Now substitute the word "righteousness," and then you will get the meaning of the preceding verse to our text. "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, righteousness." Called a stone because of its stability and duration; and a tried stone; and so Christ's righteousness was a tried righteousness. When Adam's righteousness was tried, it gave way; when the Jews' righteousness was tried-the Jewish righteousness of that covenant-it gave way. But when Christ was tried in his righteousness, his righteousness never did give way. "He did no sin; neither was guile found in his mouth." It is, therefore, a tried righteousness, a sure righteousness, and that upon which the soul shall eternally rest. Now in the preceding verse to our text there is one, to my mind, of the most lovely descriptions of the dear Savior laying the foundation of this temple; of course the words are placed there for the purpose of setting forth the same. It is said, "Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord." Now just mark the contrast here, and let the emphasis rest for a moment upon the pronoun. "Behold the man whose name is The Branch; he shall grow up out of his place." You will at once catch the contrast that is here intended. Now we fell in Adam, and we cannot by anything we can do grow up out of our sinner-ship place. We are poor sinners in and of

ourselves and we cannot by anything we can do, grow up out of our sinner-ship place. We are dying creatures, and we cannot by anything we can do grow up out of that death. We are guilty, and we are under most awful, and yet righteous responsibilities to God, and yet we have no means or power by which we can grow up out of this our responsible, guilty, lost, and ruined condition. Now the Lord Jesus Christ came into our place; he came under the law, and became a debtor to do the whole law; he came under sin, and became the Surety, and engaged to be made sin-the representative of sin; and engaged to be made a curse-the representative of the curse. He thus came under the law, and under sin, and under death. But then He had no sin in him, and therefore it is that he so obeyed God's holy law that the law demanded no more. By his life of obedience to the law he has brought in everlasting righteousness; so that he remains under the law no longer. The law asks no more; justice asks no more. Hence that is a scripture, perhaps, we cannot too frequently repeat, because it is as delightful a scripture, especially to the man who knows something of the law-that "the Lord Jesus Christ is the end of the law." Now the man that lives and dies in his sin, he will find no end to the law, he will find no end to wrath; he will find no end to his perdition; he will find no end to his woe-tormented for ever and ever. But Jesus Christ being God as well as man, he reached the end of the law by his obedient life, and has brought in everlasting righteousness, and that which was his place as our substitute, he did, by what he has done, grow up out of that place. Hence, as you know, in the 17th of John he refers to this delightful truth, namely, his obedient life. He does not there refer to his atoning department, but to his actual obedience during his life. He says, in the beginning of that chapter, "I have finished the work which thou gave me to do." Here, then, is a foundation. Jesus Christ grew up from under the law; he grew up from under all its demands; he brought in an everlasting righteousness. But then we lose the beauty of this if we do not view it in its relative character, for when he arrived at the end of the law, every one for whom he obeyed did at the same time relatively, by his work, arrive at the end of the law. He brought all his people to the end of the law. It was not for himself that he thus lived, but it was for us; it was not for himself that he thus became poor, but for us, that we through his poverty might be made rich. And now, if we know this, precious faith in him brings us up out of our place. Our place is dead in sin; but "he that believeth in him hath everlasting life." Our place is under sin, but by him sin is put away. Our place is under wrath-"children of wrath," but there is no wrath to him that is thus brought to receive Jesus Christ, "even Jesus, which hath delivered us from the wrath to come." Our place is to be bound hand and foot, and to be cast into outer and everlasting darkness; but by faith in Jesus Christ we grow up out of this place and are made to rest upon him in that state of things at which he himself hath arrived. But we will go further than this. His place was under sin in its penal form; his place was under God's terrible wrath in its concentrated and I had almost said worst form, ah! so as to make him sweat great drops of blood! Will he survive it? Will he embody in six hours all that we to eternity should have had to endure? Will he in six hours- from nine in the morning till three in the afternoon-terminate our hell? Will he drink the bitter cup dry, and will he leave nothing but the cup of salvation and eternal consolation for those for whom he died? He did do so, and having suffered all that there was to be suffered, he said, "It is finished;" and by virtue of what he had done he rose from the dead-"brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant." See, then, how he grew up out of his place. And Peter, with holy and sacred pleasure, no doubt, in his soul, said, "Having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." And I will say of ourselves, that as it was not possible for him to be holden of it, it is not possible, on the other hand, for us to be loosed from it without him. We must receive him. He only hath eternal life; he only hath swallowed up death in victory. And now, having grown up righteously, by his obedient life and atoning death, out of the place into which he came to save our souls, he is now grown up into eternal glory, and has virtually taken all his people with him. Here, then, is a foundation. And how sweet it is to think of it! Let me just linger a moment here. How can I hope in a holy, a righteous, and a sin-avenging God? Ah, by the foundation that Jesus Christ has laid in Zion. Let me hang my helpless soul on him; let my hope rest there; let my expectation rest there; let my admiration of the blessed God be there; let my love to God be

there; let my soul be planted there; let me live there; let me dwell there; let my heart be fixed there; then I can say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise."

"How can we sink with such a prop,  
That bears the earth and its huge columns up?"

In order, then, to hope in God in accordance with his character as a God of holiness righteousness, and Justice, as well as a God of love, mercy, and grace, it must be by that work which he dear Savior hath done in maintaining the majesty of the law, for God's order of things in this matter is that not one jot nor tittle of the law should fail, and the dear savior hath fulfilled every jot and tittle. Therefore, where should the sinner's confidence be but where there is pardon? Where should the sinner's confidence be but where the Lord delights to forgive? Where should the confidence of a poor unrighteous creature be but where there is righteousness for him? Where should the confidence of a miserable creature be but where the deeps of mercy rise up, unite, and flow forth like a mighty ocean, even as the waters of the sea? Ah, then, it is a solid foundation. If everything else is taken from us, here is this foundation that never, never can be moved; and they that trust in the Lord shall be as this foundation, which never can be removed; and they that are thus trusting in the Lord, the Lord is round about them as the mountains are round about Jerusalem. We do offer-shall I say so? I think I am right in saying it,-we offer, perhaps ignorantly, dreadful insults to the Savior when we attempt to make anything else our hope, to bring anything of the creature to be our hope; just as though his righteousness was not sufficient; just as though his atonement was not sufficient; just as though his work was not complete work; Just as though his victory was not entire, and just as though he had not loosed all the pains of death, and just as though he had not brought together mercy and truth, and righteousness and peace. "It is the will of the Father that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Therefore we give him honor when we say, "Blessed Jesus, thy righteousness is sufficient: blessed Immanuel, thine atonement is sufficient, thy work is sufficient;-

"All is settled, and our souls approve it well."

Here, then, is the foundation; and I need not say much upon the next idea-that of the materials. The Lord has been pleased to use all sorts of earthly similitudes to set forth heavenly things; and yet all these "Similes, of timber, and stone, and gold, and trees, and rivers, and mountains, and valleys, and fruits, and sun, and moon,-when we have named and looked at them all, we are then obliged to conclude with Dr. Watts,-

"All are too poor to speak his worth,  
Too mean to set this great Redeemer forth."

Yet it shows the care of the Lord our God, in having multiplied similitudes to such an extent. It is one of the means of keeping up a kind of freshness in his blessed word when we have the same thing represented by different similitudes, which shall instruct us into its different forms, and shapes, and characters. For we are all the creatures of circumstance, and we can always understand a thing better when we have something by which it can be in a manner represented. And the Lord, knowing this, made his own dear Son the representative of everything you can name that is divine and eternal; for he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" and the Savior says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." So if we have rightly seen the Son, we have seen God the Father in his eternal counsels by Jesus Christ in the salvation of our souls. Let us bless the Lord, then, for such a divine Builder as this-that he has laid a firm foundation. And so what a firm foundation is laid for your faith in his excellent word! But then there are the materials. There are two ideas that I will notice here: first, the forming of

the materials for the temple; and secondly, their consecration to God. First, the forming of the material for the temple. 89th Psalm: --"For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever." Well, if it be a building of mercy, that just suits me, for I am as satisfied as I am of my existence that nothing but mercy can reach me, that nothing but mercy can set me right, that nothing but mercy can save me, that nothing but mercy can keep me, and that it must be mercy from first to last. "I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever." Now if you are brought to Jesus Christ then the Lord deals with you in his mercy. He has mercy upon you in yourself, and in the church, and in the world, and in the family and in life and when you come to die, and at the Judgment day. "The Lord grant" said the apostle concerning Onesiphorus, who had searched him out very diligently, and had ministered very much to his comfort "the Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus thou knowest very well." So that the brotherly kindness of Onesiphorus to the apostle Paul brought from his heaven-born soul a solemn prayer to God that that man might find mercy in that day. It is then a building of mercy. And yet it is an awful truth-it is enough to make ones heart bleed to see it but it is an awful truth, that there is not anything that man is at such deadly war with as he is with the gospel of sovereign, sure, and eternal mercy. Oh, if you will but make it uncertain, and make it conditional, and make it something that must be under the dominion of the creature, why, then you will have very few to war with you. But declare that great truth which every man taught of God feels to be essential to his salvation, "He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy," and the world will hate you directly. Now I will tell you what that truth is to me; -and let religion be a personal thing; don't you trouble yourself about other people, you look at yourself. Now the matter stands with me thus:-"He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy." When I look at God's word, and test myself by that word, especially those parts of it which are the voice of the law-not the ten commandments merely, but the voice of the law scattered throughout the Bible-such, for instance, as the following:-"He that is angry with his brother without a cause is a murderer;" that is the voice of the law:-now when I test what I am by that, I am as sure as I am of my existence that if the Lord had not been pleased as a matter of his own pleasure, his own free, voluntary condescension, to have mercy upon me, I feel a though I should have been the last in the universe that he would have mercy upon. But then "he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy." Did the Lord ever say, well, you are gone too far; I cannot have mercy upon you? Did he ever say so? Was there a case when the Savior was on earth that was gone too far for him? Did he say that there were so many devils in the Gadarene, had they been less in number he might have cast them out, but there were so many that the case was beyond his reach? Did he say of the thief on the cross that he was beyond his reach? That is the light in which to view the sovereign authority of the blessed God, as having a right to do what he will with his own, that it is lawful for him to do what he will with his own, and that our eye should not be evil because he is good. Thus, then, it is a building of mercy. "He shall build the temple of the Lord." Oh, how solemn the thought that this very feature of the Savior's ministry upon which I am now dwelling is that that gave the great offence. "Blessed are the merciful," then: "for they shall obtain mercy." Then the next scripture I quote is that "the top stone shall be brought home with shouting, Grace, grace unto it." It is, then, a free grace building. Then I go to the sixteenth of Matthew, and there I get the idea that it is a sure building: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." You have noticed, of course, that in every one of the typical buildings the same man that commenced it finished it; to point to this blessed truth, you see that Jesus Christ has begun the work, he has laid the foundation, and he shall finish it, he shall complete the whole. Noah began the ark, and the same Noah finished it. Moses began the tabernacle, and the same Moses finished it. Solomon began the temple, and the same Solomon finished it. Zerubbabel began the temple, and the same Zerubbabel finished it;-all these pointing thus to the certainty of Jesus Christ. So, then, it is a building of mercy, of grace and of certainty. Then it means, of course, consecration to God. Now the temple was called holy. There was no holiness in the materials themselves, but they were called holy because they were put to a holy use. But the people of God are, in the high and living sense of the word, the temple of the Lord -they

are consecrated to the blessed God. And just glance for one moment at the purpose of this building. What is the purpose of this building of mercy and grace, and truth? Why, a purpose that it will take a whole eternity to understand the blessedness of. The apostle Paul sets the purpose before us; and I really feel as though I could ask every one of you, if you were to study for seventy years, whether you could think of any purpose that could surpass in excellency the purpose of this mystic temple. The purpose is thus described by the apostle:—"In whom"—that is, in Christ, resting upon him as the foundation—"ye also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Oh it is that God might dwell with us; and if God be with us, who can be against us? And see how beautifully the apostle brings in the Eternal Three. "In whom"—that is, in Christ Jesus—"ye are built together for a habitation of God," the Father, and that through the "Spirit." Here is God the Father choosing, shall I say, the materials; here is the Savior laying the foundation; here is the Holy Spirit forming them and building them up. Indeed the purpose there stated—"for a habitation of God through the Spirit"—includes every prayer you can pray. I do not think you can pray a prayer that is not included in it. Every blessing you can ask for seems to be included in this,—namely, the Lord being with you; because if he is not with you, no blessing can do you any good. When the Lord gave paradise to Adam, if the Lord had undertaken at the same time to have been with him, and to have stood between him and the enemy, then Adam would have been safe. But he gave Adam the paradise, but did not give Adam himself. He gave himself to the Jews conditionally, therefore everything was lost. But here, in this building, there is no uncertainty. "I will be their God and they shall be my people." He will dwell with them, and they shall dwell with him! Ah, what an exaltation to us! What an infinity of condescension on his part. What a blessing to us! Everything lies in it. Why do I tremble and fear—as I do at times in my solemn position as a minister—when gloomy doubts prevail that he is not with me? Why are you so unhappy at times? It is from the fear that He is not with you. One of old cried, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me." And you know the kind answer of the Lord to this fear: - "I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls" the walls of thy salvation, "are continually before Me " Thus then we have the foundation, thus we have the temple, thus we have the purpose; the purpose is this:--that God with man might dwell. If He be with us, then we have sociality indeed, communion indeed, fellowship indeed; in a word, everything. Here was the safety, and, I was going to say, the happiness of the three in the fiery furnace Daniel in the lion's den, Paul in the Mamertine prison, when, in the mist of his deep affliction, he was exceedingly Joyful, simply because the Lord of Hosts was with him and the God of Jacob was his refuge.

Secondly (and I suppose that will be as far as I shall be able to reach this evening), I notice The Savior's bearing the glory: - "And He shall bear the glory." Now I believe this is taken generally to mean that Christ shall have the honor of building the house. I believe this is the view taken generally, and it is a truth too, that we all feel the force of, that He shall bear the glory, that He is worthy of the glory; our souls delight in the very thought now; we sing it with all our hearts –

"Crown Him Lord of all."

But I for one -I leave you to judge for yourselves- I do not believe that that is the meaning here. I believe His bearing the glory here in this verse means quite a different thing, now, mind, here is the temple; and what was the next thing when the temple was built? The next thing was the temple service. Now the high priest under the law had to bear a twofold glory;—he had to bear a glory to God, and then he had to bear a glory to man. First, the high priest had to bear glory to God. He offered sacrifice; the sins of the people were ceremonially put away; and he had "holiness to the Lord" on his forehead; and he was to bear the children of Israel on his breastplate continually and in the onyx stones on his shoulders; and his approach to God was to be noted by the golden bells on the hem of the robe,—these golden bells setting forth the glorious sound of the gospel,—these onyx stones on his shoulder setting forth the people as resting upon

the almighty shoulders of Christ; the breastplate representing them as resting on his heart, on the breast of everlasting love; and, "holiness to the Lord" to represent them what He had made them. The priest went into the holy of holies, and he bore into that holy of holies a twofold glory, a sacrificial perfection, and a free people. So Jesus, when He was on earth, did the work that we have glanced at. He then entered into the holy of holies, and bore into heaven the glory of sacrificial perfection; He bore into heaven the glory of everlasting righteousness; He bore into heaven, to the unutterable delight of angels, the boundless joy of glorified spirits, and the eternal salvation of a number that no man can number. He bore into heaven the glory of sacrificial perfection, and, at the same time, carried before God by that sacrificial perfection, a sinless people, a righteous people, a holy people, a perfect people, He Himself being their representative. Here then is the glory of sacrificial perfection, and the glory of what the people are by that perfection. "He shall bear the glory." He would not trust such glory to any other. Why, even in the typical priesthood, no man could take that honor to himself, as you will see in the very nature of it, because the priest had to go into the holy of holies, and to see God, as it were, face to face; and God did actually from time to time speak to the priest from the mercy seat. Now, if a man take that upon himself, the Lord will say, how come you here? I have not chosen you; I have not called you. So sacred was this matter, that even if a good man dared to do what he was not called to do in this matter, he would suffer for it. Uzziah was a good man, but he dreadfully forgot himself when he rushed into the temple to burn incense, and the priests, understanding the solemnity of the order, said, "It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense;" and they began to stop him, and the leprosy rose in his forehead, and he hastened to go out, and was a leper to the day of his death. God would not suffer the typical priesthood to be trifled with without impunity. "No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." But this sacrificial perfection that should make unnumbered millions free from sin, and make them eternally happy-who is to have this honor? Who is to bear such glory as this? See in the 17th of John how beautifully the Savior bears the people there in his wondrous work before the Lord. "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." "He," then, "shall bear the glory," as typified by the high priest. And see how safe we are in his blessed name; because if he take us into heaven we shall never be sent out again · if he take us into heaven he will take us there by his own authority, by his own atonement, by his own righteousness, by his own Spirit, and by the counsel of his heavenly Father. "The counsel of peace shall be between them both." You never find any difference between the Father and the Son. He shall bear the glory. Indeed, every Christian is a glory to Christ, an honor to Christ. Doth it not say of the Church in 62nd of Isaiah, "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God"? And doth it not say in the 46th of Isaiah, "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory"? Why, he glories in you ten thousand times more than you do in him. We have ten million times twice told more reasons to glory in him than he has to glory in us; and yet he glories in us infinitely more than we do in him. Watts may well say-

"For such love let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break."

Now the priest had not only thus to bear into the holy of holies sacrificial perfection, and the people represented there by what that sacrifice had made them, and this he did by divine authority, and therefore was accepted; but he also had to bear in return a glory from God to the people; and the glory he had to bear is given in several items-seven or eight items. "The Lord bless thee." Ah, where did the high priest get that? "And keep thee"-and of course that is from God, - "The Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee;" that is from God; "the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee;" that is from God; "and give thee peace;" that is from God. "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel;" that is

from God; "and I will bless them;" that is from God. Now let us see whether the Savior did bear any glory from God. The Savior goes to heaven, bears the glory into heaven, as I have stated. Now it is for the same High Priest to bear a glory from heaven, as the result of his having borne the glory into heaven. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come," down came the Eternal Spirit in all the glory of sacrificial achievement, in all the glory of everlasting love, in all the glory of ancient prediction, in all the glory of the deep counsels of eternity. See the blessing, the glory that reached thousands of souls on that day. He bore the glory down to man. And has he not been bearing glory down to man from that day to this? Has he not borne glory down to us? Have we not sometimes felt this place, short as is the time we have been here, to be a sacred place, a holy place, a solemn place, a heart-softening place, a burden-losing place, a healing place? Now, says Peter, "Jesus Christ being by the right hand of God exalted he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." These are two of the senses, then, in which he shall bear the glory. But there are more yet. What shall I say to the last great day? What shall I say of the twofold glory then; when he shall raise the church from the dead, the church which he has loved, and bear it up in the skies before the Lord, without spot or blemish, or wrinkle, any such thing; and then bear down to his church that fullness of eternal glory in which the church, if I may so speak, shall, as it were, be enfolded and embodied, there to dwell for ever and ever in a fullness of joy, and pleasures which are for evermore.

May the Lord give us more of this heaven upon earth, for his name's sake.