



King Herod wanted to create for the Jews a temple more magnificent than Solomon's, and by doing this he would perpetuate his name and secure Jerusalem as his capital and one of the greatest cities in the world. So in 23 BC, 7 years after Augustus had confirmed Herod as King of Judea, he took on the task. Herod was one of the greatest architects in history and for a project this great he employed 18,000 skilled workers.

The Jews agreed only because Herod said that his skilled craftsmen would train 1000 priests to work on special religious areas of the Temple. The foundations of the old Temple were removed and the work began. Herod greatly enlarged the platform and for the Temple he used the basic floor plan of the Temple of Solomon, but its architecture was Hellenistic and Roman. He doubled the height of the Holy of Holies building and adorned every side of the main Temple building with heavy gold plate. Josephus said it achieved "magnificence beyond compare." He also said that "at sunrise it shimmered with the utmost brilliance and dazzled the eye like rays of the sun." Herod used massive white stone blocks that were approximately 40 feet long by 18 feet wide and weighing hundreds of tons each. The construction of the Temple was completed in a year and a half, but the finish work lasted until 63 AD (40 yrs.).

The Temple of Herod was the Temple that is mentioned throughout the New Testament, and the one Jesus referred to as "My Father's House." Its location was the same as Solomon's, on Mount Moriah at the east side of Jerusalem. Just outside the eastern gate was the Valley of Jehoshaphat, or the Kidron Valley, and then across the valley was the Mount of Olives.

The Temple was made up of several large courtyards, each on a higher terrace and accessible by elaborate stairs and enormous gates. The First Court or Outer Court was referred to as the Court of the Gentiles, because Gentiles or non-Jews could come there to worship but no further "lest they die." It was a beautiful courtyard surrounded by pillars of finely carved Corinthian marble. There was an area on the east side called "Solomon's Porch" which was believed to have survived from the First Temple and where Jesus did much of His teaching. It was here at the Court of the Gentiles that Jesus drove out the moneychangers and traders from the Temple and condemned the religious leaders of Jerusalem saying to "stop making My Father's house a place of merchandise."

Ascending higher the next court was the Court of the Israelites which was divided into a court for men and a court for women. The treasury was also located here. Ascending higher again the next court was the Court of the Priests where the altar of burnt offering was located and the sacrifices were made, blessings were given, and Psalms

were chanted. Ascending 12 more steps led to the Holy Temple itself, the House of God. This Rectangular building was the most beautiful part of the Temple and inside a veil was the larger room called the Holy Place with the Golden Menorah, the Table of the Shewbread, and the Altar of Incense. Inside the last Veil was a smaller room called the Holy of Holies where the High Priest entered on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle the blood on behalf of the sins of the people of Israel. The blood was sprinkled on a special rock ever since the Temple was first destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC and the Ark of the Covenant disappeared.

Herod's Temple was one of the architectural marvels of the ancient world, yet after its destruction by the Romans in 70 AD, almost nothing remains, and there is no way to know just how magnificent it really was.

⇒ **Submitted by Larry Driver**

⇒ **Via BIBLE HISTORY ONLINE**