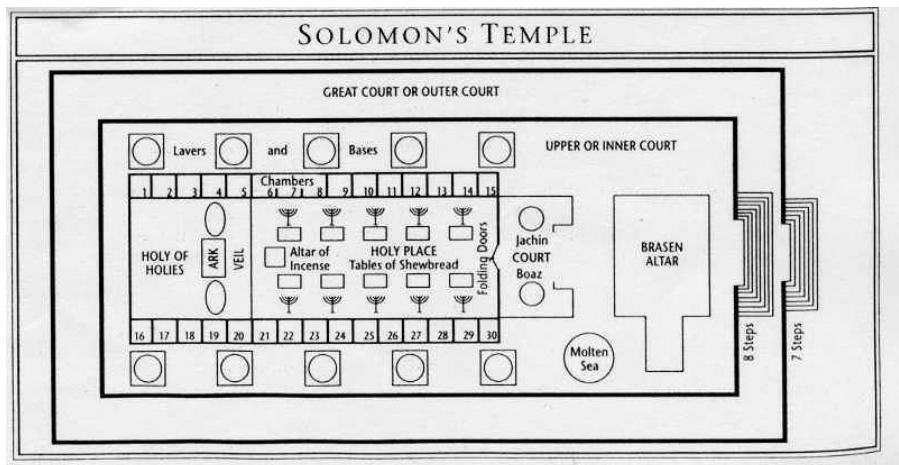


***Bible Study***

# Parallels between each Church Era and the Temple

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Version 1.0



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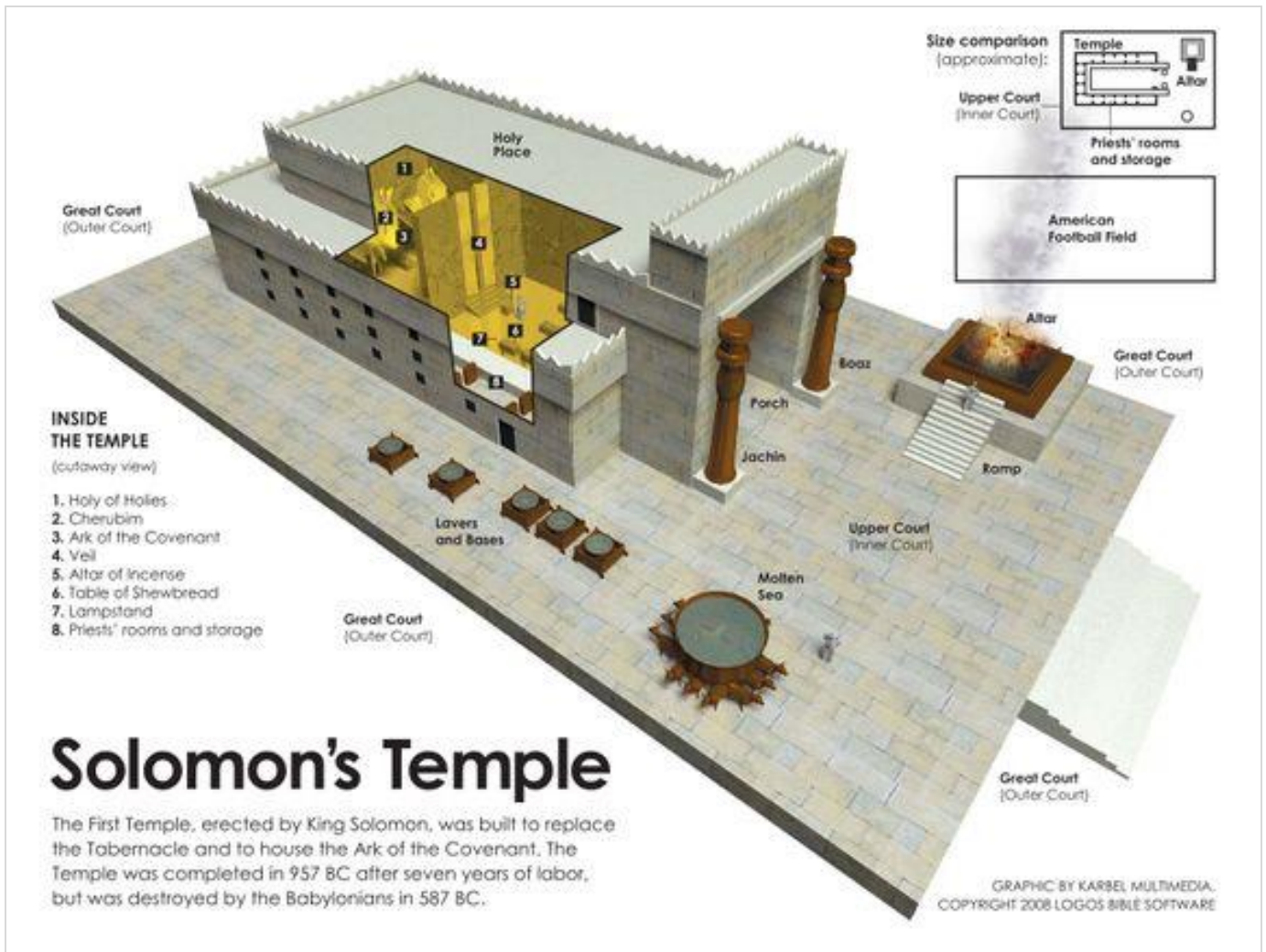
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The purpose and desire is to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God's message

### **Associated studies**

- *Amazing Temple Symbolism found in Revelation Chapter Three!*
- *Do Church Eras Exist?*
- *Do 7 Tribes of Israel parallel the 7 Churches of Revelation 2 & 3?*
- *Seven Restorations of the Work of the Church of God*
- *The Seven Eras of Ancient Israel – Type of the Eras of the Church?*



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/508132770428741503/>

## Introductory Remarks

In 1973 I was living in Port Elizabeth, South Africa and the local Worldwide Church of God minister was based in the city of East London. He would visit Port Elizabeth occasionally as there was no church congregation in the city.

During his visits, he would hold Bible studies and meet with members and prospective members in their homes. Eventually congregation was finally established that met monthly in 1976.

At that time, I was intrigued by the claim that the Sabbatarians had always existed since the first century and that their history could be traced with specific groups identified in history. And that Sabbatarian

history may be divided into 7 eras or phases. He told me that the old Worldwide Church of God booklet *A True History of the True Church* and the five old *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course* lessons (nos 49-53) on the subject were withdrawn due to errors. In double and triple checking I found out that was indeed true and that such action was authorised by Herbert W Armstrong.

Nevertheless, we should 'never throw out the baby with the bathwater' as the saying goes.

I did my own research in Encyclopedias and historical books and found some evidence for the existence of Sabbatarians down through the centuries, but not much<sup>1</sup>. It was only in 1975 or 1976 that a few of us in the local congregation were able to order copies of Dugger and Dodd's book *A True History of the True Religion* from Israel. It was very helpful (though containing its own errors which need to be recognised and addressed).

As the Worldwide Church of God claimed to be the Philadelphia Era, I took a deeper look into this in Revelation 3:7-13 and found a number of analogies to the Solomonic temple therein. Also, this typology seemed to transfer to the other churches of Revelation 2 & 3. I eventually wrote up a study on this in the 1980s but did not get around to typing it until 1994 (my Bible study on the subject may be found in the article *Amazing Temple Symbolism found in Revelation Chapter Three!*).

So, I wrote to the minister in late 1973 or early 1974 about my discovery and asked if my findings could "be taken further" with the Church. I was still rather new and learning the processes in those days. He responded with a very nice and encouraging letter.

Over time I wrote up my ideas and they eventually became this short study.

NB: this study is rather speculative, but I hope it generates further discussion, thought and research.

## **Positive Speculation**

I wrote the following in 1986:

"Members of the old Worldwide Church of God and some successor groups are very much aware that the Philadelphia Era is being moulded by God Almighty into "pillars" (Rev 3:12). As with all eras of His Church, God appears to have a program for it and its members.

Through upsets in the Church and internal stresses and strains (Rev 3:9a), one is re-created into a pillar of immense strength and character capable of withstanding the winds no matter from which direction they blow.

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<sup>1</sup> The hunt for information did bear some fruit and also uncovered various interesting non-Sabbatarian groups such as the Fifth Monarchists.

Interestingly enough, the Jews of that time commonly called teachers of the Law, “pillars”. The implication here is clear: the members of this era would take in interest in the Law (eg land sabbath, jubilee, ecological laws etc).”

But what of the other eras? How will the pillars interact with the other parts (eras) of the spiritual temple?

To ascertain what parts of the Temple the other eras were/are/will be trained to be, one might look for clues in the following areas:

1. Internal evidence in Revelation 2 & 3
2. Using logical thinking and deductive reasoning
3. Examine Old Testament parallels, if any, for any learnings they may offer

Let us now explore the possibility whether each Church of Revelation 2 & 3 may be represented in the Temple of Solomon. Together, these seven churches, it seems, combine to form the spiritual Temple.

## **Ephesus**

**Read Revelation 2:1-7.**

Ephesus commenced the New Testament Church of God. The Church continues God’s system via Israel, but this time includes gentiles. Hence, one might call the Church *spiritual Israel*.

In that letter, the Apostle Paul stated that the Apostles and Prophets were the early Church’s foundations:

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,  
**built on the foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,  
in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” (Eph 2:19-21)

Christ Himself is the cornerstone.<sup>2</sup>

Further

“For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, **God's building**.  
According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder **I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds**

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to Albert Jones *Notes on the Whole Bible*, commentary on Ephesians 2:20 for insights. See also Matt 7:24-25.

**upon it.**

**For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ ...**

Do you not know that **you are God's temple** and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and **you are that temple.**" (ICor 3:10-11, 16-17)

This would indicate that the early Church represents the **foundations** of the Temple.

The basic, fundamental doctrines are listed in Hebrews and called *foundation*:

"Therefore let us leave the **elementary** doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a **foundation** of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." (Heb 6:1-2)<sup>3</sup>

Of interest is that the Philadelphian pillars fit directly into these foundations indicating, perhaps, a close affinity between the two eras. The first had Apostles, many of whom were taught by Christ. The latter had an administrative Apostle whom restored certain first century doctrines to the church.

In my 1986 handwritten notes I wrote:

"In addition, there might be historical parallels between the two:

Eg Ephesus had 3 Apostles (Peter, Paul, John) in overall leadership responsibility [in addition to the others]; encountered immense difficulties after 2 x 19 time cycles; had problems with both phariseism and licentiousness; **eventually a great "falling away" occurred.**"

A great apostasy occurred during both eras.

## **Smyrna**

**Read Revelation 2:8-11.**

This era underwent traumatic persecutions and unspeakable tortures for holding to God's Laws and upholding His truths.

Might not one speak of this courageous era of 'sacrificing' the people of God as a sort of **altar** of sacrifice (Rom 12:1; Acts 15:26; Lev 8:10-11) perhaps represented by the bronze altar for burnt offerings at the front of the Temple?

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to the old Worldwide Church of God brochure *The Six Great Doctrines of Hebrews 6*.

While one cannot be dogmatic, this appears to be the case and no other portion of the Temple seems to fit the typology. Of course, spiritually, any Christian during any historical stage/era of the Church may be of the Smyrna type and may have to suffer enormous sacrifices – even giving up their lives for the truth!

Interestingly, in the city of Smyrna, the pagan practice was for

“Once a year a citizen had to burn incense **on the altar** to the godhead Caesar, after which he was issued a certificate.” (F. E. Gaebelin, “Revelation”, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, p. 437) [emphasis mine]

Such are Satan’s counterfeits.

## **Pergamos**

**Read Revelation 2:12-17.**

The name of this era means high or exalted and may symbolise the **roof** of the Temple. According to 1 Kings 6:9, 22 the roof was made of cedar and overlaid with gold as was the rest of the building.

The members of this era will be awarded manna (v. 17) which comes from the “roof of the earth” or heaven.

## **Thyatira**

**Read Revelation 2:18-29.**

Could Thyatira be the furnishings and other decorations of the Temple?

Thyatira was famous for its two leading industries:

- a. Manufacture of instruments of brass, bronze and other metals;
- b. Manufacture and dyeing of cloth, especially of the royal purple colour.

The Temple, in similitude to the Tabernacle, possessed various furnishings and implements such as stands, bronze pots, basins, shovels, tools. Hiram, for instance, made bronze furnishings (1 Kings 7:13-22. Cp v 14 with Ex. 35:31) and Solomon himself was responsible for the table of shewbread, tongs, lampstands etc (1 Kings 7:48-51).

This reminds one of the industries of Thyatira:

“Although not a great city, it was nevertheless important through commerce in wool, linen, apparel, dyed stuffs, leatherwork, tanning, and excellent bronzework.” (F. E. Gaebelien, “Revelation”, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, p. 437) [emphasis mine]

## **Sardis**

### **Read Revelation 3:1-6.**

Sardis was known for its wall being carelessly guarded, with sometimes fatal results. Is this era portrayed by the walls of the Temple which were made of boards of cedar?

Indeed! For the walls of the Church must be jealously guarded (Lam 2:8; Is 26:1, 6, 11-12; 60:18; Ps 51:18; Zech 2:5).

Truths died out and false beliefs entered due to lack of fervency and zeal.

The actual city itself was famous for its walls:

“The acropolis rose about eight hundred feet above the north section of Sardis and was virtually impregnable **because of its rock walls**” (F. E. Gaebelien, “Revelation”, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, p. 447) [emphasis mine] [emphasis mine]

The warning is clear: even strong walls can fall into disrepair if not constantly kept in good order by constant maintenance.

## **Philadelphia**

### **Read Revelation 3:7-13.**

This Church represents the **doors and pillars** of the Temple and is discussed more fully in the article *Amazing Temple Symbolism found in Revelation Chapter Three!*

Of interest is that some suggest that these pillars

“may be stylized trees, bringing to mind the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge which stood in the centre of the Garden of Eden.” (V. A. Hurowitz, ‘Ascending the Mountain of the Lord – A Glimpse into the Solomonic Temple,’ in *Capital Cities: Urban Planning and Spiritual Dimensions. Proceedings of the Symposium Held on May 27-29, 1996, Jerusalem, Israel*, p. 218.)



Does this not remind one of Herbert W Armstrong's oft reminder of the lessons of the two trees of the Garden of Eden representing the two ways of life: one of outgoing concern for others (GIVE) and the other of selfishness (GET).

*Strong's Concordance* has *Yakin* as *He will establish* and *Boaz* as an unknown root.

Barnes in his famous *Notes on the Whole Bible* argues that we should look at the *Septuagint* version to gain a true understanding of IKings 7:21:

"The Septuagint in the parallel passage (margin reference), translate Jachin and Boaz by Κατόρθωσις *Katorthōsis* and ἰσχύς *Ischus* - "Direction" and "Strength." The literal meaning of the names is given in the margin. The meaning was probably "God will establish in strength" (i. e. firmly) the temple and the religion connected with it."

God can make a weak Church strong, if it really wants to be (Rev 3:8).

While

"... Philadelphia became a strong fortress city ... the whole region was earthquake prone" (F. E. Gaebelain, "Revelation", *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 451 [emphasis mine])

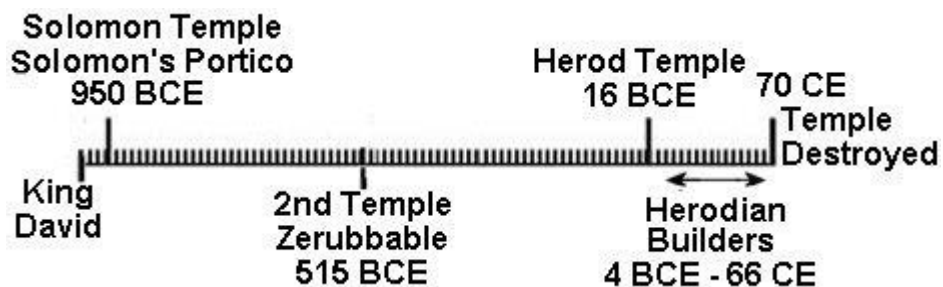
This era has been strong, but breaks apart upon internal "earthquakes" and splits.

## Laodicea

**Read Revelation 3:14-22.**

Perhaps this church is typified by the Solomonic period (Solomon actually built the Temple). He performed the quantitative "Work" while his predecessor, King David, who drew up the blueprint, performed the qualitative "Work".

In the Temple there was the Inner Court (IKings 6:36; IIChron 4:9). Then there was the Great Court (IIChron 4:9; Jer 19:14; 26:2) where the Israelites would come to worship God .



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon%27s\\_Porch#/media/File:Wiki-timeline2.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon%27s_Porch#/media/File:Wiki-timeline2.jpg)

Is it this part of the spiritual Temple that will go into the Great Tribulation? Are these the Laodicea Era? Compare Revelation 11:2:

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and **measure the temple of God**, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

But **the court which is without the temple leave out** [ie to *cast out or send away*], and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months.” (Rev 11:1-2)

Other Scriptures relating to this terrifying period include: Rev 3:18; 7:9, 14; 12:10, 15, 17; 18:24; 20:4; Ps 79:1; Lam 2:7; Is 47:9; Jer 50:28b; 51:11b; Dan 8:13.

To be cast out or driven away from God’s presence is a very serious matter – it leaves one without God’s protection during terrible times of persecution and martyrdom. Another way of putting it is being “spewed out” by Him (Rev 3:11; Lev 18:28).

## Concluding Remarks

From the above it seems that the various churches of Revelation 2 & 3 fit together to form the spiritual Temple.

If this is the case, then all parts of the spiritual Temple fit together perfectly in accordance with the Father’s will and desire, viz:

Church	Possible Temple typology
Ephesus	Foundations
Smyrna	Altar of sacrifice
Pergamos	Roof
Thyatira	Furnishings
Sardis	Walls
Philadelphia	Pillars, doors, porch
Laodicea	Outer court

This also teaches us a powerful lesson: that all Christians down through the ages are part of the body of Christ. All Christians with the holy spirit – no matter which church era or which legitimate Church of God group - are a part of that body. As such they must be recognised as such and honoured.

And that does not include talk – rather, it includes actions such as taking time and effort to meet with and to get to know other Christians.

Attempts to separate us from each other is carnal, sinful and illegal in God's sight.

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." (Eph 4:1-7)

May we all strive for the unity of the spirit despite corporate boundaries. Working through differences and yet maintaining love and outgoing concern for one another.

This may not be pleasing to some men, but it is most pleasing to God the Father, and that is all that matters.

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