

(Laying True Foundations)

Introduction

- I remember when I was doing my probation in Edinburgh, the road from our flat to church passed the site of a new Safeway supermarket:
 - I passed it every day!
 - when I started, it was an old factory;
 - quickly demolished;
 - but then a **long** time clearing site, putting in the foundations;
 - but once the foundations done, the building raced up!
- Get the foundations right, and the rest slots into place.

Over to Jerusalem...

- Jeshua, Zerubbabel & the other Israelites were literally laying foundations for the Temple.
 - in doing so they were reflecting the underlying central place they gave to the Temple, and to the **priest-led** worship that went on there!
 - they were building on, not just some rubble of an old Temple, but on a heritage of understanding of **the place of the priest in the worship of God**

Focus on God

- First things first! Order here indicates priority.
- Overall task was to build the Temple of the Lord.
 - realised that reason for doing that was to worship God.
 - since that is the central call of the believer - **to worship God!**
- So, first thing they did was to restore altar so that the priests could offer sacrifices, so that they could worship!
 - their focus was on God first and the task he had given second.
 - their lives were **oriented around the worshipping relationship they had with God**
- Foundation for all which came later.

Building the Temple

- What comes later is the re-establishment of the central place of Temple worship:
 - sacrifices;
 - priestly garments;
 - all the rituals;
- In everything they did, even down to apparently obscure details, they sought to follow the pattern laid down in Scripture:
 - altar built in accordance with Law of Moses - **v.2**
 - built it on old foundations - exactly where God had said it should go in his instructions to Solomon years before - **v.3**
 - sacrifices offered in accordance with "what is written" - **v.4,5**
 - materials from Sidon & Tyre, Lebanon cedars just like first Temple, even paid for same way! - **v.7**
 - starting month same as Solomon's Temple - **v.8, cf. 2 Chron.3:2**
- This is worship exactly as God had intended being re-established!
- Why was that all so central?
 - (recap some stuff from Leviticus!!)
 - God is holy; can't stand sin in his presence; burns up unholiness! His holiness is dangerous!
 - **like a fire - dangerous, we warn our children of the danger...**
 - so people can't come to God's presence casually, or easily
- So God institutes the whole sacrificial system, mediated through the priests, to allow people to come and to worship

Priests as Representatives

- Of us to God - taking our offerings into God's presence, interceding on our behalf
 - sacrifices, rituals, etc - all stuff we looked at in Leviticus
- Of God to us - bring God's worship into the reality of our lives, focusing our attention on him
 - beautiful clothing, symbolic significance of aspects of it, eg twelve stones on breast plate suggesting that God holds all twelve tribes of Israel close to his heart, white linen (in an age before washing machines!!) symbolising purity...
 - "here is God in our midst..." remember he carries us on his breast, he is pure..."
- Symbolically in OT priests bridge the holiness gap between man and God

Conclusion

- Jeshua & Zerubbabel laid right foundations for the work of God - not just the literal foundations of the Temple, but in their approach:
 - first a focus on God - worship him - relationship with him
 - second a commitment to tackling God's work in God's way
- And in so doing they were embodying the OT principle of the priest being used by God to bring his holiness into the lives of his people, and to bring their sin into his presence:
 - to facilitate worship!
- Same God who yearns and works to draw from us worship, who bends over backwards to facilitate our coming to him!
 - its this theme that is picked up in Hebrews 4:14, 16:
 - *"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.... Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*

Jesus

- All this is what Jesus does...
 - deals with our sin
 - invites us into holy living - life as Jesus lived it