

## NOTES ON THE SECOND TEMPLE

S.L.H.  
Soli Deo Gloria!

**THE TEMPLE UNDER THE PERSIAN EMPIRE.** The 2nd Temple was constructed by the remnant of Jews who returned from exile in Babylon by the decree of "Cyrus, the king of Persia" (Ezr1:1-4). It was built under the leadership of Zerubbabel the Governor of Judah and Joshua the High Priest (Hag1:1-2).

**THE TEMPLE UNDER THE GREEK EMPIRE.** The 2nd Temple was desecrated by the Seleucid (Greek) ruler Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC, an act prophesied by Daniel as "the transgression of desolation" (Dan8:13) and "the abomination that maketh desolate" (Dan11:31). The desecration of Antiochus included the offering of a pig on the brazen altar and the erection of an image/idol to Zeus/Jupiter in the Holy of Holies. In response to this desecration, the Jews rebelled against Antiochus under the leadership of the Maccabees, expelled the Greeks from the land of Israel, and cleansed the Temple; the rededication of the 2nd Temple is celebrated in Judaism as Hanukkah (a.k.a. "the feast of the dedication"; Jn10:22).

**THE TEMPLE UNDER THE ROMAN EMPIRE.** With the rise of the Roman empire, the Roman general Pompey laid siege to Jerusalem and captured the city in 63 BC. Tacitus records that Pompey entered the Temple, including the Holy of Holies, which he found "empty".

Under Herod the Great, an Idumean appointed as the Roman client King of Judea, the 2nd Temple underwent a lengthy refurbishment (beginning c. 20 BC; cf. Jn2:20) during which it was considerably expanded and greatly embellished, such that it is often (erroneously) referred to as Herod's Temple. The 2nd Temple is that Temple standing during Christ's ministry in the Gospels.

The Roman general Titus (Vespasian) laid siege to Jerusalem, breaching the walls of the city after 18 months, at which time the Temple was sacked and ultimately destroyed (70 AD), as prophesied by both Daniel and Christ (Dan9:26; Luk19:43-44). Many of the Temple treasures were carried away to Rome, as depicted in the Menorah Panel on the Arch of Titus constructed (c. 81 AD) to memorialize Rome's victory over the attempted Jewish rebellion.



Arch of Titus in Rome.



Menorah Panel on Arch of Titus.