

The Temple of Solomon

King David was the second King of Israel, and was a warrior who united Judah and Israel to create a strong and powerful country. He planned to create a magnificent temple, but did not manage to do so in his lifetime.

The Scriptural stories say that God forbade him from building the Temple himself, because he was a warrior who had killed and was therefore not fit to create the Holiest of Holy Places. So it was destined that his son would take up the design and create it. In anticipation of this, Solomon purchased huge quantities of the finest Cedar wood and scoured the quarries for the finest marble.

When David died, his son Solomon carried out his father's grand plan and the Temple of Solomon was built. No-one really knows what this first Temple looked like. The only descriptions are to be found in Scriptural texts, and they vary. The Temple was said to contain the Ark of the Covenant (containing the Ten Commandments) and many other treasures. There was said to be a magnificent gold leafed Mercy Seat over the Ark and two golden Cherubim by the Mercy Seat heralding the presence of God.

The land of Israel was invaded in 586 BCE and the Temple was destroyed by the King of Babylon. All the artefacts were stolen by this King, except the Ark of the Covenant, which disappeared and has never been found. This has led people to speculate about where the Ark might be, with some suggestions that it is currently housed in Ethiopia.

A second temple was completed in 515 BCE, but over the centuries which followed, the land on which the Temple stood has been fought over by Jews, Christians and Muslims, all of whom regard it as a holy place. Muslims believe that the Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven by climbing a ladder of light rising from a sacred stone which had been part of Solomon's Temple.



An illuminated manuscript from 1450 illustrates the building of Solomon's Temple.

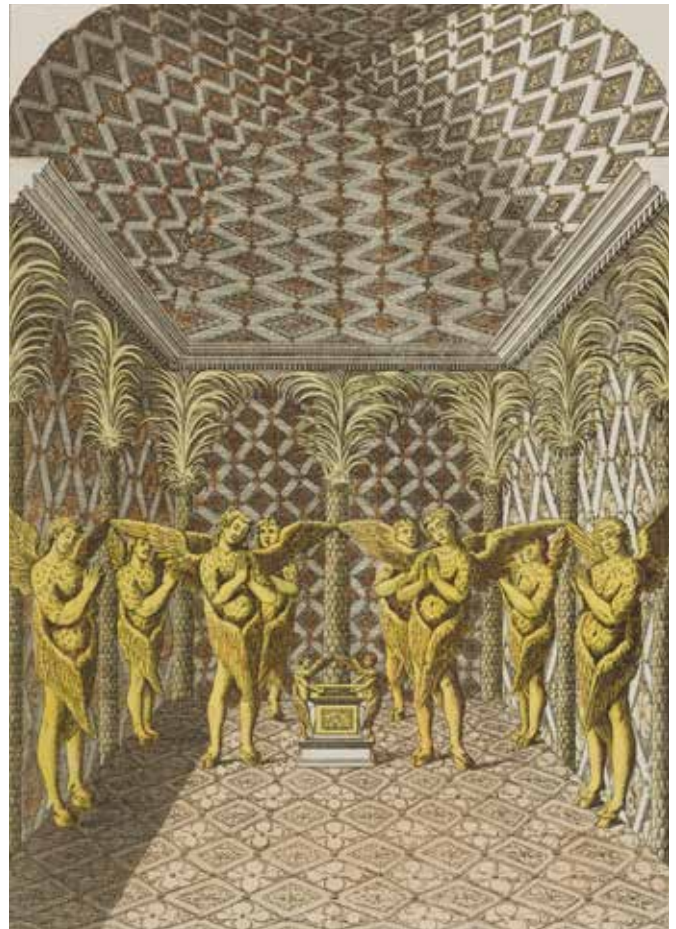
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Different temples have been built on the site, and destroyed as the city fell to one 'liberator' after another. The last known was 'Herod's Temple', a huge extension of what was left of the second temple, and this building lasted from 20 BCE to 70 CE.

The only portion of Herod's Temple which remains is the Western wall, known today as 'The Wailing Wall', which is still a holy place for Jews, who pray there daily.

Following the publication in 1982 of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* by Lincoln, Baigent and Leigh, various theories began to be put forward about the design of Rosslyn Chapel. Claims that it was a reproduction of Solomon's Temple and that it had a link to the Knights Templar grew in popularity. But were they meaning Solomon's Temple, or Herod's Temple? And what evidence was presented to back up these theories? A plethora of books and self-published pamphlets claimed to have the answers, but Rosslyn Chapel Trust has lacked the resources to test the various theories and suppositions made. So we offer a selection of the books for sale in our gift shop and leave it to you to make up your own mind!

Article by Joe Walker, Senior Education Officer at Education Scotland (Religious & Moral Education, Psychology, Philosophy & Sociology)



An artist's impression of the interior of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

Recommended Reading

Simon Sebag, *Montefiore Jerusalem: The Biography*. Paperback, Phoenix 2013

Jerusalem: The Making of a Holy City. DVD

www.rosslynchapel.com