

What was Solomon's temple / the first temple?

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The crowning achievement of King Solomon's reign was the erection of a magnificent temple in Jerusalem, often called Solomon's temple or the first temple. Solomon's father, King David, had wanted to build a great temple for God a generation earlier, as a permanent resting place for the Ark of the Covenant which contained the Ten Commandments. However, God had forbidden him from doing so: "You will not build a house for my name for you are a man of battles and have shed blood" (1 Chronicles 28:3). Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David (2 Chronicles 3:1). This new, stationary temple would replace the portable tabernacle constructed during the wilderness wandering.

If Solomon reigned from 970 to 930 BC, then he began building the temple in 966 BC. A very interesting fact concerning the building of the temple was there was no noise of the construction. The material was prepared before it was brought to the building site. The house, while it was being built, was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built (1 Kings 6:7). The Bible's description of Solomon's temple suggests that the inside ceiling was 180 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 50 feet high. The highest point on the temple that King Solomon built was actually 120 cubits tall (about 20 stories or about 207 feet). First Kings 6:1-38 and chapters 7-8 describe the construction and dedication of Solomon's temple.

Until the first temple was destroyed by the Babylonians some four hundred years later, in 586 BC, sacrifice was the predominant mode of divine service there. Seventy years

later, a second temple was completed on the same site, and sacrifices again resumed. The book of Ezra chronicles the building of the second temple. During the first century, Herod greatly enlarged and expanded this temple, which became known as Herod's temple. It was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, during the siege of Jerusalem. Only a small portion of the retaining wall remains to this day, known as "The Wailing Wall."