

Why King David Could Not Build the Temple

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | July 21, 2020



Have you ever wondered why King David, who had such a heart for the Lord, was forbidden from building God's temple?

God told the Israelite king, "You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight" (1 Chronicles 22:8 NIV84).

Yet God was the one who helped David kill Goliath and win victory after victory over the enemies of Israel. So why, if God empowered and blessed David to be successful in war, did He stop David from building the temple?

The answer is found in understanding the problem of sin, God's solution for it, the purpose of the symbolic sacrificial system (temple services), and the limits of physical force.

Might and Power vs. God's Kingdom

The problem of sin is a state of being; it is a condition of heart and mind that is out of harmony with God and His kingdom of love. Sin is rooted in lies that, when believed, break love and trust and result in fear and selfishness. Because of Adam, all of humanity has been infected with this terminal sin-condition - and all of humanity needs healing from it.

God's kingdom is the kingdom of truth, love, and freedom. His plan of salvation does not to use might and force to destroy sin or even eradicate His enemies.

He could have wiped out Satan and all his angels more easily than you allowing a pebble to fall from your hand to the ground. But using force to kill enemies wouldn't achieve God's goal - because it can't save sinners. In order to save sinners, God must destroy lies, eradicate fear, and eliminate selfishness from hearts and minds. Threats, physical might, and other coercive means cannot instill love, win friendship, eliminate fear, restore trust, or create loyalty. In other words, God can never win the war for our hearts and minds by the use of physical might.

Physical might has no power to cleanse hearts and minds, and it is limited in what it can righteously do. Physical might can only be used righteously to restrain evil:

- A parent can use physical might to restrain a child from running into the street, but a parent cannot use might to force a child to love them.
- A psychiatrist can use physical might to restrain a psychotic patient from harming themselves, but a psychiatrist cannot use might to force a patient to trust them.
- A municipality can use physical might to restrain muggers and thieves, but it cannot use might to force the criminals to be honest people.
- A nation can use physical might to restrain an invading army, but it cannot use might to force enemies to become friends.

God's solution to sin is to:

- Heal our hearts and minds (Psalm 51:10)
- Circumcise our hearts by the Spirit (Romans 2:29)
- Write His law in our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10)
- Give us a new life of love (John 3:3)
- Instill in us the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16)
- Take out the heart of stone and put in a tender heart (Ezekiel 36:26)
- Turn His enemies into friends (Romans 5:10, 2 Corinthians 5:18 GNT)

Might and power cannot achieve God's goal of healing our hearts and minds. Might and power cannot instill trust, win to love, inspire loyalty, and create friends. This is why the Bible teaches that God's plan is "not by might nor by power, but by [His] Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84). And His Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love - truth presented in love and leaving us free. Why? Because love, trust, friendship, and genuine heart and mind transformation require our agreement, our choice, our cooperation. If God were to use divine might to force a change in our minds and hearts without our cooperation, our individuality would be erased; we would be overwritten and no longer exist. The only way for God to heal us *while* we retain our unique identity is for each of us to be won to trust in God and choose to participate with Him for our healing.

This is why the Bible says that every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5).

The Sanctuary System

The Old Testament temple service was designed by God to reveal His plan to heal humankind from sin. In Old Testament times, Satan inspired various nations to assail Israel in his attempt to destroy the people through whom the Messiah would come, those to whom God's truths were entrusted. David could be used by God to use physical might to restrain these destructive forces, but such methods could not be used to heal hearts and minds. Therefore, David could not build the temple, for in doing so, it would misrepresent reality, suggesting that might and power are legitimate ways to save from sin.

No - the temple had to be built by someone who used the principles of God's kingdom and who would accurately reveal Jesus, the One who would build God's true temple (Zechariah 6:12, 13).

Yes - Jesus is the builder of God's true temple, of which the Old Testament temple was merely a symbol, an object lesson. To be faithful to God's reality, the temple, which represents the hearts and minds of people being restored to righteousness, could not be built by force, might, violence, and the killing of enemies; it could only be built by truth and love lived out, leaving people free to choose - that is, *the methods of peace*.

Thus, after God told David that he could not build the temple because he was a man of violence, He also promised him this:

But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. He is the one who will build a house for my Name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever (1 Chronicles 22:9, 10 NIV84).

Solomon, a man of peace, could build the temple because only in truth, love, and freedom can God heal hearts and minds; might, force, violence, threats, and other forms of coercion can never do this.

Well would the church remember this lesson today: Might and power may restrain the enemies of God, but they can never turn enemies into friends.
