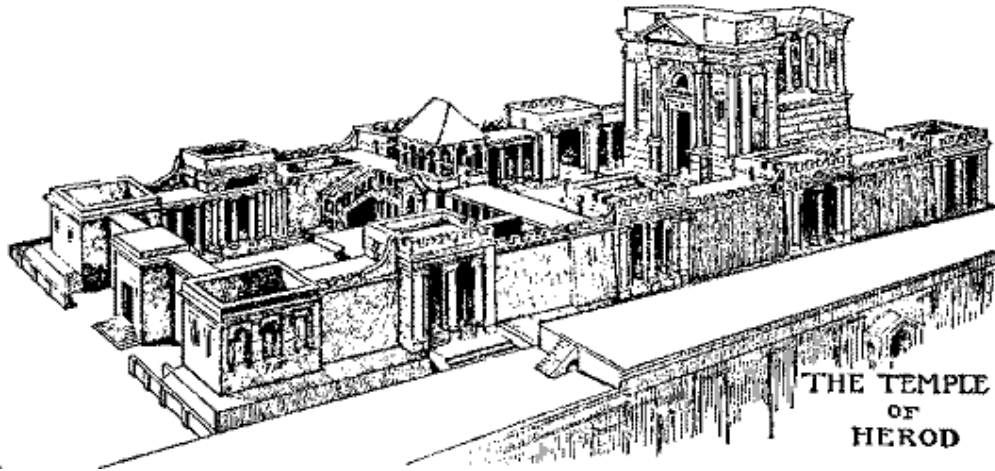


The Temple

What was the Temple?

The Temple was central to Jewish belief. It symbolised the presence of God among the people. Jews held the Temple to be the 'house of God', the place where God dwelt in all his holy mystery. The first Temple dates from the reign of King Solomon and was built in Jerusalem. The Babylonians destroyed this Temple in 586 BC. In 520 BC, on their return from exile, the Jews rebuilt the Temple. Herod the Great extended this into a new and more splendid Temple in 20 BC. Its size and magnificence dazzled the disciples (Mk 13:1-2).



So the Temple to a synagogue is like a cathedral to a little church?

No. The same kinds of worship go on in a cathedral and a small church; a different kind of worship went on in the Temple than in the synagogue. This worship involved the sacrifice of animals and other gift offerings to the deity. Therefore the Temple had an **altar** and **priests** to offer sacrifice there.

Once a year, at the Feast of Passover, vast numbers of Jewish pilgrims came to Jerusalem from all over to celebrate the Exodus. At this time the Temple resembled a huge slaughterhouse as thousands of lambs were sacrificed and handed to the people for the celebration of the Passover meal that night.

What happened to the Temple?

The work of decorating the Temple took over 80 years, and was only finished in 64 AD. Six years later the Romans burnt it down after a Jewish revolt. All that remains of Herod the Great's Temple is a course of huge stones where the Jews meet daily for prayer. This is known as the Western Wall (popularly called the Wailing Wall because Jews bewail the destruction of the Temple there). If you'd observed the Temple in its glory, you'd have thought it permanent and indestructible. Ironically, Judaism survived because of the humble synagogue.

TEMPLE	SYNAGOGUE
Priests to offer sacrifice	Rabbi to lead readings & prayer
One	Many
Jerusalem	In villages, towns, cities
Huge and ornate	Of varying sizes & décor
Herod's Temple destroyed in 70 AD	Synagogue worship has survived to this day