

Introduction

THE NEW TEMPLE AND THE SECOND COMING

Unmistakable Signs of the Last Days

“Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.”

—Isaiah 21:11-12

Almost two thousand years ago, after nearly two years of terrible seige, the brutally efficient legions of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple to the ground. Led by General Titus, the son of Emperor Vespasian, the Roman army completed its mission of destruction on the ninth day of Av (August) in A.D. 70.

The glorious temple, built by King Herod, was the second of the sacred temples to stand on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The First Temple had been built by King Solomon approximately 1000 B.C. and was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.. The Second Temple that was built by the Jews who returned to Jerusalem following the Babylonian Captivity in 536 B.C. remains in ruins today. However, exciting developments are taking place in Israel that will result in a Third Temple being built again on the ancient foundations that Solomon put in place nearly three thousand years ago. You and I are part of the prophetic generation that will live to see a Temple of God once again stand in Jerusalem, the spiritual crossroads o the world.

The rebuilding of the Temple has profound prophetic significance equal to the appearance of the Antichrist or the forming of the pagan armies to invade Israel in the coming Battle of Gog and Magog. Many students of biblical prophecy have debated the role that will be played by the Third Temple in end-times developments. But the scriptures make it clear that just before Christ returns, the Third Temple of God must stand once more on its original location on the Temple Mount.

Preparations to build the Third Temple have progressed on several fronts in recent years, with detailed plans and practical preparations that go far beyond the awareness of most people. This recent movement in Israel to rebuild the Temple signals that you and I are part of the generation that will see the return of Christ. The Temple project is yet another major prophetic signpost on the timeline of the last days leading to the final conflict of the Battle of

Armageddon and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. No less a prophet than Jesus Christ made it clear that the generation that witnessed the return of the Jews to their Promised Land would live to see Him return to earth. The modern state of Israel was born in 1948, which means that you and I are part of the last-days generation (see Matthew 24:30-32). However, the Temple must once again occupy its place on the Temple Mount before the final major prophecied events of the last days can take place.

Many scholars have questioned whether the Temple will ever be rebuilt because of the immense practical, religious, and political obstacles that stand in the way. Mosques, shrines, and other Muslim holy sites occupy the Temple Mount, a 35 acre site that is under the administrative control of Arab authorities. Since the Six Day War in 1967, Israel has controlled the entire city of Jerusalem including the Temple Mount. However, since the end of the 1967 Six Day War Israel has allowed the Supreme Muslim Religious Council (the Waqf) to control religious activities and to police (without firearms) all activities on the Temple Mount. This area is the location of the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa mosque. Religious Jews do not worship in the area of the Dome of the Rock because the chief rabbis warn they might inadvertently trespass on the site of the ancient Holy of Holies. Muslim control of the Temple Mount fulfills the prophecy of Luke 21:24 that “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

Beyond the political and religious tensions that stand in the way of rebuilding the Temple, there has been a longstanding and seemingly unsolvable dilemma from within Judaism. The Jews cannot rebuild the Temple or resume worship in the Temple unless the long-dormant Sanhedrin Court, the highest body of Jewish lawmakers, is reconvened. This is necessary in order to re-establish the Levitical priesthood. The Sanhedrin is the only religious body authorized to reinstitute the ancient rituals, to determine the correct location of the Temple, and to authorize numerous other essential details of Temple ritual.

One of Jesus’ prophecies indicates that the Sanhedrin will be fulfilling its duties in the last days. Christ warned his disciples about the coming persecution in Jerusalem during the Tribulation under the world rule of the Antichrist. He warned the Jews that they should “pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath” (Matthew 24:20). This prophecy implies that the Sanhedrin, which has not existed for fifteen centuries, will be reconvened in the generation when Israel is reborn. Christ’s prophecy implies that the law restricting casual travel on a Sabbath (limited to only 1,000 paces) will be in force during the coming Tribulation. This religious restriction (see Exodus 21:8-10) interpreted the

prohibition of working on the Sabbath as implying that any travel of less than one thousand paces was casual allowed travel. The religious declaration referred to by Jesus that prevented a Jew from travelling more than one thousand paces required the existence of the Sanhedrin. Jesus thus implies that the Sanhedrin will exist in the last days and will have the authority to enforce such a rule. Interestingly, the Jewish historian Flavious Josephus noted that the distance from the summit of the Mount of Olives to the Temple Mount is approximately 1000 paces – a Sabbath’s Day Journey.

ISRAEL WITHOUT A TEMPLE

Six hundred fifty-six years passed between the destruction of Solomon’s Temple and the burning of the Second Temple, which also occurred on the 9th day of Av, A.D. 70. From that day on, the Temple was lost as the center of Israel’s spiritual life. During the nineteen centuries that followed the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews in exile prayed for their prophesied return to the Promised Land. Each year at the Feast of Passover they prayed “Next year in Jerusalem.” Along with that hope, religious Jews have longed to rebuild the Temple and establish the long-promised Kingdom of God on earth under the rule of the Messiah.

For centuries the Jews have prayed: “May it be Thy will that the Temple be speedily rebuilt in our days...” Three times a day, devout Jews prayed this ancient prayer for the rebuilding of the Temple. They looked forward to the day when a Temple would once again stand on the Temple Mount, and the Lord would return his Shekinah Presence to Jerusalem. Finally, after nineteen centuries of waiting, today’s generation has been given the task of making these dreams come true.

GOD’S COMMAND TO BUILD A SANCTUARY

The rebuilding of the Temple is central to the Messianic hopes of the Jewish people. And, as the rabbis have noted, God never rescinded his command to Israel to build a Sanctuary for him (see Exodus 25:8). His command still remains in force today.

The Lord showed Moses the precise pattern to follow in constructing his earthly Sanctuary, the Tabernacle, which would duplicate the sacred objects found in the heavenly sanctuary. The sacred vessels and worship instruments later used in Solomon’s Temple, including the Ark of the Covenant, were modeled directly by Moses’ craftsmen according to the pattern of the sacred

objects in the eternal Temple in heaven (see Exodus 25:8-9). Likewise, God revealed to King David and his son Solomon the detailed plans for building a Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.

Solomon's Temple was destroyed, as was the Second Temple, built by King Herod. Yet Jesus mentioned the existence of a Temple when he spoke to his disciples about the events of the last days and the Great Tribulation. He warned that "when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (who so readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains" (Matthew 24:15-16). Jesus' prophecy echoed that of Daniel, who indicated that the abomination of desolation will be fulfilled in a Temple of God standing in Jerusalem. Both prophecies suggest that the Third Temple will be built before the Antichrist comes to power and takes control of Europe and the Mediterranean.

Satan will defile the Holy Place of the Temple during the last three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation. The False Prophet, the Antichrist's partner, will then demand that the Antichrist be worshiped as "god" in the Temple.

CONTROVERSY OVER REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Among the ongoing tragedies of the Middle East is that both Arabs and Jews claim the right of possession of the Holy Land, the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple Mount. In just about any current news report involving the conflict between Israel and her Arab enemies, the Old City of Jerusalem plays a prominent role. God told his prophets thousands of years ago that the final battle for the soul and destiny of mankind will be decided in Jerusalem, whose name literally means "city of peace," the city where the coming Messiah will have his throne.

You and I are part of the generation that will witness the climactic final struggle for the destiny of mankind. The forces of good and evil will wage war in the valley before the mount of Megiddo in northern Israel—the final Battle of Armageddon. Leading up to that battle, and central to the events that precede Armageddon, attention will focus not only on Jerusalem but more specifically on the Temple Mount.

The Third Temple will be built on what is easily the most contested piece of real estate on earth. Not only is this prophesied in Scripture, but today rabbis, researchers, archaeologists, and other interested parties in Israel are drawing up

detailed plans, recreating vessels used in Temple worship, and searching for lost treasures of the ancient Temple. Incredible progress has been made in locating, gathering, and in some cases re-creating the necessary vessels, utensils, and other sacred objects that will be necessary to reinstitute worship and sacrifice in the Third Temple.

The Orthodox religious leadership in Israel has finally thrown its support behind the many efforts underway to prepare for the building of the Temple. The progress, extent, and timing of these preparations will be examined in later chapters of this book.

CONTROL OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT

At the end of the Jewish victory over the Arab armies during the Six Day War in June 1967, Israeli Defense Minister General Moshe Dayan went to the Al-Aksa Mosque for a significant meeting with the five leaders of the Supreme Muslim Council. This council had held absolute control over the Temple Mount during nearly twenty years of Jordanian military control of Jerusalem from 1948 until the city was liberated by Israel's Defense Forces in 1967. The meeting between Dayan and the Muslim leaders established Israel's religious and political policy concerning the Temple Mount, a policy that remains unchanged today. Dayan, a non-religious Jew, did not understand the significance of the Temple Mount, and thus relinquished administrative control to the Arabs in the vain hope that the generosity of this gesture would be appreciated. Unfortunately, the Arabs interpreted his surrender of the Jews' most sacred site as an indication of the weakness of Israel's resolve. Dayan ordered the Israeli flag removed from the Dome of the Rock. His further concessions surrendered administrative control of the Temple Mount to the Supreme Muslim Council, a Jordanian-controlled Muslim trust known as the Waqf. Though Jews would be permitted limited access to the Temple Mount area, all prayer or reading of Scripture by Jews and Christians was prohibited. Thus, Dayan rejected any public Jewish identification with the most sacred site of ancient Israel. Tragically, for Dayan and many of the subsequent non-religious political and military leaders of Israel, the Temple Mount held no spiritual and religious significance, only historical importance.

In spite of such concessions, and even with Arabs continuing to exercise administrative control over the most sacred site in Israel, God has called on his people to rebuild the Temple. Not only is this critical development necessary to fulfill ancient prophecy, but it is necessary that God's Temple be rebuilt before the Messiah returns to earth.

In this book we will look not only at the advancing plans and preparations to rebuild the Temple, but also at closely related developments, such as the training of Levite priests, the discovery of long-lost Temple treasures, developments in locating the Ark of the Covenant and returning it to Jerusalem, and the discovery of ancient vessels and artifacts that are required for Temple sacrifice and worship. With a new Sanhedrin in place, with some five hundred Levites being trained in the requirements of Temple sacrifice, and with lost treasures from Solomon's Temple being located and returned to Jerusalem, it is no longer just a dream that God's Temple will once again stand on the Temple Mount.

After nineteen centuries of praying, waiting, and dreaming that they would see the Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem, the Jews living in Israel today have finally been given the task of making these ancient dreams come true. The building of the Third Temple will commence much sooner than most people expect. The generation alive today will see a Temple of God once again standing on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, and the King of Israel—the returning Messiah—will establish His Kingdom from the throne of David.