

27. THE MESSIANIC TEMPLE

The first Jewish temple was completed by King Solomon in 957 BC and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar 370 years later in 587 BC. The second temple was built under Zerubbabel in 515 BC and destroyed 585 years later by the Romans in 70 AD. The last OT prophet, spoke of a future temple: The Lord Almighty says, I'll send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me, and the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, look, he is coming (Mal 3:1). The context is the second coming, not the day Jesus cleansed the temple of traders. That suggests that a third temple must soon be built.

Referring to the judgment at the second coming, Malachi said, Who can endure the day of his coming? When he appears, who can stand? (Mal 3:2). And: Look! The day is coming, it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and all the evildoers will be stubble, and that day will burn them up (Mal 4:1). Jesus' future coming will be sudden and unexpected, like a thief in the night. Isaiah said, Suddenly, in an instant, the Lord Almighty will come with thunder, earthquake, and a great noise, with storm, whirlwind, and a devouring fire. The multitude of nations that came against Ariel (Jerusalem) will be but a dream (Isa 29:5-7).

When Jesus returns, what temple will he come to? There is no doubt that a temple will be built. In his visions in Revelation, the apostle John was told to go and measure God's temple and the altar, and to count the worshipers there (Rev 11:1). The context is the Great Tribulation. After his descent to earth on the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4), Jesus will be king over all the Earth (Zech 14:9), and according to what is revealed, his visible presence on earth will only be seen in his glory which will fill the temple (Ezek 43:1-5). The Lord spoke to Ezekiel from the temple, saying, This is the place of my throne and the place for my footstool. This is where I'll live among the Israelites forever (Ezek 43:7). Ezekiel's vision of a new temple (Ezek 40-48) has always been interpreted by the Jews as a literal temple at Jerusalem during the Messiah's reign.

There has to be a new temple in Jerusalem where Israel can worship, and where the nations will come to acknowledge the Lord and bring

their wealth as offerings. Jerusalem will be glorified on the South side of Mount Zion with the temple on the summit (Isa 2:2, Ezek 40:2). Raised physically above the surrounding countryside (Zech 14:10) the light of the glory of God will shine on it from New Jerusalem above (Isa 60:1-2, Rev 21:10).

The New Jerusalem described by John in Revelation 21:2-22:5 is a symbolic description of a heavenly city that descends to Earth from God. It exists in another dimension and is the residence of God, the Messiah, the resurrected and redeemed church, and angels. John saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. In other words, there is no need for a temple when God is present in person. God is omnipresent in the universe, but his residence is where his throne is. During the Messianic reign, the earthly Jerusalem will have a temple filled with God's glory indicating the Messiah's presence.

The number and variety of predictions from multiple prophets give us no choice but to interpret what they say literally. Figurative interpretations of the future temple are forced and don't suit the context.

Following are prophecies made about the Messianic temple that will exist in the historic city of Jerusalem:

1. *In the last days* the mountain of the Lord's temple will become the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many people will come, saying: Come, let us go up the mountain of the Lord, to the God of Jacob's temple. He'll teach us his ways and we'll walk in his paths. For the law will disseminate from Zion, the word of God from Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-3).
2. Foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love his name, and be his servants, ... I'll bring them to my holy mountain and make them happy in my house of prayer. I'll accept the burnt offerings and sacrifices they make on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isa 56:6-7, cf. Mk 11:17).
3. All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will be offered to you and be accepted on my altar. .. The glory of Lebanon will be brought to you and I'll adorn my glorious temple.

... to decorate my temple so that my footstool will be glorious (Isa 60:7, 13b).

Kedar and Nebaioth are the first and second sons of Ishmael who lived in present-day Saudi Arabia implying that neighboring Muslim nations will worship the Lord.

4. His armed forces will take their stand to desecrate the temple and put an end to the daily sacrifices. Then they'll set up the abomination that causes desolation (Dan 11:31, cf. 12:11).

Daniel may have been 'seeing' Antiochus Epiphanes who profaned the temple in 167-68 BC, but Jesus assures us that the real fulfillment of the prophecy is at the end of the age. He said: When you see standing in the Holy Place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken by the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - (Mt 24:15). Jesus added: At that time there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. He was not talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but the Great Tribulation before the Day of the Lord. He said: If God had not cut short those days, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened (Mt 24:21-22). Paul confirms that this profaning of the temple will occur shortly before the Day of the Lord, when the man of lawlessness (the Antichrist) appears and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thess 2:4).

5. My servant David will be their king ... They'll live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their grandchildren will live there forever, and David my servant will be their king forever ... and I'll put my temple among them forever. My dwelling place will be above them, and I'll be their God, and they'll be my people. When my temple is among the nations forever, then they'll know that I the Lord appointed Israel as my own people (Ezek 37:24-28).
6. After Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord entering the temple, he heard someone speaking to him from the temple, and a man appeared, standing beside him. Then a voice (the Messiah) said to him, "Son of Man, this is the place of my throne and the place for

the soles of my feet. This is where I'll live among the Israelites forever (Ezek 43:4-7).

7. Son of Man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may consider its plan and be ashamed of their sins. ... This is my law concerning the temple: All the surrounding area on top of the mountain is mine; it is most holy. That is my law concerning the temple (Ezek 43:10, 12).
8. Then the survivors of all the nations that attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles ... The cooking pots in the Lord's house will be considered equally holy as the bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord Almighty (Zech 14:16, 20-21). Zechariah finishes his book by declaring that on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite (trader) in the house of the Lord Almighty (Zech 14:21). The Messianic temple will be a truly holy place, suitable for the Lord to live in among his people Israel.
9. Psalm 46:4-5 contains these beautiful lines:

There is a river whose streams make God's city glad,
the Most High's holy dwelling place.
God lives in this city, it is secure,
God will help her at daybreak.

The prophets take this river literally, relating it to the surrounding geography. A spring will flow out of the Lord's house and water the valley of acacias (Joel 3:18). On that day living water will flow out of Jerusalem, half of it East to the Dead Sea and half of it West to the Mediterranean Sea, both in summer and winter. The Lord will be king over the whole earth (Zech 14:8-9a). The man brought me back to the entrance *to the temple*, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold toward the East (Ezek 47:1).

10. The Lord Almighty says: In a little while, I'll shake the heavens and the Earth once more, both the sea and the dry land. I'll shake all nations, and the wealth of all nations will be brought, and I'll fill this temple with glory (Hag 2:6-7).

On the Day of the Lord, the whole world will be rocked by earthquakes. Then, under the rule of the Messiah, things will be restored, and the survivors of the nations will come to Jerusalem to worship bringing their treasures, which will be used to glorify the

temple. The latter glory of the temple will be greater than that of the former temple (Hag 2:9), that beautiful structure built by Solomon. The following phrase, 'And in this place, I'll grant peace,' is only true of the Messianic temple. Peace will prevail during the millennium when war, natural calamities, and poverty will be eliminated.

11. I'll send my messenger to prepare the way before me and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come. But who can endure the day of his coming? When he appears, who can stand? (Mal 3:1-2).

John the Baptist was the messenger who prepared the way before the Lord at his first coming, but another 'Elijah' will prepare the way before the Lord, at his second coming. This may be one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11. The frequent appearances of Jesus at the temple during his ministry could hardly be called sudden, but his second coming is described in this way. When he returns, he'll suddenly appear at the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek 43:1-4). Jesus told us to keep watching because we do not know the day or the hour of his arrival. The second coming is a day of judgment, so Malachi asks who can survive on that day, and who can stand when he appears. It certainly wasn't the day that Jesus ejected the traders from the temple and overturned the money changers' tables!

NT confirmation of an end-time temple

The NT does not describe the second temple's destruction in 70 AD and there is relative silence regarding the millennial temple. The NT is written for the Church and the millennial temple does not concern them. The temple is a place of worship for Israel and other inhabitants of the earth in the new age. It is not relevant to the resurrected saints who will dwell with God in the New Jerusalem, unless it is for the Jewish saints who will rule over Israel at this time (Mt 19:28). Nevertheless, there are several references to the existence of a Jewish temple in the last days of this age.

When Jesus gave his discourse on the signs of the end of the age, he said: When you see standing in the *holy place* the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains (Matt 24:15-16). The 'holy place' is a synonym for the temple (Isa 60:3, John

11:48, Acts 6:13, 21:28). Jesus counseled Jews living in Judea at this time to flee when they see this terrible act.

Paul gives us more information about it. He said Jesus would not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed. He'll oppose and exalt himself above everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thess 2:3-4). That is the abomination that causes desolation. This evil, satanically empowered politician, will set himself up in the innermost shrine of the Jewish temple, the holy of holies, and proclaim himself to be God. So, a third temple must be built before this defiant act can occur. When Jesus comes, he'll kill the Antichrist with the breath of his mouth, rendering him powerless by the manifestation of his coming (2 Thess 2:8).

The apostle John sees the temple in one of his visions, together with the altar and the people worshipping there. He is told to measure the temple and the altar, but not to measure the court outside because that is given to the nations who will trample the Holy City for 42 months (Rev 11:1-2).