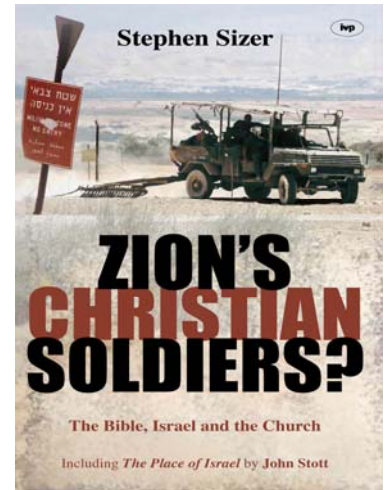


Seminar 5 The Coming Last Day's Temple – Ready to Rebuild?

Just 500 metres by 300 metres, the Temple Mount, or Haram Al Sharif as it is called in Arabic, is probably the most disputed plot of land on earth. Hal Lindsey claims, 'I believe the fate of the world will be determined by an ancient feud over 35 acres of land.'¹



Many Christians share the belief that the Islamic shrines must be destroyed and that a Jewish Temple must and will be rebuilt - very soon. But this won't be a museum replica of the one king Solomon built or be just another attraction for pilgrims to the Holy Land. No, this Temple will be built for one purpose and one purpose only - for bloody animal sacrifices, and lots of them.

In this chapter we want to explore the case for rebuilding the Jewish Temple; consider whether the Bible predicts such an event; and if so, where and how it might be built. We will then look at what the New Testament has to say on the subject and some of the implications for Christianity should the Jewish Temple be rebuilt. Finally, we will reveal that the Temple is actually under construction (but don't peep).

However eccentric or strange it may seem, influential Christian leaders are actively promoting and funding Jewish religious groups who want to destroy the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the third most holy shrine within Islam. They want to replace it with a fully functioning Jewish Temple. They are doing so because they believe the Bible mandates it. Indeed, some Christians like pastor Clyde Lott, a Pentecostal rancher from Mississippi, are even trying to breed the perfect red heifer to assist in future Temple sacrifices. According to the Book of Numbers chapter 19, the ashes of a red heifer are needed to purify the priests and altar before sacrifices can be offered

¹ Hal Lindsey, 'World's fate hangs on 35 acres' *World Net Daily*, 21 February 2001, www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=21794 [Accessed August 2006]

again.² The search for the red heifer has been described as a ‘four legged time bomb’.

Others like John Hagee and Christians United for Israel are so upset by the presence of the Islamic Dome of the Rock dominating the view of Jerusalem, they have simply airbrushed it out of the picture. Check out the logo on the website of Christians United for Israel.³ Its made up of a photograph of the Wailing Wall. There’s a garden on top but no Dome of the Rock. No Al Aqsa. They have vanished.

The thousand words painted by this picture is an essay on fundamentalist Christian Zionist fantasies... A fantasy world in which there are no Palestinians... Even more frightening is the possibility that those who live with this illusion will take steps to make the fantasy come true – to destroy the two mosques which are absent in the CUHI photo.⁴

What makes their plans even more bizarre is that they believe the Temple must be rebuilt just so that it can be desecrated one more time by the Antichrist before Jesus returns. They believe Daniel and Matthew predict the Temple will be desecrated before Jesus returns to rescue Israel and defeat her enemies in the ‘Battle for Jerusalem’.⁵

Unfortunately, this is not just some wacky belief held by a small group of fanatics. In 1989, *Time* magazine reported the findings of a survey showing that some 18% of Israelis thought it was time to rebuild the Temple.⁶ By 1996, when the Temple Mount Faithful sponsored a Gallup poll seeking a referendum on replacing the Al-Aqsa Mosque with a Jewish Temple, support for the action had risen to 58%.⁷ When you realise that Arab Israeli’s, who are mostly Muslim, would certainly not back the idea, the percentage of Jewish Israeli’s who do so, must be even higher. What makes this poll even more significant is that while Israeli society is divided on just about every

² Kara G. Morrison, ‘Believers, breeder await sacred cow: How a Pentecostal minister, an Orthodox rabbi and a Catholic cattle rancher started raising holy heifers’ *The American Association of Sunday and Feature Editors (AASFE)* www.aasfe.org/contests/1999winners/kmorrison.html <Accessed August 2006>

³ Christians United for Israel <http://www.cufi.org> <Accessed March 2007>

⁴ John Hubers, “The Christian Zionist Fantasyland”, <http://www.christianzionism.org> <Accessed March 2007>

⁵ John Hagee, *The Battle for Jerusalem* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2001).

⁶ Richard N. Ostling, "Time for a New Temple?" *Time*, (16 October, 1989), p. 64.

⁷ Randall Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1999), p. 26.

other subject, according the Gallup, this was the largest show of support any Israeli organisation has ever received on any issue.⁸

It gets more ominous still. On January 8, 2001, former Shin Bet secret service chief Carmi Gillon and former police commissioner Assaf Hefetz together with leading Israeli academics delivered a report to the then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak detailing their concerns regarding plots by Jewish extremist groups to blow up the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque. *Keshev*, the Centre for the Protection of Democracy, based in Tel Aviv, founded by Gillon and Hefetz following the assassination of Rabin, published a 12 page report entitled, 'Target Temple Mount' which examined current threats to the Temple Mount from extreme militant and Messianic groups. The report claimed, 'The Temple Mount is like a smouldering volcano that is bubbling and threatening to erupt - a threat that is liable to endanger Israel's existence.'⁹ And the tragedy is that some Christians are ready to light the fuse. On the same day, around 500,000 secular, religious and ultra-Orthodox Jews gathered near the Temple Mount at the Western Wall 'and swore faithfulness to the Temple Mount and Jerusalem.'¹⁰

Six months later, in July 2001 the Rabbinical Council of Judea, Samaria and Gaza called on all rabbis to bring their communities to visit the Temple Mount. This was the first time a group of rabbis representing a significant proportion of the religious Jewish community had ruled it permissible for Jews to ascend the Temple Mount. Previously this had been forbidden. The rabbis also called upon the Yesha Council of Jewish settlements to organise mass visits to the Temple Mount from the settlements.¹¹

So what on earth would lead so many Jews and Christians to agree on such a provocative and dangerous plan that could very well start World War 3? As scary as it may seem, they simply believe the Bible not only predicts but indeed requires them

⁸ Firas Al-Atraqchi, 'Jewish groups: Raze mosques, rebuild Temple', Aljazeera, 28 July 2004, <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/58087655-FE76-4764-9598-A952E08FEFC8.htm> [Accessed August 2006]

⁹ Yizhar Be'er, 'Targeting The Temple Mount: A Current Look at Threats to the Temple Mount by Extremist and Messianic Groups' *Keshev*, <http://keshev.org.il/siteEn/FullNews.asp?NewsID=53&CategoryID=14> [Accessed August 2006]

1 ¹⁰ Gershon Salomon, *The Voice of the Temple Mount Faithful*, 5761/2001, pp. 15-17.

2 ¹¹ N. Shragai, 'Rabbis call for mass visits to Temple Mount', *Ha'aretz*, 19 July 2001.

to help rebuild the Jewish Temple, with no fear of the consequences. Let's consider their arguments.

The Case for Rebuilding the Temple

Hal Lindsey is dogmatic: 'Obstacle or no obstacle, it is certain that the Temple will be rebuilt. Prophecy demands it... It is like the key piece of a jigsaw puzzle being found... it is a time of electrifying excitement'.¹² What prophecy 'demands it'? Well, the argument goes way back to Exodus where God instructed Moses, 'Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them' (Exodus 25:8). Orthodox Jews clearly do not recognise Jesus as their Messiah, so they believe the instructions given in the Hebrew scriptures still apply. Exodus 25-40, for example, explains how Moses was to construct the Tabernacle while Leviticus 1-7 outlines the various offerings God required from his people. Orthodox Jews believe that a Temple is necessary for them to offer sacrifices once again to make atonement for their sin. This is why religious Jews pray three times every day that 'the Temple be speedily rebuilt in our days.' They claim the Torah, or Law of Moses, 'obligates the Jewish nation to rebuild the Temple whenever it becomes possible to do so (Ex 25:8).'¹³

Some Messianic Jews (that is, Jewish believers in Jesus) are also sympathetic to the idea that a Temple is necessary for Jews to atone for their sins. Visit *Jews for Jesus* website and you can read an article by Zhava Glaser where she asks rhetorically,

Though some rabbis might minimize the revealed system of worship and its requirements, can the individual Jew neglect what God says? Can there be a "proper" Judaism without a priesthood, an altar, a sacrifice and a place on earth where God meets the individual?¹⁴

The answer to Glaser is obviously 'no'. This is also the reason why some Christian Zionist organisations celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem each year. They are anticipating the day when, according to their literal reading of Zechariah 14,

¹² Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (London, Lakeland, 1970), pp. 56-58.

¹³ Randall Price, 'Time for a Temple? Jewish Plans to Rebuild the Temple.' *Israel my Glory*, January 1998, *Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry* <http://www.apocalypsesoon.org/xfile-4.html> [Accessed August 2006]

¹⁴ Zhava Glaser, 'Today's Rituals: Reminders or Replacements?', May 1992, *Jews for Jesus*, www.jewsforjesus.org/publications/issues/8_3/rituals [Accessed August 2006]

they believe everyone, including you and me, will go to Jerusalem annually to worship God.¹⁵

However, in the vision of the Temple found in Ezekiel 40-46, this instruction is given: 'you are to give a young bull as a sin offering' (Ezekiel 43:19). For Christians who support the rebuilding of the Temple, this verse must stick in the throat. To change the anatomical analogy, it is actually the 'Achilles' heel' of those who read the Bible in an ultra-literal way. Why? Because the verse requires the reintroduction of animal sacrifices. Cyrus Scofield, in his Reference Bible, fudges the issue claiming these will only be 'memorial' offerings.¹⁶ Schuyler English and the editorial committee of the New Scofield Reference Bible dig a hole for themselves when they claim:

The reference to sacrifices is not to be taken literally, in view of the putting away of such offerings, but is rather to be regarded as a presentation of the worship of redeemed Israel, in her own land and in the millennial Temple, using the terms with which the Jews were familiar in Ezekiel's day.¹⁷

Scofield was the great exponent of literalism. If we are to take the Bible literally, then the sacrifice of a 'young bullock' cannot be mistaken for a 'memorial offering' which consisted of grain and oil. The story of Cain and Abel reminds us of the hazards of offering God the wrong kind of sacrifice! (Genesis 4:4-7). If this particular reference to sacrifice in Ezekiel 43 need not be taken literally, then what is all the fuss about? Why is it necessary to take other Old Testament prophecies 'literally' and apply them to Israel today if not this one? Sounds a little inconsistent doesn't it? They want to have their cake and eat it – or in this case, they want their sacrifices without the blood.

The context for Ezekiel's vision of a rebuilt Temple is actually the promised return of the Jews from Babylonian exile, not an event that might happen around 2,500 years later! It would have been utterly meaningless for the exiles longing to return to Israel to be told 'Be encouraged. Although this doesn't apply to you, it is going to happen in a few thousand years time.'

¹⁵ International Christian Embassy, About the Feast of Tabernacles, www.icej.org/articles/about_the_feast and the International Christian Zionist Centre www.israelmybeloved.com/channel/tabernacles [Accessed August 2006]

1 ¹⁶ C.I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 890.

¹⁷ E. Schuyler English (ed.) *The New Scofield Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 864.

The most frequently quoted passage in the Bible used to justify the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple is Daniel 9:26-27. This is what the passage says:

The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary... War will continue until the end... He will confirm a covenant with many for one "seven." In the middle of the "seven" he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the Temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. (Daniel 9:26-27)

Now, don't get hung up over the number 'seven'. Advocates assume 'seven' refers to a period of seven years. Let's concede this for the moment. What you need to focus on instead is the fact that in verse 26 Daniel says a powerful ruler will come and 'destroy the city and the sanctuary' and then in verse 27 Daniel says 'he will put an end to sacrifice' and 'set up an abomination'. Between the two you have a hint of a time scale 'War will continue until the end'. Authors like Hal Lindsey and David Brickner believe Daniel is speaking chronologically and that 'the end' literally means 'the end of the world'. Brickner puts it this way:

Obviously the Temple has been rebuilt because Daniel tells us this ruler puts an end to sacrifice and sets up some kind of abomination (a loathsome horror that would be anathema to Jewish worship) right inside the Temple in Jerusalem. Ultimately this ruler is destroyed in a final conflagration of enormous proportion.¹⁸

Now you may need to make a strong coffee at this point and read the passage a few more times to understand the logic. Put simply, the question is - How can Daniel refer to sacrifices coming to an end in verse 27 when the Temple has apparently already been destroyed in verse 26? Simple - Daniel must be talking about two different Temples! So verse 26 must be describing what happened in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Herod's Temple and verse 27 must refer to a future Temple. To justify this interpretation, however, they must place a 2000 year gap or 'parenthesis' between verses 26 and 27 and argue that the prophetic clock stopped during what they call 'Church Age' or the 'Times of the Gentiles' (Luke 21:24).

The fact that Hezekiah's Temple was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC and then Herod's Temple between 67-70 AD, first by Jewish Zealots then again by

1 ¹⁸Brickner, *Future*, p. 18.

Titus and his Roman army during the Jewish Revolt, doesn't apparently count. It has got to happen all over again. The argument falls to the ground, however, if you don't believe Daniel's vision is describing two separate events separated by thousands of years.

The other favourite passage of Temple watchers is Matthew 24:1-2, 15-16.

Jesus left the Temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down... So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Matthew 24:1-2; 15-16)

In case you don't get the plot here either, in his book *Apocalypse Code* Lindsey thoughtfully adds words to the biblical text to help you out. So Matthew 24:15 reads, 'So when you see standing in the holy place [of the rebuilt Temple] the abomination...' ¹⁹

To be consistent with their interpretation of Daniel, those advocating the need for another Jewish Temple must again add a 2000 year chasm between Jesus words in verses 1-2 and verses 15-16. Frankly, I'd much rather accept the eyewitness account of the 1st Century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, who describes how Daniel's prophecy came true before his very eyes between 67-70 AD. ²⁰

There is actually nothing in the text of Daniel, Matthew, or any where else in the Bible, that suggests or requires a 2000 year gap between the verses of these two passages. To put it kindly, Lindsey and his colleagues are "pulling a fast one" over the text of Scripture. Why? Your guess is as good as mine although this kind of tabloid journalism linking the Bible with contemporary events is certainly the way to sell books, at least first editions. Hal Lindsey claims his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* at 15 million copies in over 30 languages has 'sold more copies than any

¹⁹ Hal Lindsey, *The Apocalypse Code* (Palos Verdes, California, Western Front, 1997), p. 78.

²⁰ See Flavius Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, in *The New Complete Works of Josephus* (Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1999).

Christian book in history other than the Bible.²¹ Thankfully the Bible is easier to read and still more popular.

If the Biblical case for rebuilding the Temple is rather suspect, the quest for locating its original foundations reads more like something out of an Indiana Jones script.

The quest to build the ‘Last Day’s’ Temple

Even though many Jews and Christians believe the Temple must be rebuilt, there is one small problem. It is essential that any future Temple is built on the same foundations as the previous ones. And on this rather fundamental point experts cannot agree. Where was the Holy of Holies located? The simple answer is ‘we don’t know’. While it may not particularly matter to any budding antichrists, it does matter to the ultra-orthodox Jews. When Jesus predicted the Romans would not leave one stone left on another and that ‘every one will be thrown down.’ (Matthew 24:2), he was right. The Romans fulfilled Jesus’ prediction to the letter when they burned to the ground and then flattened Herod’s Temple along with the rest of Jerusalem. Two thousand years later, the quest to find the site of the Temple is causing a good deal of heated debate within Israeli archaeological circles.

There are four contenders each with their scholarly advocates and scientific theories. Unfortunately, the Dome of the Rock is situated over the most popular site. Inside the third most holy shrine to over one billion Muslims is a rocky outcrop on which Jews believe Abraham offered Isaac. Beneath it is a very ancient cave with a hole in the roof that looks remarkably like the place where the blood from the Temple sacrifices might have been collected and flushed away. It is now a place of prayer for Muslims.

Lindsey must be living on another planet when he suggests a future Jewish Temple could be built right along side the Dome of the Rock. Somehow I don’t think the Muslim authorities are going to agree to move it elsewhere or allow a Jewish Temple to be built along side it. But Lindsey claims it could revive the Israeli economy and become ‘the greatest tourist attraction in the world’. He goes on to say, ‘Right now, as you read this, preparations are being made to rebuild the Third Temple.’²²

²¹ www.armageddonbooks.com/309hal.html [Accessed August 2006]

1 ²²Hal Lindsey, *Planet Earth 2000*, (Palos Verde, California, Western Front, 1994), pp. 156, 163.

On the last point at least, Lindsey is right. Building a Temple with all the fancy architectural detail stipulated by Ezekiel is going to be pretty expensive. So who is going to foot the bill? You guessed it – gullible Christians who believe they are helping speed the return of Jesus. I was in Colorado Springs recently when Gershon Salomon was also speaking – in his case at one of the largest churches in town, raising funds for his organisation. Grace Halsell estimates that at least \$100 million a year is being raised by some rather well-known televangelists and church leaders to rebuild the Temple.²³ And if you want to know where to send your own donation, Randall Price in his book, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, provides you with the contact details of all the Jewish organisations committed to rebuilding the Jewish Temple.²⁴

Armageddon and the Temple of Doom

Charles Colson in his book *Kingdoms in Conflict* describes in the foreword a very realistic scenario in which an American President (probably modelled on Ronald Reagan) is faced with the hardest decision of his life. Jewish terrorists have blown up the Dome of the Rock and are being filmed live on Christian TV channels. Raised a Christian Zionist he believes the Bible predicts the rebuilding of the Temple, but his military advisors urge him to send in the US Marines to intervene, occupy the Temple Mount and maintain the status quo. What is he to do? Colson leaves you with the dilemma unresolved but with the clock ticking. Although a fictional scenario, he assures us in a footnote that the US military have anticipated such an event and have plans in place if and when it happens.²⁵ That may or may not fill you with much confidence.

In fact, this is not just fictional speculation. While some Zionists are praying like crazy for an earthquake to do it for them, others like Gershon Salomon and his Temple Mount Faithful are unwilling to wait for divine intervention.

In July 2001, the Israeli Supreme Court made a significant decision. For the first time ever they allowed the Temple Mount Faithful to hold a symbolic cornerstone laying

²³ Grace Halsell, *Forcing God's Hand* (Washington, Crossroads International, 1999), pp. 68-69.

²⁴ Randall Price, *The Coming Last Day's Temple* (Eugene, OR, Harvest House, 2002).

²⁵ Charles Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (London, Hodder, 1988), preface.

ceremony for the Third Temple near the Dung Gate adjacent to the Western Wall. Every year since then attempts have been made to carry their three ton corner stone onto the Temple Mount on Tisha B'Av (29th July). That is the day when the Jews mourn the destruction of the first and second Temples. In 2006, despite police objections, the Israeli Supreme Court gave permission for members of the Temple Mount Faithful to actually enter the area of the Haram Al Sharif on the festival of Tisha B'Av. An Israeli Arab MP, Mohammed Barakeh described the High Court's decision as 'petrol in the hands of declared pyromaniacs' To pre-empt a massacre, the police closed the site to Jews as well as Muslims for the whole day based on intelligence reports that thousands of Muslims were planning to flock to the site to protect it.²⁶

It seems that it is more a question of 'when' not 'whether' this happens. Speaking at a Christian Zionist conference in Jerusalem recently, Gershon Salomon stated:

The Israeli Government must do it. We must have a war. There will be many nations against us but God will be our general. I am sure this is a test, that God is expecting us to move the Dome with no fear from other nations. The Messiah will not come by himself, we should bring him by fighting.²⁷

Shades of Judas and the 1st Century Zealots who tried to force the hand of God to act. It is sobering to learn that since 1967 there have been no less than 100 armed assaults on the Haram Al Sharif often led by Jewish rabbis. That averages out to more than two a year. Sadly, the Israeli authorities, political and religious, have yet to condemn any of these attacks.²⁸

Gordon Welty, an anthropologist, explains the apparent contradiction of evangelical Christians claiming to follow Jesus yet choosing to support Jewish terrorists.

Their power is to keep inconsistencies in airtight compartments, so that they themselves never recognize these inconsistencies... If the money a muscular Christian donates to the Jewish terrorists buys the dynamite that destroys the mosque, the muscular Christian will say simply, "It was an act of God".²⁹

²⁶ Palestine Media Centre, 'Jewish Extremists of Temple Mount Faithful to Enter Al-Aqsa Thursday', 2 August 2006, <http://www.palestine-pmc.com/alerts/2-8-06.asp> [Accessed August 2006]

²⁷ Sam Kiley, 'The righteous will survive and the rest will perish' *The Times*, 13 December 1999, p. 39.

²⁸ Halsell, *Forcing God's Hand*, p. 71.

²⁹ Cited in Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics: The Secret Alliance Between Israel and the U.S. Christian Right* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1986), pp. 115.

As Lawrence Wright has observed, 'Jewish longing for the Temple, Christian hopes of the Rapture, and Muslim paranoia about the destruction of the mosques [are being] stirred to an apocalyptic boil.'³⁰ We wait with bated breath.

The Temple : redundant before it is even built

The problem with all this speculation about a future Temple in Jerusalem is simply this – from a Christian perspective – it is heresy. There is absolutely nothing in the New Testament about the need for another Temple in Jerusalem - just the reverse - the old Temple was declared redundant the moment Jesus died on the cross. The curtain separating the people from the Holy of Holies was torn in two – significantly from top to bottom. That is why the writer to the Hebrews says: 'By calling this covenant "new", he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and ageing will soon disappear.' (Hebrews 8:13). This is the theological explanation for the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. It had served its purpose. The true Temple had arrived.

In fact, it was never God's intention that a Temple be built in the first place. Like Israel's desire for a king it was more a sign that they wanted to be like the surrounding nations than do his will (See 1 Samuel 8:6-9). Having captured Jerusalem and built for himself a palace, David's impulse was to build a Temple for God as well. When he asked Nathan the prophet for advice, this is the reply he got:

Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' (2 Samuel 7:5-7)

In a play on words, God then tells David he is not to build a house (Temple) for God but instead God will build a house (dynasty) for David. Just as God gave in to Israel's desire for a king, so he tells David that he will allow his son Solomon to build him a house, although the impression given is that God preferred to dwell with his people in a tabernacle because it kept his people dependent on his leading.

³⁰ Lawrence Wright, 'Letter from Jerusalem: Forcing the End.' *The New Yorker*, July 20, 1998, www.lawrencewright.com/art-jerusalem.html [Accessed August 2006]

The true and lasting Temple is Jesus. The sanctuary in Jerusalem, however beautiful, was only ever a copy and shadow of the heavenly one (Hebrews 8:1-5).

This is how Jesus introduces the idea in John 2.

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this Temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the Temple he had spoken of was his body. (John 2:19-21)

When Jesus entered the Temple and threw out the money changers he wasn't 'cleansing' it for future use. He was declaring it redundant. He himself is the one and only true Temple. The temporary earthly replica was now close to its 'sell by' date. The real, more glorious and lasting Temple had arrived. That is why in his conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus said we could now worship God anywhere (John 4:21-24).

Jesus warned his followers to escape from Jerusalem when they saw the Roman army beginning to surround the city. He predicted that Herod's Temple, although unfinished, would be destroyed. (Matthew 24:15-20). The only Temple Jesus ever promised would be rebuilt was his body – in three days. Why? Because Jesus made the Temple redundant. The writer of Hebrews says, 'After he finished the sacrifice for sins...' (Hebrews 1:3 *Message*). Jesus fulfilled the role of Temple, High Priest and sacrificial lamb. That is why the offering of sacrifices since the death of Christ is now utterly futile. Only Jesus can take away our sin. Hebrews goes on to explain:

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshippers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins... Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (Hebrews 10:1-3, 11)

The writer quotes from Psalm 40:6-8 to show that obedience is more important than sacrifice, and that the obedience of the Son of God in the offering of his body would supercede and annul the need for the perpetual offering of animal sacrifices.

First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your

will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:8-10)

God used the Roman General Titus to destroy the Temple in the same way he had used the Babylonian King Cyrus to help build it. When Jesus cried out ‘It is finished’ as he died on the cross, he did indeed ‘make perfect those who draw near to worship... [and] take away sins’ (Hebrews 10:1,4).

The Temple sacrifices, at best, only ever provided a temporary cover for sin. The daily sacrifices, and the smoke rising from the altar were a constant reminder of the need for a Saviour. How then could God encourage the sacrificial system to be reinstated when he had sent his son Jesus to be the ultimate sacrifice, to shed his own blood on the cross to take away our sin? To suggest sacrifices must be made once more undermines the New Testament’s teaching that the work of Christ is sufficient, final and complete.

The true Temple is already under construction

Those who advocate the need for a new Temple and reintroduction of sacrifices are ignoring the way the image of the Temple is invested with new meaning. Subsequent to Pentecost, the Temple imagery is applied to the Church, the Body of Christ, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. For example, Paul, writing to the Church in Ephesus, describes them as part of the new living Temple.

Consequently, you are ... members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy Temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:19-21)

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul quotes from passages in Leviticus and Isaiah, both of which refer to the physical Tabernacle and Temple, and applies them to the Church.

For we are the Temple of the living God. As God has said: *‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’* *‘Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.’* (2 Corinthians 6:16-17 citing Leviticus 26:12 & Isaiah 52:11)

In his letter to the Romans, Paul uses Temple language to describe how we are to offer, not a dead animal sacrifice but our bodies as living sacrifices as our act of worship (Romans 12:1-2).

Peter does the same thing describing the Church using Hebrew imagery associated with the Temple (Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16). Christians are, he says, being made into the new house for God, in which Jesus is the 'precious cornerstone' (1 Peter 2:5-7).

So the Temple in Jerusalem was only intended to be a temporary building, a shadow pointing to the day when God would dwell with people of all nations through Jesus Christ.

The flow of biblical revelation is progressive and moves in one historical direction. Christians who support the rebuilding of the Temple in the belief that future sacrifices will be memorial offerings, or can even atone for sin, are committing apostasy. Why? Because they are trying to reverse the flow of revelation and go back to the shadows when we already have the light of Christ. In the words of the writer to the Hebrews:

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. (Hebrews 6:4-6).

And that is the final rub. People must choose between a religion and a relationship; between the words 'do' and 'done'; between law and grace; between the need to offer continual sacrifices for sin or accept the finished work of Jesus Christ in our place; between a physical Temple and a spiritual one; between one in Jerusalem that is redundant and one that encompasses the whole world that is under construction.

In this chapter we have considered the case for rebuilding the Jewish Temple. We've examined some of the biblical passages used to justify the construction of yet another Temple in Jerusalem. We have seen that there is in fact not a single verse in the entire New Testament which predicts that a Jewish Temple will ever be rebuilt or that a 2000 year 'parenthesis' should be placed between references to its

deseccration and destruction in Daniel, or that a future Temple in Jerusalem will play any part in God's future purposes. We have seen how the followers of Jesus Christ are described as a living Temple, indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

How tragic that, while the good news of Jesus is intended to bring peace and reconciliation with God and healing between nations, some Christians are fuelling religious hatred, and are bent on inciting an apocalyptic war.

Chapter Summary Points

1. Attempts by militant Jewish groups to destroy the Dome of the Rock and rebuild the Jewish Temple have widespread support and are taken very seriously by the Israeli authorities.
2. Any attempt to rebuild the Temple will very likely ignite an apocalyptic war with Muslims worldwide.
3. For some, the case for rebuilding the Temple is based on the mistaken belief that only through the reintroduction of the sacrificial system can Jewish people atone for their sins.
4. For others, the Temple must be rebuilt so that it can be desecrated one more time before Jesus returns.
5. This is only possible by the insertion of a 2000 year gap between Daniel 9:26 and 9:27 and Matthew 24:1-2 and 15-16.
6. This assumption must ignore the way in which previous Temples were desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jewish Zealots as well as by Titus and the Roman army.
7. There are four different theories as to where Herod's Temple was located and therefore there is no consensus as to where any new Jewish Temple should be built.
8. There is not a single verse in the New Testament that requires or justifies a Temple in Jerusalem.
9. The Temple was made redundant and obsolete when Jesus died on the cross.
10. Jesus is the true Temple
11. The Church, the Body of Christ, a living Temple.
12. OT references to the Temple are applied to the Church.
13. To advocate the rebuilding of the Temple is heresy.

Passages to Review

2 Samuel 7:1-17; John 4:21-24; Hebrews 9-10; Ephesians 2:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 21:9-27.

Questions for Further Study

1. What role did the Temple fulfil under the Old Covenant?
2. Why is an earthly Temple no longer required?
3. What or who is the Temple?
4. Where are we to worship God?
5. How would a future Temple in Jerusalem undermine the finished work of Christ?