

Eternity Past

Eternity Future

The LandBetween

M I N I S T R I E S

The mission of the LandBetween Ministries is to equip leaders to fulfill Christ's Great Commission of heart-focused discipleship in a broken world.

Newsletter

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“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells within you?”

— 1 Corinthians 3:16

The “Temple Mount” in Jerusalem is one of, if not the most, passionately fought over pieces of property in the world.

The Temples of Yahweh — Part 1

WHY THE “BIG DEAL” OF THE LOCATION OF GOD’S TEMPLES?

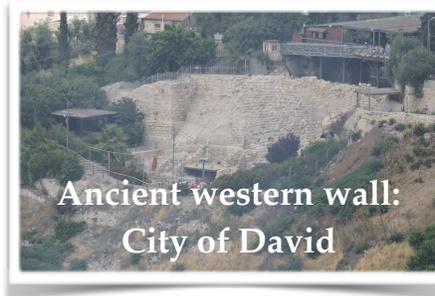
It’s easy to think, “who cares?” when it comes to the topic of the location of God’s ancient Temples in Jerusalem. But, there are at least three reasons to care:

1. The veracity of Jesus’ words. We can trust all that Jesus said and part of that trust is because what He said about the Temples has proven to be 100% true.
2. The veracity of Old Testament prophecies. Just as Jesus’ words can be fully trusted, so can the OT prophets. Without this trust, we will not be able to have the deep, solid relationship with the Heavenly Father and His Son that He knows is best for our hearts.
3. The Temple Mount controversy is huge on the world stage. In the West, we can downplay the significance of the Temple Mount; but, for millennia this 35 acre plot of land has been, and still is, a landscape that has taken the world by storm...mainly due to lies.

MY STORY

In January 2001, God blessed me with a four-credit seminary course in Israel. It was truly amazing to see sites that I had heard and read about for so long.

But, although it was 14 years ago, I distinctly remember seeing the massive Temple Mount and thinking, “There’s something wrong.” What I saw did not match up with Scripture. I recall thinking, “But didn’t Jesus say...?” and various



verses would come to mind. But the verses (which we will get to) and what I was seeing and being taught were incongruent.

After another excellent study tour in Israel this past summer (2014) my doubts about the Temple Mount persisted.

After 14 years of study, God allowed me to come across a documentary, “Jerusalem and the Lost Temple of Jews.” Also, research by David Sielaff led to a book written by the late Dr. Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D. His 476-page book is titled, “*The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot*” (Portland: ASK, 2000). Dr. Martin was an American professor of theology in England and here in the US and numerous times worked on archeological sites in Israel. Dr. Martin helped provide a view of the temples that is supported by Scripture. This view is also held by Dr. George Wesley Buchanan, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Dr. Buchanan is on the Editorial Advisory Board of *Biblical Archeology Review*, a scholarly archeological publication. A recent investigative book, “*Temple*” by Robert Cornuke, published this year (2014) and is accepted by a growing number of theologians and pastors and helped solidify a similar perspective on the temples.

THE CITY OF DAVID

I now believe the God’s temples (e.g. Solomon’s, Zerubbabel’s and Herod the Great’s), were in the City of David. They were located 1/3 of a mile south of (over)

(Page 2)...the traditional Temple Mount site. The entire traditional Temple Mount complex, including the Dome of the Rock, is also called the Haram esh-Sharif, or Haram. I agree with the evidence that shows the the Haram was the Roman Fort Antonia named in honor of Herod the Great's patron, Mark Anthony. But, questions linger: What does this Temple controversy have to do with life today? Why care about it?

THE VERACITY OF JESUS

One significant issue is that the Temple motif is a major focus in all Scripture. The former location of God's Temples can build your faith in the words of Jesus. When studied in their proper context, Jesus' words were precisely accurate.

One passage of Scripture that went through my mind in January 2001 while near the Haram was Matthew 24:1-2.

"Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon one another, which will not be torn down." — Matthew 24:1-2 (NASB).

To us who believe in Christ, it is easy to discard the precision of what Jesus said would happen to the Herodian Temple complex. Some disregard Jesus' words about the temples because their significance makes no difference in their belief in God.

However, many who reject Jesus as Messiah argue "Jesus isn't the Messiah; he can't even speak the truth about the Temple; look at the Temple Mount with the huge stones that still exist." (See photo above). A Christian might respond to this scenario by saying, "Well, if someone doesn't want to believe in Jesus they can always come up with some type of excuse." To a certain extent, they may be correct. Many are not sincere seekers of Jesus. Evidence beyond doubt could be set in front of someone and they can still be hard hearted and never receive Christ.

But, what if someone today is a sincere seeker? Like the Berean Jews of Acts 17:11, what if one is truly interested whether what Jesus said was genuine? Would they have a legitimate argument that Jesus was not accurate in His words in Matthew 24:1-2? If they believed that what is called the Temple Mount/Haram today was the same Temple Mount in Jesus' day, then I would agree they might have a case.

In contrast to my position, a fellow believer, who has also been to Israel, told me that what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 24:1-2 was simply the Temple building, and it is obvious those stones have long been "torn down." But, this believer's argument does not concur with what Jesus said. Jesus told His disciples,



Photo: SW corner of what is called the "Temple Mount" but was Rome's Fort Antonia

"not one stone will be left upon one another." The context of this verse was Jesus referring to all the stones of all of the buildings (plural) in Herod's Temple complex, not only the stones of the Temple.

Also, in contrast to the Temples being in the City of David, there is the argument that the hundreds of massive Herodian-era stones that still exist under the Haram and go down many feet under ground, are simply "retaining wall" stones. Thus, the "retaining wall" position would allow for what Jesus said about the Temple's destruction to be true, while the retaining walls could remain intact. However, this "retaining wall" argument does not fit the context of what Jesus said in both Matthew 21 and Luke 19.

In Luke 19:41-44, Jesus is approaching Jerusalem and warns that their enemies

would come and "...level you [Jerusalem] to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

Jesus states that by this "visitation" He came in person as Messiah but the religious leaders rejected Him and had Him killed. As a result, God used Rome's military to attack ancient Jerusalem (City of David) and its Temple and leveled it "to the ground" (see Luke 19:44) in 70 AD, fulfilling Jesus' literal prediction.

Jerusalem and the true Temple complex were destroyed in the 67-73 AD war. Then, around 300AD, church leader Eusebius was an eye witness confirming Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 21. Eusebius saw the Temple was, "...leveled with the ground" (*The Oration of Eusebius*, Ch. XVII, sect. 8). Further, Eusebius writes, "Their ancient holy place, at any rate, and their Temple are to this day as much destroyed as Sodom" (*Proof of the Gospel*, Bk. V, Ch. 23, sect.250). But, the traditional Temple Mount is very much intact (See photo). Obviously, someone is wrong.

Dr. Martin writes, "To Eusebius, the Temple was so destroyed that no remnant of it was standing in his day... To be like "Sodom" meant to be "thoroughly demolished." (Ernest L. Martin, *"The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot"*, p. 188). Dr. Martin continues, "Eusebius was not referring to the four walls surrounding the Haram esh-Sharif with the 10,000 stones in place as in Jesus' time, and still evident in Eusebius' day. Indeed, they are still in their lower courses in pristine grandeur today." (Ernest L. Martin, *ibid*, p. 189). In Part 2 of this article, I will share more evidence proving Jesus' words were literally accurate pertaining to the temples. *Joel Francis is a graduate of Michigan State University and Dallas Theological Seminary*

The LandBetween Ministries

831 N 550 E

Lafayette, Indiana 47905-8745

Web: www.landbetween.org

E: jfrancis4@yahoo.com

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