**Temple Mount—Its History and Future**

Pastor Emeritus Joe Fuiten, July 27, 2016

There are many beautiful and significant mountains on the earth but none is more important than a very small hill called Temple Mount. Tonight I want to walk us through its history and its glorious future.

Our first encounter with this mountain was when it was called Mount Moriah. Genesis 22:1-18 **“***Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." 3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." 6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. 9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." 15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*

Most people believe that Isaac was offered on Mount Moriah. I have come to see it differently by being there and seeing it all with my own eyes and thinking about what happened there. Mostly notably it was the land of Moriah not Mount Moriah. Jerusalem is the land of Moriah. Further God said he would show him the exact spot when they arrived. I think God showed Abraham to offer Isaac on Mt. Calvary making him a type of the sacrifice of Christ on that same hill nearly 2000 years later. When I describe the scene to my tour groups I take them into the Jewish cemetery across from Dominus Flevit and show them the proximity to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher to Temple Mount. It helps to establish the connection between Isaac and Jesus, two young sons who carried the wood of their own sacrifice up the same will and willing and to their own detriment surrendered to the will of the father.

The second major moment for Temple Mount was the arrival of David. 2 Sam 24:16-25“*16 When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the Lord was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 17 When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the Lord, "I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall upon me and my family." 18 On that day Gad went to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." 19 So David went up, as the Lord had commanded through Gad. 20 When Araunah looked and saw the king and his men coming toward him, he went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the ground. 21 Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" "To buy your threshing floor," David answered, "so I can build an altar to the Lord, that the plague on the people may be stopped." 22 Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever pleases him and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. 23 O king, Araunah gives all this to the king." Araunah also said to him, "May the Lord your God accept you." 24 But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them. 25 David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the Lord answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.”*

The place for the altar was a threshing floor. It seems logical to me that a natural threshing floor would be relatively smooth rather than having deep crevices where grain could hide. On Temple Mount there is only one part that is a naturally occurring smooth stone and that is under the Dome of the Spirit and the Tablets.

Some have suggested it is also the flat space where the Ark of the Covenant rested within the Tabernacle and Temple.

The Dead Sea Scrolls indicate the Red Heifer was sacrificed at the pinnacle of the Mount of Olives. The High Priest would stand on the steps of the Temple and look directly over the Eastern Gate to the place where it happened. Today the tall tower on the Mount of Olives marks both the place of the Ascension and the place where the Red Heifer was sacrificed. Since the Eastern Gate of today is directly over the Herodian gate, we have a good indication as to where the ancient temple was located.

When you look from the Eastern gate directly west there is a direct line between the Dome of the Spirit and the Tablets and the two domes of the Church of the Holy Sepluchure

In any case, on Mount Moriah David built an altar and later, in 967 B.C., Solomon built the first temple. 1 Kings 5 and 6 describe the building of the temple which took seven years. Solomon’s temple was very elaborate, constructed of white limestone quarried in Jerusalem. The interior was wainscoted with imported cedar and inlaid with gold. It contained the Ark of the Covenant, which held the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written.

Unfortunately, most of the gold and its treasures were sent to the Pharaoh of Egypt as tribute to save the city from destruction (1 Kings 14:25). In 586 B.C. Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of this temple by the Babylonians.

In our hearts we go back to the prayer that Solomon prayed here. He really was praying for us when he said in 1 Kings 8:41-43 "*As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name— for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm — when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the* ***foreigner*** *asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name*.”

In 515 B.C. the second temple, sometimes called Zerubbabel’s temple, was built on this same site, some 100 meters south of the present Dome of the Rock. This temple stood until the time of Herod.

Herod the Great expanded (some say he rebuilt it entirely) the temple and erected the Antonia fortress, which overlooked the temple courtyard. Herod’s temple is technically the third temple, and was the one referred to in the New Testament. However, when people refer to the “Second Temple Period” it is to his temple that they are referring. He began his temple refurbishing and expansion work in 20 B.C., completing the basic structure in a year and a half. According to John 2:20, the sanctuary was not completely finished for 46 years. The outer portion was called the Court of the Gentiles, and included colonnaded walkways on all four sides. On the east these walkways were called Solomon’s Porch as referred to in John 10:23. The colonnade on the south was called the Royal Portico, and was under the Royal Mansion. Just outside the northwest corner of the court of the Gentiles was the fortified palace that Herod rebuilt and named Antonia. The work on the outer court may have still been going on when it was destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D. On the ninth day of Av, the same day the temple of Solomon was destroyed, this Herodian temple was burned and ruined.

There are various remains of this temple which can still be seen today. The most famous would be the Western Wall sometimes called the Wailing Wall. We still go there to pray today and hope that Solomon’s words of 1 Kings 8 will come true.

The Western Wall has been excavated all the way to the end, some 150 feet. You can walk the full distance of that wall today. Some of the largest carved stone I have ever seen are in the foundation of the Temple retaining wall. There are stones weighing 160,000 pounds that are 100 feet above the foundation stones.

The Southern steps of the Temple are some of the stones we know Jesus walked upon. The Double Gates and Triple Gates can still be seen.

Most of the walls that are seen today are from Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century during the reign of the [Ottoman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire). The ancient walls were often incorporated into the construction which lasted from 1535 to 1538. Obviously the gates are also from that construction.

To return to the Roman era, we have the destruction of Titus but further , there was the impact of Hadrian. Because of the ongoing trouble with the Jews, the Emperor Hadrian had salt plowed into the Temple Mount area so nothing would grow there. Then he had a new city, Aelia Capitolina built over it, expelling Jews and forbidding them from living within the city. A temple of Jupiter was built over the temple site. The reused pillars of the Temple of Jupiter now support the roof and cupola of the Dome of the Rock. Those pillars, along with the stones used to rebuild the western wall, are all that remain of the Temple of Jupiter.

In 536, Emperor Justinian built a church in honor of Mary on the south side of the Temple. The church of Justinian was rebuilt as a mosque—two aisles on either side obliterated the cruciform shape of the ground-plan. The El Aksa Mosque may well be a “converted” church and is considered the first great building of Islam.

The Dome of the Rock, often erroneously called the Mosque of Omar, was built in 691 and is considered by Moslems as one of the most holy shrines in Islam, third only to Mecca and Medina, Mohammed’s birthplace. Its “holiness” probably relates as much to wanting to deprive Christians or Jews of the place as it does to the place in their own tradition. I would note as we did with Bethlehem and Nazareth that the main motivation of the height of the building was to make it higher than the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Revelation 11:1-2 describes this future scene: “*And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles’…*”

Earlier I related the location of the Temple advanced by Professor Kaufman. In his scenario, the outer court, or the Court of the Gentiles, is the area in which the Dome of the Rock now stands. The Dome of the Tablets and the Spirits would be the spot where the Holy of Holies once stood.

Ezekiel 44:1-4 describes the future entrance of Jesus through the now closed Eastern Gate: “*And when he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looks toward the east; and it was shut. Then said the Lord unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.*”

This is the future of Mount Moriah. The prophet Micah gave its future in Micah 4:1-5 “*In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. 2 Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 3 He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. 4 Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken. 5 All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever*.”