

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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THE THIRD TEMPLE OF GOD

In May of 1948 the modern state of Israel was born. These sixty-six years have given birth to a multiplicity of prophetic speculations, misguided opinions, and dogmatic doctrines, one of which is the teaching of the rebuilding of the Jewish temple which will usher in the second coming of Christ. Some traditional dispensationalist teach that the temple will be rebuilt and animal sacrifices will be restored for a thousand years. This teaching leaves many Christians in doubt, confusion and fear. In the last several years the works of Tim LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins, Hal Lindsay, John Hagee, the late Jerry Falwell and a host of other popular prophesy preachers have kept the confusion alive. The Middle East and notably Jerusalem and the Jews have been the center of the drama.

Curtis Dickinson wrote in the January 2001 issue of his paper *The Witness*: "Christians in America have been raising millions of dollars to aid Israeli Jews to destroy a shrine sacred to a million Muslims and replace it with a great Jewish temple, which they call 'The Third Temple.' A late 1988 Israeli newsletter posted on a 'Voice of the Temple Mount' web site says its goal is 'the liberation' of the Muslim shrines and the building on that site a Jewish Temple." Posted on the web site of the *Temple Mount Faithful*: "A Call of the Faithful Movement in Jerusalem for Urgent Help" this declaration: "Dark clouds are coming from the east and the north and soon threaten to cover Israel and the entire world. An intensive campaign and work of the *Faithful Movement* to answer the call of G-d to Israel: 'Build immediately my Holy Temple before the darkness and inhuman evil completely covers the life of all mankind. Only when the G-d of Israel dwells in the Third Holy Temple in Jerusalem will evil be defeated and will real peace come to the entire world."

Orthodox Jew Gershon Salomon, leader of the now famous group in Israel called "The Temple Mount Faithful" has been an annual guest of fundamentalist Trinity Baptist church in Asheville, N.C. for a number of years, advocating support for the Temple Mount movement. On one of his recent visits, according to the Asheville Citizen-Times: "Solomon told a packed sanctuary of Christian believers that 'Evangelical Christian and Orthodox Jews are one family of God.' And that they would 'stand together in the house of God (evidently what they call "the third temple") hand and hand.'" The headline of the article read: "Jewish activist looks to future for Messiah: Evangelical Christians, some Jews find common ground on rebuilding the Temple." This is an example of what we are being fed by the media and from our pulpits by popular prophesy preachers.

What these religious Zealots do not understand is that the "Third Temple" has been existing since the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given to the early believers (Acts 2). The first temple was a product of David's desire to build God a house, (II Samuel 7:1-2). But we read in I Chronicles 28:2-6: "Then King David said 'Listen to me, I had intended to build a permanent home for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God. So I made preparations to build it. But God said to

me, 'You shall not build a house for My name because you are a man of war and have shed blood,'...He has chosen my son Solomon (to) build My house.'" The house (first temple) was thus built by Solomon (I Kings 6, 7) which stood as the center of Israel's worship until it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar about 587 B.C. when he carried the nation into captivity to Babylon. Ezra returned from the captivity and rebuilt the temple which was the second temple. (Ezra 4-6). Five centuries later Herod spent 46 years reconditioning the temple (John 2:20). Jesus refers to it as "My Father's house" but later says of the temple buildings, "Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down" (Matt.24:2). He was speaking of the coming judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 AD when the city, including the temple, would be utterly destroyed. This was because "...the kingdom of God will be taken from you (Jews), and be given to a nation (Christians) producing the fruit of it" (Matt. 21:43). The Jews had become so enamored with the temple they did not realize "the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands, as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne and earth is the footstool of My feet; what kind of house will you build for Me?' says the Lord; or what place is there for My repose? Was it not My hand which made all these things?" (Acts 7:48-50).

When God revealed to Israel His desire to dwell among them it was a tent He chose as His dwelling place. God said to Moses, "Let them construct a sanctuary (dwelling place) for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle..." (Exodus 25:8, 9). Further: "And I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them" (Ex. 29:45, 46). It has always been God's intention to have a people on earth in whom He could dwell. So the tabernacle was the symbol of God's presence among them until the days of Solomon when the temple was built that replaced the portable tabernacle. Although God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle, and He gave him strict instructions on how to build it, He never commanded the building of the temple. Building the temple was David's idea. At the dedication of the temple Solomon said: "Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel" (I Kings 8:17).

When describing the Old Testament system of worship, the Hebrew writer never refers to the temple services, but always to the services of the tabernacle. (For example: Hebrews chapter 9). God never intended for the temple in Jerusalem to be a permanent symbol of His presence, because His intention was to have a third temple that was spiritual and would not have a physical location. The Apostle Paul writes these sobering words to the Church in Corinth: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (I Cor. 3:16, 17). The modern religious system has laid so much emphasis on real estate and making their building an attractive Sunday dwelling for their constituency they have lost God's desire to

have a temple that is spiritual and therefore holy. It was God's intention in calling Israel from among the nations of the world, to have such a people. God said to Moses, "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). God's purpose was: "And I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God" (Exodus 29:45,46). Jesus was the first to reveal that God's temple would be a temple of flesh: "'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up'...He was speaking of the temple of his body" (John 2: 19, 21).

Later, on the eve of his death, Jesus told the grieving disciples: "If any one loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:23). He had said earlier, "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you...the Spirit will be with you, and will be in you" (John 14:17, 18). It was on the day of Pentecost that this promise was fulfilled (Acts 2) and Jesus and the Father would now be dwelling in His people via of their holy presence, the Holy Spirit. This was a fact the Corinthian church had evidently forgotten. Paul's question to the church was "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? I Cor. 3:16). He further says concerning the individual Christian: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God" (I Cor.6:19). It is a sobering fact to realize our physical bodies are temples housing the presence of the Divine! After reminding the Corinthians of this fact the Apostle exhorts them, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers, for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them and I will be their God and they shall be my people'" (II Cor. 6:14-17).

Contrary to Hal Lindsey's prediction in his book *Rome on the Revival Road* that the coming dictator, or Antichrist (described as "The Future Fuehrer") will sign a peace treaty with Israel that will allow the rebuilding of the temple, in which this dictator "will then enthrone himself as God in the rebuilt temple" the Apostle Paul states that Christians "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone, growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a *dwelling of God in the Spirit*" (Eph. 2:20-22).

When Jesus stated, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" John tells us "He was speaking of the temple of his body" (John 2:19, 21). The disciples did not understand the meaning of Jesus' words until he was raised from the dead (ver. 22). These words must have sent shock waves throughout the Jewish system. It was these words that was used against him at his trial before the council that demanded his death (Matt. 26:61). At the crucifixion "those passing by were hurling abuse at him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Ha! You who were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross'" (Mark 15:29, 30). This affirmation that he was speaking of the temple of his body shows more than

the fact of his resurrection. It declares that his body was a "temple." This prefigures that his body (the church) would be a temple, and those "in Christ" would also be built into a "spiritual house for a holy priesthood" (I Pet. 2:5). Jesus was the first man to have God dwelling permanently and continually in him by the Holy Spirit.

Early in his ministry Jesus made it plain it was not in physical temples that God would be worshipped. He told the Samaritan woman: "An hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall you worship the Father" (John 4:21). "This mountain" probably refers to Mount Gerizim, located North West of Sychar. Jewish historian Josephus says a temple had been built on this mountain. Jesus is saying the "place" of worship is neither in a temple in Samaria or the temple in Jerusalem. This in itself makes a physical third temple, advocated by Jewish Zealots and fundamentalist preachers, not only ridiculous but patently unscriptural. Should another physical temple be built in Jerusalem it would be a counterfeit and serve no useful purpose, and certainly would not hasten the "second coming" of Christ as they maintain. Neither would it be one step closer to the Jews accepting their Messiah. To quote Jewish activist Gershon Saloman again: "If the Jews can reconstruct the Temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed 2,000 years ago, the world will be one step closer to the coming of the Messiah." He further states: "Eighty percent of biblical prophecies have been fulfilled in the last half century with the formation of the state of Israel and the return of the Jews from around the world. The next step is the reconstruction of the temple." (from: *The Asheville Citizen-Times*). In commenting on Hal Lindsey's prophetic books, and past president of Dallas Theological Seminary John Walfoord's advocating the rebuilding of the third temple, Bernard McGinn in his book *Antichrist, 2000 Years of Human Fascination With Evil* states: "both have made considerable impact on the general public, partly out of mere curiosity but also out of their ability to provide meaning in a time of historical uncertainty."

The building of the third temple is prophesied in the Old Testament: "Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed" (*or will not be in a hurry to find anything else*) (Isaiah 28:16). Also "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:22, 23). These scriptures are quoted or referred to seven times in the New Testament. Dr. Leroy Garrett in a recent essay entitled *Ignorance of the Expert* wrote: "There is an ominous line in Psalm 118. After saying 'the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,' it goes on to say: 'This was the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes' (verse 23). The writer could well have had Isaiah 28:16 in mind when he wrote verse 22, for he did not see the 'tried and precious stone' set up in Zion as the work of human hands. It was rather the marvelous handiwork of God Himself. No contrivance of man could have produced such a miracle—an out-of-place stone, discarded by the experts, becoming the chief cornerstone of the Temple! 'It is marvelous in our eyes,' the writer cries out. The foolishness of God always triumphs over the wisdom of the wise (I Cor.1:25). Like the cross of Christ the rejected stone was a part of God's eternal plan." The effort to rebuild a "third temple" in Jerusalem today is the ignorance of religious experts.