

THE MESSIANIC TEMPLE

Revise again

The first temple of the Lord was completed by King Solomon in 957 BC and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar 370 years later in 587 BC. The second Jewish 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: "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire will come," says the Lord Almighty (Mal 3:1). The context is the second coming, not the day Jesus cleansed the temple of traders. "Who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?" (Mal 3:2). This refers to the judgment at the second coming as also Malachi 4:1: "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire." Jesus' future coming will be sudden, unexpected, like a thief in the night. Isaiah said that in an instant, suddenly, you (Jerusalem) will be visited by the Lord with thunder, earthquake, a great noise, whirlwind, tempest, and a devouring fire (Isa 29:5-6), and the enemy will be but a dream. When Jesus returns, what temple will he come to?

In a vision, John is told to go and measure the temple of God and the altar and its worshipers (Rev 11:1).

Overcomers will be pillars in God's sanctuary, that is, they will have a permanent position there (Rev 3:12). Christians who are martyred during the Great Tribulation are there before the throne of God, serving him in his sanctuary (Rev 7:15). The ark of the covenant is seen in God's sanctuary, symbolizing the protection God will give his people during the time of judgment (Rev 11:19). Angels come from the sanctuary in heaven to reap the harvests of the righteous and the wicked on earth (Rev 14:15, 17). The sanctuary is equated with the tent of witness, the Tabernacle in which were the Ten Commandments.

It is opened because God, the lawgiver, is about to judge the world with the plagues (Rev 15:5-6, 8). The angels are instructed by a voice from the sanctuary to pour out their bowls of plagues, now called the bowls of God's wrath (Rev 16:1, 17). And finally, John did not see a temple in the holy city, because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Rev 21:22). The New Jerusalem and all who well there are sanctified by God's presence there

God is omniscient throughout the universe; his sanctuary is the place that John saw in his vision (Rev 4-5), where God was surrounded by angels and the spirits of the righteous. Hebrews 12:22 speaks about the same place. We have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to thousands of angels and the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. This is not a physical structure, but it is a sanctuary because God is present there. This heavenly Jerusalem becomes the New Jerusalem that descends from God at the resurrection. It is the eternal dwelling place of the resurrected saints.

None of these references requires us to think of the earthly temple at Jerusalem in any other way than as a literal house of God built by the Jews. Those who have doubts about the future existence of a Jewish temple in Jerusalem should take note that ten OT prophets predict it. In the premillennial view of eschatology, Jesus the Messiah will rule the world for one thousand years, however, there is no indication in Scripture that Jesus will be visible during this time. When he returns, every eye will see him as he comes with the clouds (Rev 1:7, Zech 12:10, Isa 40:5), and the leaders of the world will hide themselves in caves and rocks and holes in the ground to hide from the splendor of his majesty when he rises to terrify the earth (Isa 2:19, Rev 6:15-17). But after his descent to earth on the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4), he 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 at Jerusalem (Ezek 43:1-5). The Lord spoke to Ezekiel from the temple and said, "This is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will 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.

There will be a new temple in Jerusalem where Israel will worship, and the nations will come to acknowledge the Lord and bring their resources 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 home of God and 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. There is no need for a temple when God is present in person. 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 be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths" (Isa 2:2-3).
2. And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord and to be his servants, ... these I will bring to my holy mountain, and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isa 56:6-7, c.f. Mark 11:17).
3. Isaiah 60. "All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you; they will be accepted as offerings *on my altar*, and I will adorn *my glorious temple*. ... to adorn my

sanctuary; and I will glorify the place for my feet” (Isa 60:7, 13b). The following verses are based on Isaiah 60, a description of the future glory of Jerusalem.

4. His armed forces will rise up to *desecrate the temple* fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation (Daniel 11:31, 12:11). He 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, “So when you see standing in *the Holy Place* the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - (Matt 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 those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened (Matt 24:21-22). Paul confirms that this profaning of the temple would occur shortly before the Day of the Lord, when the man of lawlessness (the Antichrist) will appear and exalt himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat *in the temple of God*, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thess 2:4).
5. “My servant David will be king over them ... They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob ... They and their children and their children’s children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever ... and I will put my *sanctuary* among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my *sanctuary* is among them forever (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 will live among the Israelites forever (Ezek 43:4-7).

7. “Son of Man, describe the *temple* to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. ... This is the law of the *temple*: All the surrounding area on top of the mountain will be most holy. Such is the law of the *temple* (Ezek 43:10, 12).
8. “Then the survivors from all the nations that have 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 like the sacred 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 glad the city of God,
the *Holy Place* where the Most High dwells.
God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.”

The prophets take this river literally, relating it to the surrounding geography. “A fountain will flow out of *the Lord’s house* and will water the valley of acacias” (Joel 3:18). “On that day living water will flow out from *Jerusalem*, half of it East to the Dead Sea and half of it West to the Mediterranean Sea, 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 of the temple toward the East” (Ezek 47:1).

10. “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘In a little while, I will once more shake the heavens and the Earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this *house* 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 and bring their treasures, which will be used to glorify the temple. “The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory

of the former house” (Hag 2:9 NIV) means that the glory of the humble second temple would be greater than Solomon’s temple, which it wasn’t. Many versions translate “The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former.” The following phrase, “And in this place I will grant peace” is only true of the Messianic temple. Only during the millennium will peace prevail; no more war, natural calamities, or poverty.

11. “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his *temple*; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?” (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 could hardly be called sudden, but his second coming is described in this way. When he returns, he will suddenly appear at the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek 43:1-4). Jesus told us to keep on watching because we do not know the day or the hour. The second coming of the Lord is a day of judgment, so Malachi asks who can survive on that day, and who can stand when he appears. It certainly isn’t the day that Jesus ejected the traders from the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers!

NT confirmation of an eschatological 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. It is a place of worship for Israel and other inhabitants of the earth in the new age; not relevant to the resurrected saints who will dwell with God in the New Jerusalem. 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 through 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). It could refer to a third Jewish temple, or at least the holy place where the previous temples stood on the temple mount in Jerusalem. Jesus said that the Jews in Judea should flee when they see this terrible act.

Paul gives us more information about it. He said the Lord Jesus Christ would not come “until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will 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 will cause desolation. An evil, satanically empowered man, will set himself up in the innermost shrine of the Jewish temple, the holy of holies in Jerusalem, and proclaim himself to be God. So, a third temple must be built before this act of defiance can take place. When the Lord Jesus comes, he will 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 people worshiping 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 three and a half years (Rev 11:1-2). The nations, maybe UN peace-keepers, will disrespectfully go about their business, in defiance of the biblical teaching that Jerusalem is God’s chosen city and Israel is God’s chosen people.