

Your QUESTIONS About Prophecy ANSWERED Part 5

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Originally published in *Jacob's Ladder*, the newsletter and a publication of Middle East Ministries

WHAT ABOUT THE TEMPLE? Part 2

Since the establishment of the modern state of Israel, rumors have abounded concerning the rebuilding of the Temple. In the last issue of *Jacob's Ladder*, we looked at whether or not the Jewish people wanted to rebuild the Temple. We saw that secular Jews might want to see the Temple rebuilt as a national shine to Israel's great history. Meanwhile the religious Jewish community is divided over whether the Temple should be rebuilt to bring in the promised Messianic Kingdom or if they should wait until the Messiah comes to build the Temple.

While these differences may hinder any massive, organized effort to rebuild the Temple, there is an even greater roadblock to the rebuilding of this special place of worship. Muslims claim the Temple Mount and the surrounding Old City as their third most holy sight after Mecca and Medina. Any attempt by the Jews to build a worship place on the Temple Mount would result in a call for the Muslim world to destroy Israel and her allies. Even the rumor of such an attempt to rebuild is enough to cause riots as it did in 1990.

The Muslim claim to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount is intriguing in light of the fact that Jerusalem is mentioned 669 times in the Old Testament and 136 times in the New Testament as the center of Jewish life and worship, BUT the word *Jerusalem* is not mentioned once in the Koran or in Islamic liturgy.

Even in religious practice and belief, Jerusalem is a secondary city to the Muslim. While religious Jews face Jerusalem when they pray, the Muslim

faces Mecca. The Muslims believe Abraham attempted to offer up Ishmael (not Isaac) as a sacrifice not on Mt. Moriah (Jerusalem) but in Mecca. So how can the Muslims claim that Jerusalem is their third most holy site?

Dr. Daniel Pipes, an expert on Islam and Middle East politics, writes that part of the answer has to do with politics. You could call it the "toy in the corner" syndrome. A toy in the corner is ignored by the children playing in the living room until one goes and claims it as his own. Then the others challenge his claim to the toy. So it is Muslims take a religious interest in Jerusalem when it is politically practical to do so. When the political need wanes, so does the religious interest. In an article in the *Los Angeles Times* (7/21/2000), Dr. Pipes lists several times in the history of Islam that Jerusalem was politically important.

Jerusalem in the time of the Prophets - Around 621 AD Mohammed sought to convert the Jews living in his area so he adopted several Jewish practices including not eating pork and praying toward Syria (in the direction of Jerusalem). When his overtures were rejected by most of the Jewish community, it was written in the Koran that one should turn his back to Syria and face Mecca when one prays. Thus Jerusalem became important to win over the Jews, but when that failed so did Jerusalem's importance fade. When Caliph Omar, Mohammed's successor, conquered Jerusalem from the Byzantines a little over a decade later



Mecca and Medina were already well established as holy cities. Upon visiting the Temple Mount ruins Omar deliberately went to the southern edge of the temple platform to face south to pray toward Mecca as he did not want anyone to mistakenly think he was praying toward a Jewish holy site.

Jerusalem during the Umayyad Dynasty- After the death of Omar, the Umayyad Dynasty rose to power with their seat of power in Damascus. After losing control of Mecca, the rulers wanted to enhance the Islamic importance of the territory still under their rule. This resulted in the construction of a shrine (the Dome of the Rock) on the traditional site of the Jewish Temple in 691AD and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 715AD on the southern end of the temple platform where some say Omar prayed toward Mecca.

An interesting fact concerning the Dome of the Rock is that the rotunda has the exact same measurements as the rotunda in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (traditional burial site of Jesus) which is a short distance away. This has led some historians to speculate that another reason for the "Dome's" construction was to build a Muslim shrine as dominant as the famed church.

By calling the mosque "Al-Aqsa" the Umayyad were tying Jerusalem to the Koran. In Sura 17:1 of the Koran it is written: "*Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque (al-masjid al-Aqsa), whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things).*"

In the beginning "farthest mosque" was unidentified or as some taught an expression for heaven. Once the Umayyad named the mosque on the southern end of the Temple Mount "Al-Aqsa," Muslims began believing and teaching the passage is referring to Jerusalem even though the mosque did not exist in Mohammed's day.

After the Umayyad Dynasty collapsed, Jerusalem once again became an insignificant location in Muslim thinking. Even the glorious structures built to Allah fell into disrepair resulting in the collapse of the Dome of the Rock in 1016 AD.

Jerusalem during the Crusades -When the "Christian" Crusaders conquered Jerusalem in 1099 AD, once again Muslim literature extolling Jerusalem began to reappear. When Jerusalem was back in Muslim hands 88 years later, she once again became an insignificant community with a declining population and collapsing infrastructure.

It is interesting to note that this is the only time Jerusalem was in non-Muslim hands from 638 AD to 1917 AD. During that time, not once was Jerusalem made the capital of any government other than that of the Crusaders who were non-Muslim.

Jerusalem under British rule - In 1917, the British defeated the Ottoman Empire and took control of Jerusalem. Once again Muslim interest in Jerusalem was reawakened. This time the concern was not only over taking Jerusalem but also preventing Jews from returning to their homeland (Zionism).

Again Muslim interest in Jerusalem waned when Jordan conquered the city from the newly founded State of Israel in 1948. Interestingly, the city once again fell into disrepair and the Muslim shrines remained unvisited by Muslim leaders. Dr. Pipes in his above mentioned article writes, "Taking out a bank loan, subscribing to telephone service, or registering a postal package required a trip to Amman. Jordanian radio transmitted the Friday sermon not from Al-Aqsa but from a minor mosque in Amman. Jerusalem also fell off the Arab diplomatic map: the PLO covenant of 1964 did not mention it. No

again, Muslim interest in the historic city began to resurface. This time, with the advent of modern communication, the response by the Muslims took the form of an advertising campaign (blitzing the media with what you want people to hear so soon the people will believe what you have to say is fact).

Though the revised 1968 PLO Covenant (English translation) does not mention Jerusalem, Allah, or Islam, these have been increasingly referred to by the Palestinian leadership as they discuss a future Palestinian State. The draft constitution proposed in January 2003 for a future Palestine includes East Jerusalem as its capitol, Islam as its official religion and rule by Islamic law as its government.

To further complicate matters, there has been a massive effort to revise history. For example, Dennis Ross, former U.S. diplomat to the Middle East, shared that Yasir Arafat "never offered any



Holy Sepulcher from Lutheran tower - BiblePlaces.com

Arab leader (other than King Hussein, and he rarely) visited there."

Six-Day War in 1967 - For the first time in over 2000 years the Old City of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount came under Jewish control. Of course once

substantive ideas, not once" during the Camp David talks in July 2000. However, "He did offer one new idea, which was that the Temple didn't exist in Jerusalem, but it was in Nablus."

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Another example of an effort to revise history is an article published in the Jordanian daily Al-Ra'i written by Lina Nabil titled, "Jerusalem. 5,000 Years of Arab History." In this article the author claims the Jebusites were Arabs and there is great doubt that there was an Israelite kingdom ruling out of Jerusalem.

In an interview on the Palestinian Authority TV, Dr. Jarir Al-Qidwah, Head of the PA Public Library and Arafat's Advisor on Education said, "Solomon's Temple, I believe, was built by the Canaanites who were the neighbors of the Israelis, the Israelites... I want to state several words clearly: the Bible became an archival document, not representing what the Israelis and the first Jews were, but what they thought they were, what they imagined. The Temple is the fruit of their imagination. In any case, when our nation or our Canaanite forefathers came to Palestine, they built the Temple...a temple in Jerusalem."

Other public statements by the Palestinian leadership include:

"Abraham was not a Jew."

"The Jews never lived in ancient Israel."

"Jews never had any connection to Jerusalem."

"Jerusalem was never a Jewish city." "There never was a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem."

"The Western Wall is not a Jewish holy site."

"The Tombs of Rachel and Joseph are actually Muslim sites."

Sadly, this effort to make Jerusalem and the Temple Mount Muslim sites in the eyes of the world, particularly the Muslim world, has virtually eliminated all legitimate negotiations for peace. No Muslim leader is willing to give up "holy ground" to non-Muslims. It will take a "super politician" respected both in the Muslim world and non-Muslim world to broker a peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem." And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. (Zechariah 12:1-3) (NKJV)

In our next issue we will look at the various theories on where the Temple was located on the Temple Mount.

-Larry Jaffrey

