

EZEKIEL 40-48 THE TEMPLE

PROPHECIES OF THE "REBUILT" TEMPLE By Dr. Stephen S. Jones

Ezekiel 40-48 speaks of a "rebuilt" temple. Generally, Bible teachers take these chapters literally, even to the point that God will return to animal sacrifices. This is based on **Ezekiel 43:18-27**. Of course, we must admit that if God had the desire to build a physical temple in ancient Jerusalem and to re-establish the priesthood after the order of Levi, we would believe that Judaism would once again become the true religion, with animal sacrifices once again to be offered in the future.

But let it be clear that I do not believe any of this. As a Christian I have knowledge of better things. As I see it, such an attachment or conversion to Judaism is exactly the slavery that the apostle Paul warns about in the book of Galatians. **How many times does Paul have to tell us that we are the temple of God before we actually believe this?**

Ezekiel's temple would undoubtedly have been built as a literal structure of wood and stone, **if Israel and Judah had repented in earlier times and returned to the old land. But they did not. Part of the house of Judah returned, but Israel did not. Therefore, Jesus came to establish a new and better temple, the temple of our body.** This, of course, was God's plan from the beginning. **For this reason, the prophecy of Ezekiel's temple must be applied according to the New Testament model. The temple of wood and stone has been replaced by a new temple of living stones. The priesthood after the order of Levi has been replaced by that after the order of Melchizedek. The sacrificial service has been replaced by the one true sacrifice for sin—Jesus Christ—who is the fulfillment of all sacrifices.**

According to 1 Corinthians 3:11, **Jesus is the only foundation** or cornerstone that could be laid in this New Temple,

¹¹ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

If anyone tries to build a physical temple in Jerusalem, then this is a direct violation of the will of God, because there is no way they can build a physical temple and still use Jesus as the foundation.

By His death and His laying down in the earth, His burial was the foundation of the New Temple. Later, on the day of Pentecost, He took up His abode in the believers, thus beginning this Temple with living stones. Paul told the Ephesians in Ephesians 2:19-22 the following:

¹⁹ Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ and are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; ²¹ in whom all the building fitly

framed together grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God through the Spirit.

TWO TYPES OF JERUSALEM WITH DIFFERENT FINAL DESTINATIONS

Jeremiah was the chief prophet of the ancient city of Jerusalem. He was there when the Babylonian army invaded and destroyed the city and the temple. He was the prophet who persecuted the priests of the ancient temple. Jeremiah is thus the most important prophet whose writings reveal the ultimate fate of that city.

In **Jeremiah 18:1-6** God told the prophet to go to the potter's house. There he was to watch a potter making a vessel out of clay. Verses 3-6 tell us,

³ So I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he was making a work on the wheels. ⁴ And the vessel that he made spoiled because of the clay in the potter's hand, and he made another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. ⁵ Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁶ Can I not do to you, O house of Israel, as this potter has done? declares the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.

This prophecy was addressed to the house of Israel—not the house of Judah. It was addressed to the lost ten tribes, the people whom God had destroyed in the days of Hosea, their last king (2 Kings 17:3) from 745-721 B.C.E. In those days Salamanzer had come and taken Israel into slavery. Shortly after this the Assyrian army came and conquered Israel and Samaria, its capital city, deporting the survivors to “*Halah and Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of Media*” (2 Kings 17:6). This is where the prophet Ezekiel prophesied to them a century later. Ezekiel 1:1 says,

¹ Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar [or “Habor”], that heaven was opened, and I saw visions of God.

It is important to understand that Jeremiah's revelation about the potter's house was NOT about Judah, but about Israel. Since many people are ignorant of the fact that Israel and Judah were two different nations, we are compelled to clarify this. God promised that He would rebuild the house of Israel as a potter makes a new vessel out of clay.

But Jeremiah devotes only ten verses to the house of Israel, because he was not sent to them, but to Judah. The rest of Jeremiah 18 and all of chapter 19 are addressed directly to Judah and Jerusalem. The only reason Jeremiah devoted the ten verses to Israel was to show the difference in destiny between the two nations. Beginning in **Jeremiah 18:11** and 12 the prophet addresses Judah and Jerusalem:

¹¹ Now therefore, please say to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am preparing disaster

against you, and I devise a plan against you. Return, everyone, from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. ¹² But they say, There is no hope; for we have followed our own counsels, and we have done every one according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.

The remainder of this chapter outlines the rebellion of Judah and Jerusalem against God and gives us the reasons for the coming judgment. In [Jeremiah 19:1-3](#) finally we read,

¹ Thus says the LORD: Go and buy an earthenware jar, and take with you some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests. ² Go out to the Valley of the Ben-Hinnom, which is by the entrance of the Gate of the Potsherds, and proclaim there the words that I will tell you. ³ And say, Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing disaster on this place, so that everyone who hears of it will have their ears tingle.

Then in verses 4 and 5 the prophet gives God's indictment against Judah and Jerusalem for their rebellion against Him. For these reasons God says that the nation and the city will be destroyed and the people will fall by the sword. When the prophet had finished his indictment against them God told him to give the people an object lesson in verses 10-12,

¹⁰ Then you shall break the jar in the sight of the men who went with you, ¹¹ and say to them, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Even so I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that it cannot be repaired. They will bury them in Topheth, because there is no other place to bury them. ¹² Thus I will do to this place, declares the LORD, and to its inhabitants, to make this city like Topheth.

The chapter can be read through, but there is not a single word of comfort about Jerusalem. Not once does he say that in the end times the city will be restored. In fact, Jeremiah says the opposite. Unlike the wet clay pot that represented the house of Israel – which failed and was kneaded, but then made into a new pot – this old clay pot was smashed. *Once old pots or jars are broken, they cannot be repaired* . They were simply taken to the "Gate of the Potsherds" (19:2) and thrown into *gehenna* , the city dump.

Jeremiah made it clear that the day would come when the old city of Jerusalem would be destroyed as an earthen cross in the hands of the prophet. Many cannot believe that God will actually do this and so they interpret this to mean that this destruction was fulfilled when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. The problem is that the people returned seventy years later and REBUILT Jerusalem. First, King Cyrus granted permission for the people to return to their land and rebuild their homes in 534 B.C. Then, in 458 B.C., King Artaxerxes gave a second decree that allowed the city itself to be rebuilt. This fulfilled the prophecy of [Daniel 9:24 , 25](#) in fulfillment, where it says,

²⁴ Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal

up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. ²⁵ Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in times of trouble.

God told Jeremiah that the city would be destroyed like a pitcher and never be repaired. But then Daniel is told of " *a word (commandment) to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem .*" In fact, the city was completely rebuilt. This seems to be an inherent contradiction. Many years later, in 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the city again, but it was rebuilt by later generations. In fact, the city was destroyed and rebuilt about nine times.

This tells us that Jeremiah's prophecy has only been PARTIALLY fulfilled in the past destructions of Jerusalem. The day is coming when Jerusalem will be destroyed in such a way that it can NEVER BE BUILT AGAIN. The Word of God cannot be broken, but Jerusalem will be broken like a pot in Jeremiah's hand and never be repaired again.

This is in fact the reason why God has established a New Jerusalem. The old city is under the curse of God and will not serve as the seat of Christ's government.

When we view this prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction in the light of Jeremiah's statement about the glory departing from that place, as was the case with Shiloh, the plan of God begins to become clearer. Shiloh, after the glory had departed, was destroyed. Its priests were also killed, for God intended to replace the corrupt line of Eli with a new line of priests from the descendants of Zadok. This prophesies of a larger picture, for Zadok is a type and shadow of the order of Melchi-Zadok, or Melchizedek. It then becomes clear that in the larger picture God intended to replace the order of Levi with the order of Melchizedek, with Jesus Christ as High Priest.

HAGAR IS REPLACED BY SARAH

In Galatians 4:22-31 Paul speaks about the old and new covenants and how they are allegorically depicted by Hagar and Sarah. Hagar was the slave from Egypt, while Sarah was the free woman and the one through whom the prophecies would come. However, Hagar was the first to bear Abraham a son. His name was Ishmael. When Ishmael was 13 years old, God finally told Abraham that he would have a son by Sarah. That son was Isaac, he was born when Abraham was 100 years old.

Of course, there was a struggle between Abraham's two wives over whose son would inherit the birthright. Ishmael was the firstborn of Hagar, but God chose Isaac, who was born of Sarah. In a similar way, the old covenant was established first under Moses, but God chose the New Covenant under Jesus to bring forth the promise. Then Paul makes a very remarkable statement in 4:25 and 26,

²⁵ For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. ²⁶ But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Modern prophecy expositors generally say that Hagar and Ishmael represent the Arabs and therefore have no right to the city of Jerusalem at all. Paul says that the old Jerusalem is Hagar and her children are Ishmael. Paul is really talking about the Jews who convert to Judaism. Verses 28-31 say,

²⁸ Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of the promise. ²⁹ But as then he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. ³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. ³¹ Therefore, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

The ancient Jerusalem was born after the flesh and not after the Spirit. The leaders of Jerusalem rejected the New Covenant that Jesus offered them and chose to remain under the old covenant. The covenant that was given at the foot of Mount Sinai *in Arabia* . Arabia was the inheritance of Hagar and Ishmael. So when the Jewish leaders made their crucial choice to remain under the old covenant and reject the Mediator of the New Covenant, they placed themselves and the city under the legal jurisdiction of Mount Sinai *in Arabia* , rather than under the legal jurisdiction of the Jerusalem that is above.

For this reason God sent His armies (the Romans) to destroy the city and drive out the Jews, eventually banishing them from Palestine. We read about this in the parable that Jesus told in **Matthew 22:2-7** said:

² The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king [the Father] , which prepared a marriage for his son [Jesus] , ³ and he sent forth his servants [prophets] to call them that were bidden to the marriage: but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Say unto them that are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. ⁵ But they paid no heed, and went their way, one to his farm, and another to his business. ⁶ And the rest seized his servants [prophets] , and treated them shamefully, and slew them. ⁷ When the king heard thereof, he was wroth, and sent his armies [the Roman armies] , and slew those murderers, and burned their city [Jerusalem] .

Paul also noticed in his day that the church itself tended to remain under the old covenant and the jurisdiction of "Hagar." For decades, the early Christians in Jerusalem continued to offer sacrifices in the temple, even after they understood that Jesus was the one true Sacrifice for sin. It wasn't until God hired the Roman army to destroy that city and temple that the penny began to drop for the early church. Somewhere around that time, God inspired someone to write the book of Hebrews to make it clear to the Hebrew Christians that Christianity was simply not a sect of Judaism.

The Stone that the Jewish builders rejected became the Cornerstone of the new way called Christianity.

Sadly, there are many in the church today who have reconverted to the ideas of Judaism. They think that Hagar-Jerusalem will somehow bring about the

promised Kingdom. It will not. The old Jerusalem is the slave, not the free. The old Jerusalem persecutes the children of the New Jerusalem – and not the other way around, as is so often claimed. Paul, who himself had persecuted the church before his conversion, was very aware that the children of Hagar-Jerusalem were persecuting the children of Sarah-New Jerusalem.

²⁹ But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

One need only read the historical records of the book of Acts to see how Judaism persecuted the church. The solution is NOT to reunite with the Jews or Judaism, as so many advocate today. In doing so they spiritually marry Ishmael and disqualify themselves from the reward of the full inheritance of Tabernacles. When Christians try to identify with Judaism they spiritually become children of Hagar. Let them not think that they will bring forth the promise, for it can only come through Sarah, the Jerusalem which is above.

Paul's solution *is to drive out the bondwoman and her son* (**Gal. 4:30**), just as Araham drove out Hagar and Ishmael to establish Sarah and Isaac. This is done by making a clean break with Judaism, just as the early church did with a little help from God and the Roman armies. Let us no longer think that the glory of God will return to ancient Jerusalem, or that a physical temple will one day house the glory of God there. According to Paul's words in **2 Thessalonians 2:3-12** that place can only house an antichrist, or a man of lawlessness, a son of perdition, a Judas.

Could this be part of the apostasy that Paul saw in **2 Thessalonians 2:3** had in mind? Has this man of lawlessness already appeared within the church? **Has the church already forsaken the heavenly Jerusalem in favor of the old?** Has the powerful error from **2 Thessalonians 2:11** the idea that Hagar and her son will inherit the promise and be the ones to reveal the Kingdom of God?