**Coming - A Temple in Jerusalem?**

**Ronald D Kelly**

**Good News, February 1985 (pages 6-8, 24)**

**Jews and Christians alike anticipate the construction of a temple in Jerusalem. But is a temple necessary to fulfill prophecy?**

   It was April, A.D. 69. The 29-year-old General Titus had command of the Roman army for the Judean campaign.
   The Jewish war against Rome started in early A.D. 66. Gradually the Roman legions brought the rebellion under control. Now, in 69, the siege had caused famine.
   Jerusalem's population had swollen by the thousands as refugees gathered in one last desperate struggle against the Roman armies. Some 25,000 Jewish fighters prepared to hold off 80,000 Roman troops from four legions.
   The Roman 10th legion came up from Jericho on the east. The 12th came from the west. The fifth and 15th legions, under the personal direction of Titus, camped to the north on Mt. Scopus.
   By the spring of A.D. 70 one of the greatest and most famous battles of all history was under way. Titus sent his major thrust into Jerusalem from the northwest. Within three weeks, the Romans had broken through the third and second walls and occupied much of the city.
   The main body of Jewish zealots prepared to fight to the bitter end, barricading themselves in the natural fortress that was the Temple.
   The hot summer months were filled with the agonies of war. Finally, in late August of A.D. 70, the Temple Mount fell to the Roman forces.
   Apparently Titus had not intended to destroy the Temple. But one of his soldiers hurled a piece of burning wood into the sanctuary, setting the complex ablaze.
   Describing the scene, the Jewish historian Josephus wrote: "One would have thought that the hill itself, on which the Temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them; for the ground did nowhere appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it."
   Within days the Temple lay in ruins and most of Jerusalem was rubble. Sections of the Temple that had been overlaid with gold had melted in the destructive flames; soldiers and looters pushed stones aside to retrieve the melted gold. In the course of time, not one stone was left on another.
   An era that began a thousand years before was at an end.
   Now, more than 1,900 years later, there is revived interest in the construction of a Temple in Jerusalem. Some among the Jewish religious leadership believe a Temple must be built before the coming of the Messiah. Others don't think so.
   Many fundamentalist Christians believe a Temple must be set up before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Some Christian organizations have contributed to a fund to participate in the construction of such a Temple.
   What does the Bible say? Will there have to be a Temple in Jerusalem before the prophesied end-time events can take place? Must sacrifices be offered on the Temple Mount? Or will a physical building and sacrifices not be necessary until the Messiah has come and God's Kingdom is set up on earth?
   The future holds some interesting possibilities.
   Before studying the prophecies for the future, let's understand the history of probably the most famous geographical area and building in all human history — Jerusalem, the Temple Mount and the Temple itself.

**The first Temple**

   King Solomon constructed the first Temple in the middle of the 10th century B.C. But even before Solomon, King David desired to build a house for God.
   After David returned the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, he said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains" ([II Samuel 7:2](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Sam%207.2)). Thus David let it be known that he wanted to build a Temple.
   That night, however, God informed Nathan that David's militaristic ways did not qualify him for the project. However, David's son Solomon would build the Temple. Then God revealed the plan and design He desired for the building.
   During the next years, David continued with plans for his dream to build a house for God. He purchased the threshing floor of Ornan, commonly called Mt. Moriah, for the project site.
   Interestingly, this is believed to be the same location to which Abraham brought his son Isaac to be sacrificed more than 1,000 years before David. In that case, you remember, God supplied a ram for the sacrifice after proving Abraham's obedience and faith.
   Then David began to collect materials for the construction of the Temple. David wanted quality for the house of God, and perhaps wasn't sure young Solomon would obtain the finest materials and hire the best craftsmen.
   David died at age 70, leaving Solomon with the responsibility to construct the Temple.

**Construction under Solomon**

   To maintain peace in Israel, Solomon first honed his military strategy, assembling an imposing force of charioteers and horsemen — some 1,500 chariots and 12,000 horses. Then he set out to secure the economic basis of the kingdom. His copper mines and smelteries and his shipping and transport enterprises became famous. Camel caravans and ships provided a dazzling flow of goods and services. Taxes were also increased.
   The wealth provided means to build Jerusalem into a magnificent city. Solomon built his own palace, much more imposing than David's.
   Four years after he became king, Solomon started construction of the glorious Temple. The project was to last seven years. In addition to the material and laborers David had prepared for the project, Solomon hired even more workers and purchased more fine materials.
   Although by modern standards, it was not an especially large building, the Temple Solomon built was, for its time, extremely impressive. The Temple was not designed to hold thousands of people at a time. It was a center of worship. The priests had carefully prescribed duties and rites to perform. Even the animal sacrifices were performed in front of the Temple — not inside it.
   The workmanship and construction of the Temple were of the highest quality. The main walls were of hewn stone blocks quarried not far from the Temple Mount. Sturdy beams reinforced the walls. Finely carved horizontal beams were overlaid with ceiling planks and roof tiles.
   Finely dyed fabrics adorned some walls and doorways. Flanking the main entrance to the Temple were two massive bronze pillars, six feet in diameter and some 30 to 40 feet high. These and numerous other bronze castings were produced by a technology advanced for that day. Bronze and gold utensils were used for rituals and sacrifices.
   It didn't take long for the fabulous Temple to become a symbol of godly worship among the Hebrew peoples, and then its fame spread throughout the Middle East.
   But the time of peace and prosperity that existed under Solomon was short-lived. After Solomon's death, Israel was torn by revolution. The northern tribes formed a separate nation, retaining the name Israel. The southern nation continued under the name of Judah.

**The Kingdom's decline**

   By 721-718 B.C., the northern tribes were carried away into captivity in Assyria. Most of those people never returned to their homelands, but in later centuries migrated to Europe and other areas of the world.
   For more information on where the so-called "lost" tribes of Israel are to be found today, send for our startling free book The United States and Britain in Prophecy.
   Not learning the lesson from Israel, Judah continued to reject God's ways, and between 604 and 585 B.C., they, too, were carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians.
   In 604 the Babylonians took the first wave of captives from Judah to Babylon. Among the captives were Daniel and Ezekiel. For the next 19 years the Jews mounted a series of uprisings against the Babylonians in Judea. God's prophet Jeremiah faithfully carried out God's work during that time.
   Zedekiah, who was to be Judah's final king, in desperation formed an unwise 'alliance with the pharaoh of Egypt, contrary to Jeremiah's warnings. Enraged, Nebuchadnezzar sent his armies against one fortified Jewish city after another. He set a siege around Jerusalem. It was then only a matter of time.
   In the summer of 587 B.C. the Babylonians broke through Jerusalem's northern wall, swarming into the city. King Zedekiah fled toward Jericho, but was captured and brought before Nebuchadnezzar, just as Jeremiah had prophesied. The king's sons were killed before him and then his own eyes were put out. He was bound hand and foot and carried to Babylon, where he died.
   The palace and the Temple area were plundered, looted and set ablaze. The glory of Solomon's Temple was over. It had stood more than 350 years.

**Permission to return**

   The Jewish captivity in Babylon had been prophesied to last about 70 years.
   In 539 B.C., the mighty Persian army under the command of Cyrus besieged Babylon. One night as the Babylonians drank and reveled, Cyrus quietly diverted the river Euphrates into irrigation channels, marched his army up the dry riverbed and in the early morning hours swarmed into the city, taking it in a few hours.
   Persia became the dominant empire of the world, inheriting the captive Jewish peoples. But Persian policies were different from those of the Babylonians. The Persians permitted captive peoples to live in their homelands and worship according to their ancient traditions. Previously deported peoples were allowed to return to the areas from which they had been taken. By 538 B.C., Cyrus issued a decree permitting Jewish subjects of his empire to return to their country and begin rebuilding. Settlers began to straggle back to Jerusalem. Among them was a descendant of King Jehoiachin named Zerubbabel. He was to become governor and play an important role in the reconstruction of Jerusalem and a new Temple.

**A second Temple**

   Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, cleared the rubble off the Temple Mount. The first order of business was to erect an altar and reinstitute animal sacrifices. This was done and the Festival of Succoth (the Feast of
   Tabernacles) was observed on the Temple Mount.
   It is important to note that a Temple was not at this time considered necessary for a sacrificial altar or for religious services.
   Then Zerubbabel began building a Temple. Just as Solomon had done, he hired quality craftsmen and ordered building logs of cedar. Levites were given responsibilities at the project. Songs and religious ceremonies recalled the days of glory of the first Temple.
   But the joys were short-lived. Because of many problems in the region, the work stopped.
   After more than a decade, work began and ended at irregular intervals. By 515 B.C., the main edifice of a Temple was completed and dedicated. This second Temple was similar in size to the one Solomon built, but nowhere near the magnificent structure destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Because of prophecies uttered by Daniel, Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah, many began to look for the Messianic kingdom to be set up, and this second Temple seemed to play an important role. However, the years passed and the glory of the Temple as depicted by Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 40-48) was not realized. And there was no sign of the Messiah.
   In truth, Ezekiel was not prophesying about this time of reconstruction at all, but foresaw the Temple that would be built after the coming of the Messiah — not before.
   Then, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, religious laxity and intermarriage with local peoples set the stage for a revival in Judea. In the land of Persia, a devout Jew named Nehemiah had been appointed to a high office in the Persian government. Upon hearing reports from Jerusalem of the sad state of affairs there, he obtained permission to lead an expedition to Jerusalem and complete the rebuilding process now long delayed.

**Coming - A Temple in Jerusalem? Part Two**

**Ronald D Kelly**

**Good News, March 1985 (pages 14-17)**

**Is the construction of a temple in Jerusalem necessary to fulfill prophecy? The future holds some startling possibilities.**

   Will there have to be a temple in Jerusalem before prophesied end-time events can take place? Must sacrifices be offered on the Temple Mount?
   Or will a physical building and sacrifices not be necessary until the Messiah has come and God's Kingdom is set up on earth?
   The answers are important for Jews and Christians alike!
   The Temple is probably the most famous building in all human history. Last month we traced its history until the time devout Nehemiah, a high-ranking Jew in the Persian government, obtained permission to lead an expedition to Jerusalem and complete the building of a second Temple.
   Now to continue with this second installment: In 457 B.C. the Persian king Artaxerxes issued a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. This is a most important date.
   During the Babylonian exile more than 100 years before, God revealed an unusual prophecy to Daniel. He said: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until the Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times" ([Daniel 9:25](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Dan%209.25)).
   This amazing prophecy, dated from 457 B.C., predicted not only the rebuilding of Jerusalem, but the coming of the Messiah.
   From this, many thought the Messiah would appear in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. But that is not what the prophet meant. He did prophesy the reconstruction and resettlement of Judea. However, the 69-weeks prophecy was not a period of 69 literal weeks, but prophetic weeks.
   God reveals in prophetic symbol that a day equals a year in prophecy ([Ezekiel 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ezek%204.6), [Numbers 14:34](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Num%2014.34)). To know how many years till the fulfillment, we would have to know how many days are in 69 weeks. Since there are seven days in a week, we would multiply seven times 69 and arrive at 483. The Messiah would not appear, then, till 483 years after Artaxerxes' decree.
   That would bring us to the year A.D. 27, as we count the years. In that year, according to the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth, when He was about 30 years of age, began His public ministry ([Luke 3:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Luke%203.21-23)).
   The Messiah had indeed arrived. Most of the world did not accept Him at that time. He had come to die for the sins of the world. After only 3 ½ years of active ministry, He was put to death by crucifixion.
   For more than 1,900 years the Christian world has been waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus. And for longer than that, the Jews have looked for the appearance of the Messiah. Christian and Jew both are concerned about Jerusalem, a temple and animal sacrifices in relationship to the coming of the Messiah. But more about that later.

**Continued trying times**

   Now back to the second Temple. After the reform period of Ezra and Nehemiah, there was a time of great turmoil in Judea. The Persian empire fell to the onslaught of the Macedonian ruler, Alexander the Great. After Alexander's death, his empire was divided among his leading generals.
   Judea lay in the path of two constantly warring factions, the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria. Wars raged back and forth for nearly three centuries. In 175 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes became ruler of the Seleucids in Syria. In 168 he attempted a campaign to Egypt, but was thwarted by the rising Roman power. He turned his wrath on the Jews.
   Jerusalem was again ravaged by war. The city was captured and a Syrian garrison headquartered near the Temple Mount. The Temple sacrifices, observance of the seventh-day Sabbath and feast days, along with circumcision, were forbidden to all Jews. The penalty for practicing any of these was death. After about two months, the crowning blow was struck. Antiochus set up an altar to the Greek god Zeus on the Temple Mount and offered swine upon it. It was, as had been prophesied, an abomination of desolation ([Daniel 11:31](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Dan%2011.31)).
   This date, to live in infamy in Jewish history, was the 25th of Kislev (the month of November-December on the Roman calendar) in 167 B.C. This event also had been prophesied in the book of Daniel. In [Daniel 8:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Dan%208.13-14), New International Version, God revealed: "Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, 'How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled — the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?' He said to me, 'It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.'"
   In other words, there would be 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices that would not be offered — a period of 1,150 days or just more than three years till God would permit restoration of the sacrifices.
   Those three years were to be among the most trying in Jewish history. Jews were forced to eat pork and worship pagan gods. Those who refused were mercilessly killed. In the Judean hills, a band of zealous Jews under the leadership of a Jewish priest named Mattathias steadily grew in numbers and strength. They became known as the Maccabees — the "hammerers."
   After the death of Mattathias, his son Judas took command of the Jewish forces. They gained one victory after another and finally, on the 25th of Kislev in 164 B.C. (exactly three years to the day from the setting up of the Zeus statue on the Temple Mount), the Maccabees liberated Jerusalem, tore down the pagan gods from the Temple Mount and relit the lights of the Menorah.
   To this day the Jewish eight-day winter festival of Hanukkah, or Festival of Lights, recalls the cleansing of the Temple in the days of the Maccabees.
   In all probability it had been 1,150 days or 2,300 evenings and mornings since Antiochus had forbidden Jewish sacrifices.

**Roman dominion**

   During the next century, Jerusalem was to undergo great change. By 63 B.C., the Roman general Pompey marched his legions into Judea. Huge war machines hurled boulders into the city and at the Temple.
   Jerusalem once again succumbed to foreign forces.
   After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., an Edomite noble named Herod was appointed king of Judea in 37 B.C. He was a loyal subject of Rome, and was at the same time one of the most infamous personalities of his day.
   Herod was a cruel taskmaster, even putting to death his wife and several sons, whom he suspected of subterfuge. But his building programs made that area of the world a showplace. He built palaces at Herodium, Jericho and on Masada. He built and named the seaport city of Caesarea after emperor Augustus.
   But there was great unrest in Judea. To settle the Jews, Herod undertook a grand project — the rebuilding of the Temple of God in Jerusalem to make it a showplace, one of the most magnificent buildings in the empire.
   Plans were drawn up in about 22 B.C. with construction beginning in 19 B.C.
   A huge retaining wall was erected on the southwest corner. Tons of fill dirt were hauled in. Natural rock outcroppings were carved flat.
   Glistening white marble set off by sparkling gold formed the outer walls of the Temple itself. Solomon's Temple had not been more than 40 feet high and maybe 115 by 70 feet in length and width. Herod's newly renovated masterpiece would be more than 100 feet wide, 130 feet long and 150 feet high.
   Some 162 huge Corinthian columns formed a colonnade on the southern edge of the courtyard. It was in this area that Jesus of Nazareth would turn over the moneychangers' tables and drive out the animals. Here also Jesus would teach His disciples, and later those disciples would teach others in the early days of the New Testament Church.
   But this renovated second Temple would not exist in a time of peace any more than Solomon's original Temple or the one built by Zerubbabel.
   In A .D. 70, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the beautiful Temple of Herod. No Jewish temple has to this day ever been rebuilt on Mt. Moriah.
   All that remains from the glory of the past is a lower portion of the retaining wall including a 150-foot section on the southwest corner of the Temple Mount. It is considered holy by the Jews, since it i's all that remains from the glorious days of the first and second Temples. This Western Wall came into Jewish possession in 1967 after the Six Day War.

**What about the future?**

   Ever since the Six Day War, speculation has run rampant on whether, how and when the Jews would again worship on the Temple Mount, offer animal sacrifices or build a temple.
   Today observant Jews do not even go on the Temple Mount. There are two major reasons.
   First, the Temple Mount is now, and has been for centuries, under Muslim control. The Dome of the Rock mosque, built in the late seventh century A.D., now occupies the traditional site of the Temple. Muslim law does not permit other religions to worship on the Temple Mount.
   Second, Jewish religious law does not permit Jews on the Mount since the exact location of the Holy of Holies is not known. Only the high priest was permitted in the Holy of Holies, so Jews do not wish to even accidentally enter that location.
   Many fundamentalist Christians believe that three important events have to occur in the Holy Land before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. One is that Israel must again become a Jewish nation, second that Jerusalem must be a Jewish city and third that a temple must be built on the Temple Mount. Two of those three events have taken place.
   Jews themselves are divided on the matter of the Jewish state and the building of a temple. Some ultraorthodox Jews do not even recognize the state of Israel and believe it should not be a nation till the Messiah appears.
   On the other hand, the Jewish dream of centuries began to be fulfilled when Jews began to resettle in the Holy Land. By 1948 the Jewish state of Israel had been declared a nation. Many Bible students viewed this as a fulfillment of prophecy. Then in 1967, when Israel occupied all of Jerusalem, the West Bank territory and the Golan Heights, many felt the prophesied time of the end was at hand.
   It seemed to some that very soon the Jews would take over the Temple Mount, offer animal sacrifices and construct the long awaited temple.
   But time has passed and a temple does not seem to be forthcoming. Many questions yet remain to be answered: Would the Dome of the Rock have to be torn down to construct a Jewish temple? Is the site of the Dome of the Rock even the site of the first and second Jewish Temples? Is a temple necessary to offer sacrifices? Could worship services be conducted on the Temple Mount apart from a temple?
   These and other questions are being given careful consideration. The Jewish high court in 1983 decided that the Temple Mount was indeed a holy site for Jews. They also declared that Jews have rights of access and worship on the Temple Mount. However, the political situation in Jerusalem is so delicate that no move has yet been made to attempt Jewish worship atop the Mount.
   For a number of years now, certain Jews have been undergoing preparation and education for Temple Mount service, should that become a reality. A 15-year training program of priests at Yeshivah Ateret Hacohanim is preparing priests for temple service. Other groups are studying priestly ritual and the manufacture of priestly garments.
   From the example during the days of Zerubbabel, it seems evident that religious worship services and a sacrificial altar could be set up even if no temple is built. There is some support, if not for a temple, for a synagogue on the Temple Mount.
   Archaeological studies have led some to believe that the site of the Holy of Holies was not where the Dome of the Rock is situated, but more than 100 yards to the north. If so, a Jewish structure could be built without destroying the Muslim holy place, if the political problems could be worked out.

**Prophecy will be fulfilled**

   All in all, it makes for a great deal of speculation. Some scoff at biblical prophecy. Others look eagerly for events to fulfill it.
   There is no doubt that some of the prophecies that looked forward from the Babylonian captivity were fulfilled, at least in type, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Other prophecies about the temple will not be fulfilled until God's Kingdom is established.
   But many Bible prophecies pertain to events that will soon take place in Europe and the Middle East before the end of this age. Certainly we should be aware of events in the Middle East and in Jerusalem. We will soon see the establishment of God's peaceful government on the earth!
   Events brought about by people are not necessary to fulfill prophecy. God will inspire those events He has prophesied. We'll wait and watch with interest to see what happens in the coming months and years.
   For more information on this critical region and coming events there, read our free booklet The Middle East In Prophecy.