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The Mission
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Revelation The Temple

I want to take tonight and next week as well and digress a bit and talk about two things that we need to get clear in our minds before we move forward into this next section. The first thing is the temple in Jerusalem, past, present and future. And the second is the “Seventy Weeks of Daniel” and where that comes from and what that means with respect to the end times.

Now, tonight we’ll only get through with the first one and so next week we’ll be talking about the latter.

Now, as most of you already know, I’ve been preaching verse by verse through Daniel on Sunday morning, and teaching verse by verse through the book of Revelation on Wednesday night and that’s not by accident.

And the reason is because these two books compliment each other, and in fact, are essential to each other, in order to really understand properly what is going to take place in the future. And even then, we’re left with unanswered questions and with things that we just can’t really be adamant about.

But to even have a chance in getting it right, we have to take the Bible as a whole, and allow scripture to interpret scripture as much as possible.

And so that's why I want to take some time tonight and next week to try and more or less fill in some blanks with some of the things we need to know; so going forward we'll be able to hopefully understand the why behind the what.

And so tonight I want to talk about the temple in Jerusalem. And you'll see why this is important as we make our way through the rest of the book of Revelation.

Now, some of you may already know a lot of this, and if so, then just bear with me, because not everybody does. And even for those who have heard it before, maybe you didn't completely understand it, or maybe you're like me and you can't remember what you did this morning. At any rate, it's not going to hurt us to review it.

So, why is the temple in Jerusalem important?

Well, we've probably all been taught at some time in the past that, before Christ can return, the temple in Jerusalem has to be rebuilt.

But is that true? And if so where does that teaching or that truth come from? Is that really scripture, or is that something some people just believe in their hearts will happen, or is it something that somebody made up?

Well, we're going to find out, but first let me just start from the beginning. The first temple ever built in Jerusalem was during the reign of King Solomon. Solomon's father, King David, had wanted to build the temple for God a generation earlier, as a permanent resting place for the Ark of the Covenant, which of course contained the Ten Commandments, but God wouldn't let him. And we have that record in

1 Chronicles 28:2, Then King David rose to his feet and said, "Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and

for the footstool of our God, and had made preparations to build it. 3 But God said to me, ‘You shall not build a house for My name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood.’

And so God wouldn’t allow David to build it, but He did allow Solomon his son, to build it.

1 Chronicles 22:9, Behold, a son will be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.’

1 Chronicles 28:11, It says, Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; 12 and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the Lord, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things; and then it goes on and on and on and gives the details of how it’s to be constructed and furnished.

And so Solomon takes his father’s plans which were inspired by God Himself and he built a temple in Jerusalem for God. And that’s in

1 Kings 6:1, And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.

Now, where did he build it? Because that too is important.

Well, we're told that too in

2 Chronicles 3:1, Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

And so the first temple was built by King Solomon, on Mount Moriah, there in Jerusalem, where the Lord had appeared to King David his father.

And today that site is believed to be at or very near where the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa (Alacasa) Mosque is located.

And the Dome of the Rock, if you're not familiar with it, is an Islamic shrine, which sits in the center of the Al-Aqsa (Alacasa) mosque compound on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem. In fact, it's the oldest surviving Islamic architecture, in the world

And so this magnificent new temple was built to replace the portable tabernacle that they had used while they were wandering around in circles in the wilderness.

Now, when it was built would have been somewhere around 966 BC, almost a thousand years before Christ. And it would stand for the next 380 years.

Now, one really interesting fact concerning the building of that temple was the fact, that there was no noise generated as it was constructed. All the material used to build the temple was prepared before it was ever brought to the building site. The massive stones that were used in building the foundation and the walls were every one prepared beforehand at the quarry. There was never a hammer or an axe or a chisel or any iron tool of any kind ever heard in the building of God's house.

The Bible gives us all the details of its' construction and I won't bore you with all that, but I will tell you that the main structure of the temple was 180 feet long. It was 90 feet wide, and it was 50 feet high. Another part of the temple was actually over 200 feet tall. And of course its' main use was a place of sacrifice for the people.

The Temple was a symbol of the covenant between God and Israel, a place where heaven and earth met, and a place where God's divine presence was manifest. This spiritual significance of the temple is often seen as a foreshadowing of Christ, who referred to His body as the temple as in

John 2:19, Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

And then in the writings of Paul in

1 Corinthians 6:19, Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

Well, in 586 BC, 380 years later, the temple of Solomon was destroyed. When the Babylonians, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, took over Judah, they ransacked the city, along with the temple, and they pillaged the temple, and they carried out all the vessels of God, and all the gold and silver, and the pillars of brass, along with the golden tables, and the candlesticks.

And when they had carried all the temple treasures away, they burned the temple. And of course we've been studying about that on Sunday mornings as through we make our way through the book of Daniel.

And so for seventy years there was no temple. And really there was no need for a temple, because most all the people were away. All, but the poorest of the poor, had been exiled to Babylon, when God had used this pagan nation to bring judgment on the nation of Israel, because of their disobedience and sin.

And so that was in 586 BC. Daniel, himself, actually had been exiled 20 years earlier in the very first wave of Jews to be exiled.

Now, fast forward to 538 BC or thereabouts. It's been nearly 70 years now since the Babylonians took Judah and destroyed the temple of God. And now, the Medo-Persians have conquered the Babylonians. And we're just learning about that in our Daniel study on Sunday mornings as well.

And so King Cyrus, who was the King of Persia, allows Zerubbabel, who is a Jewish leader, who was actually born in Babylon during the exile, but has become a leader of the Jews while there; King Cyrus allows him and around 50,000 other Jewish captives to return to Jerusalem to begin rebuilding the temple.

King Cyrus also encouraged the people who were left behind to give to the cause of rebuilding the temple. In other words, he was supportive of their efforts and even looked on it as his responsibility or his calling of God if you will to get it done.

And so right away, Zerubbabel, and the people that go back with him, along with Joshua, the high priest, they begin rebuilding the temple. And you can read about all this in the book of Ezra.

And so they get the foundation finished, but then they run into a problem. The neighboring nations don't want the temple to be rebuilt. And so they sent some folks over and they pretend like they wanted to help them to build it back, when in reality their goal is to stop them.

But when the Jews saw through them, and when they wouldn't accept their help, well, they bribed some of the Jewish officials to rebel.

And when the leadership, back in Persia, got wind of all the unrest, and confusion, they withdrew their support; and then ordered that all the work be stopped. And for the next seventeen years, it just sat there. And nobody could work on it.

Well, long story short, construction finally resumed; and in 516 BC, it was finished. And though many thought it to be a poor substitute for Solomon's great temple, at least they had a temple.

And it was considerably smaller and it did contain fewer resources. And the Ark of the Covenant was no longer in Israel's possession and even though King Cyrus had returned some of the temple treasures, many of them were lost forever.

On top of that dedication day was nothing like that of the first temple's dedication day. At the temple on that day, the altar was lit by fire from heaven. And the temple of God that day was filled with the Shekinah glory of God.

But when folks attended at the second temple's dedication, there were no such miracles. But even so, God prophesied through the prophet Haggai that this second temple, would one day outshine the glory of the first.

In fact let me just read that for you. This is from the NIV translation.

Haggai 2:3 'Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?

4 But now be strong, Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord. 'Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you

people of the land,’ declares the Lord, ‘and work. For I am with you,’ declares the Lord Almighty.

5 ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’

6 “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. 7 I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the Lord Almighty. 8 ‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the Lord Almighty. 9 ‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”

Now, that “little while” which Haggai referred to in his prophecy wouldn’t come about for almost another 500 years. But it did finally come, when the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth for the first time. And it was the Lord Jesus who would eventually bring that glory to the temple when He Himself walked inside.

But now, a few things happened in this second temple; between the time it was rebuilt; and the time in which Jesus visited; that we need to know about.

First of all, we know the second temple was originally built during the reign of King Cyrus, which was after the Medo-Persians had conquered the Babylonians. And we know the Medo-Persians remained in power for almost 200 years from 539 B.C. to 330 B.C.

But then just like was prophesied in Daniel chapter 2, when King Nebuchadnezzar was given the dream about the huge statue with the golden head, and Daniel was given the interpretation; Daniel saw four

empires which would rise and fall. The empire in power at the time of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream was of course his own. It was that of the Babylonians, and though it was represented by the head of gold, and supposedly the strongest and most powerful, it fell.

And then later the Medo-Persian Empire fell, just like Babylon had fallen.

And then **they** were replaced of course by the Greek Empire, which was led by Alexander the Great; and that was in 330 BC.

Now, that meant that Israel was now under Greek rule. But the Greek rulers, unlike those before them, never attempted to exile or displace the Jewish people, and they never attempted to destroy their cities or their Temple.

Their philosophy was to keep their friends close and their enemies even closer. In other words, they just tried to influence them. They tried to convert or corm them to their way of life. And in that, they were very successful. And many of the jewish people did actually conform to the Greek lifestyle.

At any rate, Alexander the Great's reign was very short. He became sick and died suddenly of some mysterious disease. And then after his death, the Greek Empire was divided into four areas and controlled by four of his generals.

Now, one of those areas was Egypt. And eventually a man by the name of Antiochus IV, or Antiochus Epiphanes came to power. His name, which by the way, he gave to himself; means "illustrious one" or "god manifest."

But those who knew him, especially the Jews who he hated, they had a nickname for him. They called him the "mad one."

And many believe he was a foreshadowing, if you will, of the antichrist, who will come on the scene during the last days during the Tribulation Period. Look at

Daniel chapter 9:27, This what God told Daniel was going to happen. The Jewish people had been exiled already for almost 70 years and Daniel know it should be over soon, but then God shows him this. And this is what he saw.

27, Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”

And then in Daniel 11:31, And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.

And we know from history that the first thing Antiochus Epiphanies does is to put guards all around the temple; where nobody can worship. In other words, he stops the sacrifice and he halts all worship. And then on a given Sabbath, he sends his soldiers into the city, and he slaughters all the children they can find. And then he slaughters all the women. And then he makes heathen idolatry mandatory. And then he has nakedness flaunted about in full view of the temple grounds.

And then he enforces Greek culture upon the Jews. He erects a statue of Zeus, the main god of the Greeks, on the very altar of the temple. And then he slays a pig on the altar in the temple, and makes the priests eat the pork.

And in

Daniel 12:11, It says, “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

And so this is what is referred to in the Bible as the abomination of desolations. He abominates the temple, in order to make it desolate; and he even had some Jews join in with him.

And so this what Daniel sees. He sees a coming ruler, who will cause the offerings and the sacrifices and the worship in the temple to cease and who will set up “an abomination that causes desolation.”

And while that did actually happen in 167 BC, and most certainly qualifies as an abomination, Jesus in Matthew chapter 24 tells us that this prophecy which Daniel speaks of, is still yet to come.

Matthew 24:15, “Jesus said, Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

In other words, when the true Antichrist comes during the tribulation, he will model what Antiochus Euphianes, has already done. And he’ll do it for the same reason, because he too will hate the Jews.

Now, the other thing, we need to know about this second temple is that when Herod the Great came to power during the first century, the Temple underwent a massive reconstruction project, that project led by King Herod transformed the once looked at as inferior temple, into an architectural marvel.

Herod the Great, was known for his ambitious building projects, and so he spared no expense in making the Second Temple a symbol of his power

and magnificence. His aim was of course to surpass the splendor of Solomon's temple, and create a structure that would be revered by people for generations to come.

And what he accomplished really was, nothing short of extraordinary. This massive construction project included expanding the size of the temple complex. It added all these awe-inspiring courtyards, and colonnades, and all these intricate architectural details.

And the scale of the project was so immense that it required thousands of workers to work several years to complete. And the result was one of the most impressive structures of its time. When it was finished, the grandeur and beauty of the Second Temple were unmatched, and it attracted visitors from far and wide.

The renovations made by Herod went way beyond just the outside physical structure though. He also invested in beautifying the inside of the temple with all these lavish decorations and precious materials. He used gold, and marble, and all these intricate mosaics to adorn the walls, and the ceilings, and the floors, to create an unforgettable and captivating atmosphere.

Herod's construction project not only elevated the physical stature of the Second Temple, but it also solidified its significance as the center of Jewish worship and identity. As you can imagine, the temple became a source of immense pride for the Jewish people. And it was no doubt, a project that cemented his legacy and left an indelible mark on Jewish history.

But as time passed and as people changed, tensions between the Jewish population and the leaders of the Roman Empire began to deteriorate. And in 66 AD, a group of Jewish rebels, seized control of the

Second Temple. And they expelled the Roman guards that had been stationed there.

Well, this sparked an all out war between the Romans and the Jewish rebels. And though the Jews fought the best they could against the Roman forces, eventually they were overpowered.

And in 70 A.D., the Roman rulers laid siege to the city, and then they stormed the second Temple and they set it on fire; and the fire became so hot, that it caused the massive stones to crumble; and to become like dust, and in doing so, fulfilled the prophecy that Jesus had prophesied just a few years earlier, that not one stone would remain upon another.

And so today, there is no temple in Jerusalem, at least not a Jewish temple on the site where this temple was once located. Only one portion of a retaining wall; called the “Wailing Wall” remains.

And so the destruction of the Second Temple was not only a physical loss, but it was also a spiritual blow to the Jewish people. This holy site had been the center of Jewish worship, and a symbol of their identity and faith for centuries. And now the loss of the temple left a void that was felt deeply within the community.

But despite the tragedy, the **memory** of the Second Temple lives on even today in what remains of the wall, and it serves as a reminder to the entire world of the resilience and the enduring spirit of the Jewish people.

And when you visit Israel, the Western Wall is considered the most sacred site in all Judaism. And visitors from all over the world and from all walks of life flock each year and every day of each year to this remnant of the temple, pay their respects, and to offer prayers, and to place handwritten notes in the crevices of its ancient stones. And for many, it is a

place of solace, for others a place introspection, and for others a place of spiritual connection.

But one day in the future, somewhere very close to this wall, many believe, will be built a brand new temple for the Jewish people.

Now, historians and archaeologists can't really agree as to exactly where that location is. They know as we know that it's in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared to David.

And like I said before, many believe it stood where the Dome of the Rock presently stands today. Others suggest it was situated somewhere very close by and that there's room for both temples. Others say both temples, according to God's word, can't co-exist side by side.

The most common scripture people point to concerning the need for a third temple is

2 Thessalonians 2:1, Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Now, people point to that scripture and some say it's talking about a literal physical temple that the antichrist will set himself up in. And others say that the temple in this verse is speaking of a spiritual temple, and that

the antichrist is just trying to put himself on the same level as God and imitate God.

But after doing a lot of word studies and reading commentaries that I trust, I believe this is a literal, physical temple. And so even though we don't know how, or when, or exactly where the Third Temple in Jerusalem will be built, I believe God's word is telling us that there will be one; somewhere. And again, how that will come to pass and when really has no bearing whatsoever on the timing of the Rapture of the church.

The Rapture could happen at any moment and then the Tribulation begin on at anytime after that. There's nothing to indicate, that the tribulation period will begin immediately.

And bottom line is that everything God has told us in His word, will come to pass, just like He said it would. The timing we may not know. All the details we may not know. But He's given us enough to get the big picture and He's certainly given us enough to live our lives properly in the present. Amen!