

An Overview of the Future Temples

By Randall Price

As in the past, the Temple will be present in the future to enable Israel to fulfill her national and spiritual existence. The prophecies of the rebuilding of a Temple in Jerusalem in the eschatological age are therefore an inseparable part of the restoration prophecies made to national Israel which include both the preparation for Israel's restoration in the Tribulation as well as the resumption of Israel's theocratic kingdom in the Millennium. Scripture indicates that three temples will appear in the future: a Tribulation Temple, a Millennial Temple, and an Eternal Temple.

The Tribulation Temple

During the Tribulation the Temple will be rebuilt by unbelieving Jews (Is. 66:1-6), apparently as the result of a covenant made between the Jewish leadership and the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27a), and desecrated by the Antichrist with the "Abomination of Desolation" (Dan. 9:27b) when he invades Jerusalem (Dan. 11:45; Rev. 11:2). Jesus enlarged upon Daniel's prophecy by setting the Temple's desecration as the signal event dividing the birth pangs of the first half of the Tribulation from the remaining 1,260 days of "Great Tribulation" (Matt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14; cf. Rev. 11:1-2) which begins an unparalleled period of Jewish persecution (Matt. 24:16-22; Mk. 13:15-20) leading up to the rescue of the redeemed Remnant at the second advent of Messiah (Zech. 12:8-14; 14:3-5; Lk. 21:27-28; Rev. 19:11-16). Paul further developed the prophecy of the Temple's desecration in his description of the end-time "deception" that will accompany the revelation of the "man of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:4, 10). He explained this as the Antichrist's blasphemous act to usurp God's place in the Holy of Holies (2 Thess. 2:4; cf. Rev. 13:6, 14-15). The Tribulation Temple may be destroyed at the return of Christ when the Mount of Olives splits (Zech. 14:4), but it will certainly be removed as part of the extensive topographical changes that will prepare for the Millennial Jerusalem and its Temple (Zech. 14:10; cf. Is. 2:2).

The Millennial Temple

The Millennial Temple will be built by Christ (Zech. 6:12-13), redeemed Jews (Ezek. 43:10-11), and representatives from the Gentile nations (Zech. 6:15; Hag. 2:7; cf. Is. 60:10) at the beginning of the Messianic kingdom (Ezek. 37:26-28). As a sign of the restoration of theocratic rule, the Shekinah Glory will return to its Holy of Holies (Ezek. 43:1-7; cf. Is. 4:5-6). Redeemed Gentiles will also be included in worship at this Temple (Is. 60:6; Zeph. 3:10; Zech. 2:11; 8:22; 14:16-19) as predicted by Jesus (Matt. 21:13; Mk. 11:17; Lk. 19:46; cf. Is. 56:7). The dimensions and architectural design of the Millennial Temple, as well as its priestly personnel and ritual regulations are detailed in Ezekiel 40-48. Reasons as to why these descriptions in Ezekiel must be both literal and with reference to the eschatological age are as follows: (1) the immense size of the Temple as well as other features of its design differ radically from those of previously known Jewish temples (Ezek. 42:20; 48:35), (2) aspects of the Temple's design and ritual violate the Mosaic Law (e.g. a stepped-altar, Ezek. 43:17), indicating it must be built under Israel's future New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-33; Ezek. 37:26-28), (3) those rebuilding the Temple after the exile did not refer to Ezekiel nor attempt to rebuild the Temple he described because they realized it was

intended for a future age (Hag. 2:3-9), (4) the context of Ezekiel indicates the Temple is rebuilt after the glorious return of the Lord (Ezek. 44:1-4; 48:35), (5) it accords with other prophetic texts which speak about the Millennial Temple (Is. 2:2-4; Jer. 33:18; 60:7, 13; Ezek. 37:26-28; 40-48; Hag. 2:9; Zech. 6:12-13; 14:20). Another feature of Ezekiel's Temple that indicates its literal interpretation is the ceremonial system including blood sacrifices. This is in keeping with other prophetic predictions where the Temple includes a priesthood and sacrifices (Is. 56:6-7; 60:7; Jer. 33:18; Zech. 14:16-21). The function of these sacrifices may be memorial in nature, just as the Lord's Supper is today (1 Cor. 11:24-26), however, the fact that they are said to be for "atonement" may also indicate the need for a ritual purification. This would be necessary, as in the past (Heb. 9:13), for those saints living in mortal bodies throughout the Millennium and seeking approach to the Temple since God's holy presence will be resident there (Jer. 3:17; Zech. 14:20-21). The Millennial Temple will apparently be besieged by Satan and his army at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:7-9) and removed at the time of the creation of the new earth (Is. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:12-13; Rev. 21:1).

The Eternal Temple

The final Temple revealed in prophecy is that which will occupy the New Jerusalem throughout the eternal state (Rev. 21:2, 10). Since all of the saints are now in resurrected bodies without the possibility of sin there will be no need for a physical structure to prevent direct contact with God (Rev. 21:3; 22:4). For this reason John declares that he "saw no Temple there" (Rev. 21:22a). However, he immediately adds "for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its Temple" (Rev. 21:22b). This holy Temple comprised of God Himself will fulfill the divine ideal begun, but never realized, in the Garden of Eden where God and Man were to experience intimate relationship (Gen. 3:8). As a result, the saints will forever fulfill their function as priests, serving God (Rev. 7:15; 21:3) in the New Jerusalem, which itself is an infinitely magnified Holy of Holies (Rev. 21:16; cf. 1 Kgs. 6:20).