

Christ in Prophecy

Mountains of Jerusalem 2: “The Temple Mount”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: If you were to select the most significant mountain in the world, what would it be? Mount Everest? Mount Rainier? How about Mount Fuji in Japan or Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania? All of these are very tall, majestic mountains of great beauty, but all of them together cannot rival the significance of a very small mountain in Jerusalem; a mountain that is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the most important in all the world. Stay tuned.

Part 1

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy! Last week we launched a study of four mountains in Jerusalem, and we began with the Mount of Olives. If you missed that program, you can watch it on our website at lamblion.com. That's lamblion with no and in the middle.

We explored many interesting sites on the Mount of Olives, but our focus was on the Russian Church of the Ascension which marks the traditional spot where Jesus ascended into Heaven. We emphasized that site because the Bible says that is where Jesus will return to this earth. You'll find that passage in Zechariah 14. It says that Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives and that when His feet touch the ground, the mount will split in half. It also says that on that day He will become “king over all the earth.” Acts chapter 1 also states that He will return in the same way that He ascended specifically, He will return physically and visibly. This week in our second program in this series, we are going to take a look at a second mountain in Jerusalem that happens to be the most important mountain in all the world. It's called The Temple Mount.

In just a moment we will go to Jerusalem to see the Temple Mount, but before we do so let me give you just a little bit of orientation. I have outlined on the board here the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem as they exist today. These were the walls that were rebuilt by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 1500's.

There is a deep ravine called the Kidron Valley that runs north and south, and separates the Old City from the Mount of Olives located to the East of the City.

The Eastern Gate is located here it is also known as the Beautiful Gate or the Golden Gate.

This trapezoid is the Temple Mount where the ancient Jewish temples were located. It's about 35 acres in size.

This round thing here represents where the Dome of the Rock is today and many scholars believe that's where the Ancient Jewish Temple stood.

Over here on the western side of this trapezoid of the Temple Mount marked in red is where the Western Wall or the Wailing Wall is located. That's where Jews go to pray today.

The ancient City of Jerusalem was located to the south of here. The City of David was down south on a little finger of land that today is occupied by an Arab village.

There were deep ravines on both sides of the Ancient Jebusite City and so the only way it could grow was to the north toward the Temple Mount.

Let's go now to a spot here on the Mount of Olives where we can get a panoramic view of the Temple Mount.

Part 2

Welcome to the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem! I'm standing here near the pinnacle of the Mount of Olives because this is a great place to view the City of Jerusalem including the Old City and the Temple Mount. We're looking to the West here so what we are seeing is the East side of the Old City. And the deep ravine in front of us here is the Kidron Valley. In the background you can see high rise buildings that represent the New City of Jerusalem. The gate you see is the Eastern Gate which is sometimes called the Golden Gate or the Beautiful Gate. It was sealed in the 1500's when the walls of the city were rebuilt. That sealing fulfilled a prophecy in Ezekiel 44 that says that one day the gate will be sealed and that it will remain sealed until the Messiah comes.

The building with the golden dome is a Muslim shrine, not a mosque. It is called the Dome of the Rock because it is situated over an outcropping of bedrock. The Dome was completed in 691 AD. And it was built to assert the superiority of Islam over both Judaism and Christianity. It asserts its superiority over Judaism because it is built where most people believe the ancient Jewish temples were located. And it asserts its superiority over Christianity because it was built to be higher than the dome that is on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which is considered to be the most sacred church in all of Christendom. At the south end of the Temple Mount is a black domed building called the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It is a worship center for Muslims.

Now, the first thing you need to understand about the Temple Mount is that it is an artificial mount. There is a mount there but most of it is artificial. It was simply a hill at the time of David, and at the time the First Temple was built. What happened is that later on Herod greatly expanded the temple platform by building arches underneath and filling it with topsoil. Let me

illustrate to you what I am talking about: This rather rough diagram here will give you an idea of what I am talking about. Here was the mount going up like this, and down on the other side and the Temple built at the top. Now what Herod did is he built a series of arches that went like this, and also on the other side like this. Then he put topsoil on top of that to greatly expand the temple platform to make it more grandiose approach to the Temple itself. Most people are surprised to find out that the Temple Mount is the same as the ancient mount called Mount Moriah. Yes, it is the place where Abraham went to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice! The next time we hear about it in the Bible it is referred to as the threshing floor of Araunah. So the top of it has been cleared off and has become a threshing floor. Probably in the time of Abraham it was a thickly wooded mountain, we don't know for sure. The prophet Gad instructed David to purchase that threshing floor to be used as a future foundation for the Temple. And David did purchase it and he built an altar to the Lord there. Later on his son Solomon built the first temple the Solomonic Temple which was placed there on that particular threshing floor which served as the foundation for the Temple. And the Temple stood there for 400 years until it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC.

The Temple was rebuilt after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, and it stood there on that Temple Mount for almost 600 years before it was destroyed again by the Romans in 70 AD. It was about 20 BC when Herod began to renovate the Temple and the Temple Mount. And it was at that time that he greatly enlarged the Temple platform. Well let's go now to the Temple Mount for a closer look.

Part 3

What you see behind me here is one of the corners of the retaining wall of the Temple Mount, it is the Southwest corner. And up at the top of that there was a priest who would blow a shofar to announce the beginning of the Sabbath and also the beginning of festival days. Down below you can see excavations that have been made by the Israelis since they reoccupied this city in the 1967 Six Day War. Let's go down there now for a closer look at those excavations.

This First Century street was excavated in the mid-1990's. Before that time it was underneath tons of debris as you can see there in the background. That debris was pushed off the top of the Temple Mount by the Romans in 70 AD when they destroyed the Temple. You might remember that Jesus prophesied during the last week of His life that the Temple would be completely destroyed and not one stone would be left on top of another. This particular stone is referred to as "the trumpeting stone" and it is called that because it was located at that Southwest corner of the Temple retaining wall where the fellow blew the shofar. On it inscribed in Hebrew are the words, "to the place of trumpeting," or the place of the shofar blowing. It is believed by scholars that this is an instruction from the stone masons to the construction workers as to where they are to place the stone. Incidentally, standing from here and looking up you can get an idea of how tall and massive these retaining walls were that were built by Herod the Great.

These magnificent white steps are located at the southern end of the Temple Mount, and this is the way the public in the time of Jesus would enter the Temple come up these steps and at the top there were two sets of doors or gates. There was a double gate on the left, and a triple gate on the right. And if you look up here you can see the remains of one of the double gates, there is a wall built into it by the Crusaders in the 12th Century.

Above me here you can see the faint outline that is left of the triple gate called the Holy gates. These particular gates were used for the entrance to the Temple; the double gates were used for the exit. Unless of course you were in mourning in which case you sent the opposite direction and people could express their sympathy to you because they knew that you were in mourning. Down at the base of these steps are a great number mikvas or ceremonial baths, they are very important in the history of the Church. Let's go down there and take a look.

What you see in these excavations are many mikvas or ceremonial baths that were discovered when this place was excavated in 1967. The discovery of these solves a problem that is raised in Acts chapter 2 where we are told that Peter at his first gospel sermon probably on the Temple Mount had 3,000 people respond and they were all baptized. You see folks it was always a mystery as to where those 3,000 people were baptized, after all water around here is very scarce. Some people even theorize that they might have all marched down to the Jordan River, which is long way from here. But now we know all in the world they had to do was come right down the Temple steps and there were mikvas all over this place where 3,000 could easily have been baptized. Well let's go now to the Western Wall.

Part 4

Behind me here is the Western Wall also known as the Wailing Wall because it is place where Jews have come to for centuries to lament the destruction of their Temple and to pray for the coming of the Messiah. Access to the wall is partitioned to separate the men from the women. People write prayers on pieces of paper and put them in cracks in the wall. The only reason this area of the retaining wall of the Temple Mount became sacred is because it was the only place where the Jews could get close to the Temple Mount. They were not allowed to go up on the Temple Mount itself. There were buildings built right up to the retaining wall at the north and south ends, and on the east side there is a Muslim cemetery. On this West wall, there were also buildings built almost up to the wall itself but there was a narrow alley that was left where the Jews could go and pray. You can see the alley in this photo taken in 1894. Jews would come to this alley to touch the wall and pray. After the Six Day War in 1967, when the Jews reoccupied this city the Israeli government came in and cleared out all of the buildings that were in this area in order to create this large plaza where many ceremonies are held today.

In order to go up to the Western Wall there are certain attire that you are supposed to wear. You are supposed to have your head covered, and it is okay to wear a cap like this, but out of respect I would rather wear a more traditional one. So I am going to put on this type, a yarmulke. And also it's not required to have a pray shawl but out of respect for the Western Wall

I am going to put on this particular pray shawl before I go up there, one like this. Let's go to the wall now.

Part 5

We are ready now to ascend the Temple Mount. But before we do so I want you to keep in mind that although the Israeli's have sovereignty over the Temple Mount, they allow the Muslims to administer it, and because they are intolerant of other religions, they will not allow Jews or Christians to read Scripture or to pray on the Temple Mount. Another thing you might keep in mind too is that they even require visitors to abide by Islamic cultural laws. So for example a husband and wife cannot walk around the Temple Mount holding hands. One final thing before we go up on the mount, the Muslims will not allow us to shoot video footage with audio. So what we are going to do is we are going to shoot video footage of the structures that are important and then we will explain them to you by voiceover.

This building is the Al-Aqsa Mosque it sits at the south end of the Temple Mount, right above the white steps we were standing on a few minutes ago. The Mosque is where Muslim worship services are held on Fridays. It was built in the 7th Century but has been rebuilt many times since then. King Abdullah of Jordan was assassinated in this mosque in July of 1951. On the east side of the Temple Mount you can view the back side of the Eastern Gate. This is the gate that Jesus will enter when He returns to be coronated the King of king and Lord of lords. As you can see, it is sealed on this side as well as on the outside. Psalm 24 indicates that the gate will blow open and welcome the King of Glory.

The dominating structure on the Temple Mount is this building, the Dome of the Rock. It was erected between 689 and 691 AD. As you can see, it is a masterpiece of Islamic architecture. It sits over an outcropping of bed rock that many believe may have been the site of the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Temple that was destroyed in 70 AD. Others believe it was the altar of the temple since it has a built-in drainage system for blood. To the north of the Dome is a small cupola called "The Dome of the Spirit." It is located about 250 feet north of the Dome of the Rock almost the length of a football field. Some scholars believe this cupola marks the true location of the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temple.

Let's take a closer look at the Dome of the Spirit. As you can see, it sits on top of an outcropping of bed rock that has been given a smooth finish. Many believe that this is where the Ark of the Covenant sat. Supporting the thesis that the Temple was located to the north of the Dome of the Rock is the fact that the Eastern Gate is located in front of the dome of the Spirit and not in front of the Dome of the Rock.

The reason the location of the Eastern Gate is so important is because the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal that when a red heifer was sacrificed to provide ashes for ceremonial cleansing of the Temple Mount, the sacrifice took place on the pinnacle of the Mount of Olives, and the High Priest would stand on the Temple steps and watch the sacrifice while looking directly over the

Eastern Gate. Well, as you can see from this shot, the Dome of the Spirit is directly in front of the pinnacle of the Mount of Olives. And this angle will show you that the Dome of the Spirit is almost directly in front of the Eastern Gate.

Now, what we have shown you up on the Temple Mount raises a very serious question. If the Temple was located to the north of the Dome of the Rock, at that little Dome of the Spirit then what in the world is that outcropping of bedrock that's underneath the Dome of the Rock? Well, we are told in 1 Kings 8:64 that when Solomon dedicated the Temple, he wanted to sacrifice so many animals in fact he wanted to sacrifice 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep that he built a special altar it says on the Temple Mound for that sacrifice. And many people believe that the bedrock underneath the Dome of the Rock is that special altar that Solomon built, because it has drains in it for blood and is clearly an altar.

The reason no one knows for sure where the Temple was located on the Temple Mount is because the Temple Mount is under the administrative authority of the Muslims and they will not allow any archaeological digs on the Temple Mount, because today they deny that the Jewish Temple was ever located there and they are afraid archeological digs might verify that truly it was located there. That has not always been the position of the Muslim authorities in the past they were ready to agree that the Temple was located on the Temple Mount and I can prove that to you beyond a shadow of a doubt. You see this publication here this publication was put out by the Muslim authorities in 1924. And at the very beginning it says, "The Temple Mount identity with the site of Solomon's Temple is beyond dispute." But to admit that today is not politically correct. Let's go now to the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount.

Part 6

The debate about the location of the Temple relates to this particular gate which is called the Eastern Gate, or the Beautiful Gate, or the Golden Gate. Here's the reason it relates to it. When the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed that the High Priest stood on the steps of the Temple and look directly over the Eastern Gate to the pinnacle of the Mount of Olives while they were sacrificing the red heifer. Those who believe that the Temple was located at the Dome of the Rock responded by saying, "Well what happened is the Eastern gate was moved north about 250 yards when the walls were rebuilt by Suleiman the Magnificence in the 1500's." But in 1969 an American student named Jim Fleming, who later became a renowned teacher of biblical archaeology, accidentally discovered that the ancient Eastern Gate is located directly beneath this one.

Here's what happened Jim was a student here in Jerusalem in 1969 and he decided to come over here on morning and photograph this Eastern gate. But it had been raining for like 3 days and the ground was very soft, and these limestone coverings on the tombs had absorbed a lot of water and so when Jim got ready to photograph he climbed up on one of those tombs and the limestone gave way and he fell 8 feet into a mass grave. Now I don't know about you, that been me I would have climbed on air to get out. But he realized he had a great opportunity and so he

whipped out his camera which had a flash on it, and he started photographing in a circle, just like that. Later on when the film was developed the picture he took looking directly at the wall showed the tops of the arches of the ancient Eastern Gate sticking up above the skulls and bones in this mass grave. So we now know for certain that the Eastern Gate was located directly underneath this one. Now that we know that the Ancient Eastern Gate was located directly beneath this gate, the argument that the Temple might have been located some 250 feet north of the Dome of the Rock is a much a stronger argument, of course it is not proved but it makes the argument much stronger. If so that means the Jewish Temple could be rebuilt without touching the Dome of the Rock. And the Dome of the Rock would be in the Court of the Gentiles. It is going to be interesting to see how that all plays out.

Before we leave this very special spot I want to tell you a very personal story. I am going to find a shady place to sit and I will relate it to you.

Part 7

In 1967 when the Six Day War broke out I was a professor of International Law and Politics, and because I was following international politics I followed that Six Day War very carefully. I will never forget that when the war was over I read a very interesting news article one day that said when the Israeli's decided that they were going to take this Old City which was under the occupation of the Jordanian forces, the logical way to do it was to hit it from the west over at the Joffa Gate, certainly not here because all this territory was under Jordanian control. But the Israeli's always relying on surprise decided no we are going to hit from this side, we'll come around under the cover of darkness and hit from this side. And it said that while they were discussing that they discussed the possibility of blowing open this gate with satchel charges and catching the Jordanians by surprise. Then it said that when that suggestion was made an Orthodox Rabbi was there who said, "No, you will do that over my dead body because that gate is supposed to be closed until the Messiah returns."

Well I had no idea what that was all about folks. I had grown up in a church that did not teach Bible prophecy. I knew nothing about Bible prophecy. So I got out a concordance and I looked up the word gate and I started looking at verses and guess what? I discovered Ezekiel 44 which has a prophecy that says, "This gate is going to be closed, and it will not reopen until the Messiah comes."

Then I got out the Encyclopedia Britannica and I started reading about the Eastern Gate and it said that no one knows for sure why this wall was closed. But the best story is that when these walls were being rebuilt in the 1500's by Suleiman the Magnificence that a rumor swept Jerusalem that the Messiah was coming. And they called the Rabbis in and said, "What does this mean?" "When the Messiah comes He is going to come from the east, He is going to go through the Eastern Gate and He is going to run all of you aliens out and He is going to become the Messiah the ruler over the earth." They dismissed the Rabbis and the order was given, "Seal up the Eastern Gate. Put a Muslim cemetery in front of it, that will take care of the Messiah

because He won't walk in a Muslim cemetery and He can't go through a gate that is closed." Well folks that is a special story for me because that is what got me interested in Bible prophecy. I was hooked from that point on. I could not believe that I was seeing a prophecy fulfilled before my very eyes in the 20th century at that time. And so I started studying Bible prophecy intently. That is why I call this gate the gate to prophecy as far it concerns me personally.

Part 8

As we bring this study of the Temple Mount to a close. I'd like to summarize for you what the Bible has to say about the Jewish Temples both past and future. It says for example that there were two temples in the past. The first was the Temple of Solomon and the second was the temple built after the Babylonian captivity which was renovated by King Herod and became known as Herod's Temple. Those are commonly referred to as the First and Second Temples. The Third Temple will be built either before or during the Tribulation. And that of course is going to be the Tribulation Temple that the Antichrist will enter and will defile by proclaiming himself to be God.

Incidentally, that Third Temple could be erected overnight, because all they would have to do is go up on the Temple Mount and put up a tent type temple like the Tabernacle of Moses and start offering sacrifices immediately. And then begin building a permanent temple around that and over it. The Third Temple, or the Tribulation Temple, will be destroyed when Jesus Christ returns, because when He returns there is going to be the greatest earthquake in history. It says every mountain will be lowered; every valley will be raised up. It says every island will be moved and it indicates that Jerusalem will be lifted up and become the highest point on the earth. Also it indicates that the earthquake will be so great that the topography of this area will be totally changed. So totally changed that a new platform for the Temple will be provided much, much larger than this one, 2 or 3 times larger and that will be the platform of the great and glorious Millennial Temple from which Jesus Christ will reign over all the earth. What a day that will be.

You know there are many descriptions of it in the Scriptures; one of the most glorious is to be found in Isaiah 2. But one of my favorites which is an echo of Isaiah 2 is found in the book of Micah in chapter 4; listen to what Micah says about that day when the Lord will reign from here on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. He says, "It shall come to pass in the latter days, (that is these times), That the mountain of the LORD's house, Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And people will flow to it."

You know, in Bible prophecy when the word, mountain is used, it is always used as a symbol for a kingdom, unless the mountain is specifically named. So, what it's saying here is that the kingdom of the Lord's house will be established on top of all of the kingdoms and be exalted above all of the nations. Verse 2, "Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain to the kingdom of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob (the Millennial Temple); He will teach us His ways, we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go

forth; and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” Verse 3, “He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations of far off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.” How long have we dreamed of that day. And then he ends, “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. The world will experience 1,000 years of perfect peace. When I read Scriptures like that everything within me cries out, “Maranatha! Maranatha! Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus.”

Closing

Well, folks, that’s our program for this week. I hope it was a blessing to you, and I hope you will be back with us next week when we will take a look at a third mountain of Jerusalem, Mount Zion. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministrie’s, saying, “Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near.”

End of Program