

IS IT TIME FOR THE TEMPLE?

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

The current situation in Israel is one of constant tension and turmoil. Yet in the midst of Arab aggression and opposition, it appears that Jewish interest in rebuilding their Temple continues to grow. In the last few months there have been a number of events that have taken place that appears to be ratcheting up the interest level of the Temple movement in Israel among Jews. One of the more interesting developments has been the reestablishment of the Sanhedrin after 1600 years of absence.

THE SANHEDRIN

The Sanhedrin was a council of 71 rabbis that governed Israel under Roman rule during the time of Christ near the Temple and continued to function outside of Jerusalem (primarily in Tiberias) until around A.D. 400. The reinstatement of the Sanhedrin is seen as a harbinger for the rebuilding of the Temple and the coming of Messiah. Orthodox Jews believe that a body like the Sanhedrin is needed today to oversee the rebuilding of the Temple and to identify Messiah should he appear on the scene.

The body met for the first time in October 2004 in Tiberias (the place where they last gathered) but now meet monthly in Jerusalem in order to issue rulings on matters related to Israeli Judaism. Their goal is to eventually become the governing body for the modern nation of Israel, which would replace their current social democracy. Orthodox sects are known for following their specific leaders as opposed to valuing unity between themselves. This is why the founding of the Sanhedrin is viewed by many within the Orthodox community as miraculous that causes them to believe that great things are on the horizon for the Jewish people of Israel.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Hebrew Christian scholar has noted the following:

The significance of Israel's reinstating the Sanhedrin may be another event that leaves in place the possibility of how the Lord will work out His will with His people. Almost sixty years after a 1900 year absence, the nation of Israel came into existence. Jewish people from the four corners of the world have made *aliyah* to live in the Land. The Temple Institute in Jerusalem has reconstructed the instruments for Jewish Temple worship; Jewish men determined to be descendants of Aaron, known as the *Kohanim*, are being trained in ritual practices to serve as Temple priests; and now we have the establishment of an authoritative body to speak to the nation of Israel on matters of Jewish religion. This is significant in light of such passages as Zechariah 12:10 and Hosea 5:15, which speak of a time when the people of Israel will be led into the acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah. The existence of a religious authority for the entire nation will facilitate the multitudes coming to faith.¹

It is important to note that as a result of the June 2005 meeting of the Sanhedrin, they have issued a call for specific plans to rebuild the Temple. "The Israeli rabbinical council involved with re-establishing the Sanhedrin, is calling upon all groups involved in Temple Mount research to prepare detailed architectural plans for the reconstruction of the Jewish Holy Temple."² This demonstrates that increasingly the new Sanhedrin

believes that it is taking steps to prepare the modern state of Israel for a new Temple and the coming of Messiah. These stage-setting steps are things that are in concert with the end time events that will take place during a future era known as the tribulation.

In order to specifically carry out the Sanhedrin's call to prepare architectural plans for rebuilding the Temple, "the group will establish a forum of architects and engineers to begin plans for rebuilding the Temple—a move fraught with religious and political volatility."³ The Sanhedrin is also "calling on the Jewish people to contribute toward the acquisition of materials for the purpose of rebuilding the Temple—including the gathering and preparation of prefabricated, disassembled portions to be stored and ready for rapid assembly, 'in the manner of King David.'"⁴

READY TO REBUILD

In 1992 Randall Price and I wrote a book about current efforts in Israel to rebuild Israel's Third Temple called *Ready to Rebuild*.⁵ Frankly, this book was the first in the American Evangelical world to introduce many to the growing Temple movement in Israel. Now, 13 years later, there are even more organizations and Israeli Jews working toward this goal. I recall during a trip to Israel a few years ago our visit to the Temple Institute in West Jerusalem. (This is the group of orthodox Jews who have already reconstructed all of the implements that will be needed for the Third Temple.) The young lady who led our tour of their Institute was questioned by our group as to whether they really believed that a new Temple would actually be built upon the Temple Mount where the Arab Dome of the Rock now stands. She stated very clearly and repeatedly that they were 100% sure that a Jewish Temple would one day be reconstructed upon that Mount. When asked how she thought this would happen, she said that she had no idea but knew that the Lord would bring it to pass in order for the end of days to unfold.

The main problem facing those who would rebuild the Temple is political in nature. Israel recaptured the Old City of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount in the Six-Day War (1967) and then Moshe Diah returned day-to-day control of the Temple Mount to the Muslims. Until Israel comes to the point where they are willing to exercise political control over the Temple Mount, they will not be able to restore the Temple. Increasingly, there are new organizations that arise among the orthodox Jews seeking to regain hegemony over their most holy place.

One of the newer organizations that have recently arisen to join older ones like the Temple Mount Faithful and the Ateret Cohanim is the group called "Revava," led by David Ha'ivri. The goal of Revava is to restore Jewish sovereignty over the Temple Mount. Their tactics include an effort every month to take a group of 10,000 Jews or more up to the Temple Mount.⁶ The 35-acre Temple Mount platform is the most volatile real estate upon planet earth. The mere (unsuccessful) attempt by Revava to take 10,000 Jews up to the Temple Mount in order to pray resulted in over 100,000 Muslims in Indonesia rallying "for continued Islamic dominance over the Mount."⁷ The police prevented the Jews from ascending to the most holy place in all of Judaism, so they carried on a demonstration near the Temple Mount. "Demonstrators sang songs and danced, and chanted slogans about reclaiming the Mount for Jewish worship. Several Israeli Knesset members delivered speeches about the importance of the Temple Mount to Jewish tradition."⁸

The point that needs to be made is that Israeli Jews are increasingly interested in rebuilding their Temple. It appears that the more the Islamic militants increase their terrorist pressure upon the Jewish nation, the more religious Jews step up their efforts

to focus upon rebuilding the Third Temple. "Islamic Jihad issued a press release claiming Jews were planning to 'attack' the Mount, which they would explode the entire region and open an unprecedented confrontation with the 'Zionist entity.'"⁹ In fact, on June 6, 2005, when Israel was celebrating the 38th anniversary of Jerusalem's liberation a number of Jews were allowed to go upon the Temple Mount. This resulted in about 300 Palestinians throwing stones at the Jews. "They came from Al Aqsa, took off their belts, and ran through the Jewish Israeli group to evict them while trying to throw stones," noted a Jewish police spokesman.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

In spite of contemporary turmoil, Israel's Third Temple will one day be rebuilt as Dr. Price and I demonstrated in *Ready To Rebuild* from Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 11:1-2; 13:14-15. Few observers of world events ever thought Israel would become a nation again, but it did occur in 1948. Yet, there will be a rebuilt temple by the middle of the seven-year tribulation in order to facilitate the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

I have often taught that the long-awaited permission for the Jews to rebuild their Temple will likely be part of the covenant between Antichrist and Israel that starts the seven-year tribulation after the rapture. It appears to me that the Temple will be rebuilt and supervised supernaturally by the two witnesses during the first half of the tribulation. Since one of the two witnesses will most likely be Elijah, this would mean that the ministry of Elijah should tell us more about the ministry of the two witnesses. Malachi 4:4-5 says, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. An he will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." Perhaps the ministry of Elijah, where he will help the Jewish people "get right with God," before the return of the Lord will involve their Third Temple, until commandeered by Antichrist.

Regardless of how the Lord works out the details, His plan will be brought to pass. In the meantime, many of the current events now taking place in and around Jerusalem and the Temple Mount are setting the stage for what will be a string of events that will usher in the second coming of Christ. Meanwhile, the church is looking for the rapture, where Christ will take us in an instance to be with Himself for all eternity. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel Ministries Newsletter* (Fall 2004/Winter 2005), p. 4.

² "New 'Sanhedrin' plans Rebuilding of Temple: Israeli rabbinical body calls for architectural blueprint," *WorldNetDaily.com* (June 8, 2005).

³ "New 'Sanhedrin.'"

⁴ "New 'Sanhedrin.'"

⁵ Thomas Ice and Randall Price, *Ready To Rebuild: The Imminent Plan to Rebuild the Last Days Temple* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1992).

⁶ Aaron Klein, "Temple Mount leaders vow Jewish sovereignty: Group seeking to reclaim Israeli control of site threatens monthly protests" *WorldNetDaily.com* (April 18, 2005).

⁷ Klein, "Temple Mount leaders."

⁸ Klein, "Temple Mount leaders."

⁹ Klein, "Temple Mount leaders"

¹⁰ Aaron Klein, "Teens stone Jews at Temple Mount: Hundreds of Palestinians emerge from Al Aqsa"

mosque to attack" *WorldNetDaily.com* (June 6, 2005).