

SEED & BREAD

Otis Q. Sellers, Founder

Titus leveled the temple and destroyed the city of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Romans rebuilt the city in 135 AD as a Roman city, but the temple has never been restored. Jerusalem remains today as a divided city, held sacred by Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

Yet the glory of Jerusalem shall someday be restored. Isaiah 33:20 promises, **“Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home, a tabernacle that will not be taken down; not one of its stakes will ever be removed, nor will any of its cords be broken.”** This cannot describe the war-torn and splintered Jerusalem today. It describes the glorious city as it will exist in the kingdom of God to come. The prophet Ezekiel was taken by the hand of the LORD to view the future Jerusalem. In chapters 40-47 of his book, he describes Jerusalem and the temple in God-inspired detail as they will exist in that coming kingdom.

Jerusalem’s history will continue through the thousand years of Christ’s *Parousia*. Zechariah 14 describes Jerusalem as being the center of worship even after the stunning events of the tribulation period described in its earlier chapters. Revelation 20:9 portrays the “beloved city” as the center of Satan’s last deception during the Little Season that follows the thousand years. Though Jerusalem is not mentioned during the following Great White Throne period, we next see the city in the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21. In verse 2, John writes, **“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”** This is the glorious, ultimate Jerusalem. Revelation 21:22 tells us, **“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”** Thus, God Himself permanently takes up residence in the city.

When we consider Jerusalem’s checkered past and contrast it with its magnificent future, we must acknowledge that this will yet be the most significant of all cities. Its place in the plans and purposes of God far exceeds any other human city that has ever been built. Yet ultimately, the glory of the city will be its inhabitants. As Revelation 22:3 says, **“The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.”** God and His servants will be the true glory of the city, and it will be great indeed. The Psalmist certainly told the truth when he said, **“Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!”** May we all be alive to see this city in all its splendor in that day.

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Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future

By Nathan C. Johnson

Jerusalem is an ancient city with a mysterious past and a glorious future. The first time we read of this city is in Genesis 14:18, where we are introduced to the man Melchizedek, the king of Salem, who came to support Abraham after his great victory over four kings. We never learn exactly who Melchizedek was, nor who his people were. Next we read of Jerusalem in Genesis 33:18, which is two generations later in the days of Jacob; Salem is called a “city of Shechem.” It apparently was no longer an independent city, but was under the control of Shechem and Hamor, king of the Hivites. We are not told what happened to Melchizedek or the original inhabitants of the city. Yet the absolute identification of Salem with Jerusalem is made plain in Psalm 76:2, where Asaph wrote, **“In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion.”** This statement demonstrates that what earlier was called Salem later became Zion, the city of David, or Jerusalem.

We next encounter Jerusalem in Joshua 10. The city was then under the control of Adonizedek, a king of the Amorites. He led a campaign of five kings against the Israelites, but the campaign failed, and he was executed. Yet it appears that his city remained unconquered at that time, despite his death. Five chapters later, Jerusalem is mentioned in marking out the territory of Judah. Joshua 15:8 says, **“And the border went up by the Valley of the Son of Hinnom to the southern slope of the Jebusite city (which is Jerusalem).”** While we are not told how this came about, apparently Jerusalem had come under control of the Jebusites. Whether the Amorite king whom Joshua defeated had ruled over Jebusites, or whether these quickly moved in when the Amorites were defeated, we do not know.

The conquest of Jerusalem by Israel appears to be a very complicated matter. We first read in Judges 1:8, soon after the death of Joshua, **“Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.”** That seems straightforward enough, until we compare it with verse 21, **“But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.”** How can this be, when in verse eight of the same

chapter we read of the city's conquest and destruction? The key to this puzzle is provided by 2 Samuel 5, which records David's final conquest of Jerusalem. There we are told in 2 Samuel 5:7, **Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David).** It appears that Jerusalem consisted of both a city and a stronghold. While the city was conquered and burned by the tribe of Judah, the stronghold was never taken, and so the Jebusites continued to dwell there until the days of David. This was true to the extent that the city was called Jebus, according to Judges 19:10-11 and 1 Chronicles 11:4-5, until David conquered it at last. He then moved his national capital there, north of Hebron, where it had been before he extended his rule from Judah over the whole land. We are told in 1 Chronicles 11:7, **Then David dwelt in the stronghold; therefore they called it the City of David.** The city was ever afterward called Jerusalem, and the stronghold Zion.

The movement for Jerusalem to become a religious center, and not just a political center, also began in the days of David. Previously, the city of Shiloh had been the chosen place where Jehovah's tabernacle was pitched and where His worship was to be carried out. However, due to Israel's wickedness and the unfaithfulness of the priest Eli, this city was destroyed by a Philistine invasion. During the years of Samuel's judgeship and Saul's reign, no new location was chosen.

David prefaced his choice of a new city for the center of God's worship with his decision to bring the ark of God out of its long exile in Kirjath Jearim. Rather than reuniting it with the tabernacle pitched at Gibeon, from which it had long been separated, he chose instead to bring it to his capital in Jerusalem. Though his first attempt was aborted, it was not because God objected to the relocation of the ark. Rather, David had failed to use the method God had commanded for transporting the ark. Later, after he successfully installed the ark in a tent that he had pitched for it in Jerusalem, David formulated a plan to build a permanent house for the ark—an established temple rather than a movable tabernacle. God approved his plan, but put off its execution to the days of King David's successor. David had been a warrior and shed much blood, but his son and successor, King Solomon, would be a man of peace, and so he would be the one to build the permanent house for Jehovah's name.

When Jehovah stopped a plague that He was bringing against Jerusalem, the temple site was chosen at the threshing floor of a man named Ornan the Jebusite. Why this Jebusite was still living at Jerusalem after the conquest of the Jebusites by David and his men is not stated, but we can speculate that he must have allied himself with David and with his God. The prophet Gad told David to set up an altar to Jehovah at Ornan's threshing floor, so David purchased the site and set up the altar to offer sacrifices on it. Apparently, this former threshing floor became the choice for the final location of the temple, as we read in 2 Chronicles 3:1.

Now 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. When he was dedicating this house, he prayed a long prayer in 1 Kings 8 asking Jehovah to accept this temple as His house, and Jehovah replied in 1 Kings 9:3, **"I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually."** Forever is two words in Hebrew, *ad olam*, and means for the longest duration and in perpetuity or for the outflow. Olam particularly has to do with the future kingdom of God. Jerusalem was now chosen to be God's city, not just in Israel's former kingdom, but in God's future government on earth as well. The importance of Jerusalem in the plans and purposes of God was established and could not be changed.

Since Jerusalem was the choice for the location of the house of Jehovah, it immediately became the nation of Israel's beloved city. David himself wrote of Jerusalem in Psalm 122:9, **"Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good."** Jerusalem became a prayer and a blessing in Psalm 122:6, **"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; 'May they prosper who love you.'"** Psalm 87:2-3 declares, **"The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!"** That a Divinely-implanted love for Jerusalem was infused into the hearts of His people is clear from the magnificent words of the prophets concerning it. For example, in Psalm 137:5-6, we read, **"If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy."**

Sadly, as the people of Israel rebelled against Jehovah, worshiped idols, and sinned against Him more and more, Jerusalem's eventual destruction was prophesied. Micah 3:12 declares, **"Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest."** This prophecy was fulfilled when Babylon destroyed the city and the temple.

Yet the story of Jerusalem is not finished, since Jehovah graciously allowed a restoration of the land and city. The book of Nehemiah shows how the walls of the city were rebuilt in order to restore its protection, and the book of Ezra tells about the rebuilding of the temple to restore the Divine religion that God gave to Israel. The temple existed for centuries after this, and the Lord Jesus Christ visited there Himself many times. Yet when He was leaving the temple for one of the last times, as the disciples were pointing out the buildings there to Him, He made a grim prediction in Matthew 24:2. **"Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."** This prophecy was fulfilled when the Roman general