

Reason 16: Jerusalem the focus of world attention



Figure 1 The Dome of the Rock, the location of the first and second Temple

There are over 10,000 cities on the earth today, and if you count back from the beginning of civilization there are probably 100,000's of thousand cities that have existed. One city stands out in the world when we consider all these cities; it's the city of Jerusalem.

The population of the earth is over 6 billion, and over 1/2 of that population has a religious link to this city. Muslims claim it's a Muslim city where their prophet Mohammad ascended into heaven in a night journey from Mt. Moriah over 1300-years ago. Beside Mecca and Medina, Jerusalem is considered sacred for 1.5 Billion Muslims, 20% of the earth population. Christians also consider Jerusalem sacred, it's the

place where Jesus was killed on the cross, it's the city Jesus claimed to be King and Messiah. Today there are over 2 Billion Christians, Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox who claim a link to Jerusalem. In addition to Muslims and Christians, Jews consider Jerusalem to be their possession, the capital to their nation. Though Jews only number about 5 to 6 million in the Middle East, Jerusalem is the focus of the world as these major world religions each claim Jerusalem's important link to their faiths.

Background of Jerusalem



Figure 2 The sacrifice of Isaac

The Bible first refers to the city of Jerusalem in Genesis 14, when Abraham meets the king of Salem (Jerusalem), Melchizedek, who is also priest of Most High God. Abraham had earlier defeated the kings of the east and rescued his nephew Lot; Abraham offered Melchizedek a tithe of the spoil (10%), Melchizedek blessed Abraham in the name of the Most High God. This event took place 4000-years ago, after Abraham was called into the land from Haran in Syria, where Terah his father had settled when he migrated from Ur in ancient Babylon (Genesis 11:37).

Later Abraham was tested; God had given Abraham a son, Isaac, in his old age. Sarah his 90-year old wife bore him a son when Abraham was 100. After a time God told Abraham to go to the land of Moriah (Jerusalem) and offer his son up as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:22) in a test of his faith. God prevented the sacrifice and promised that through Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham.

Genesis 22:16-18 (16) and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

- (17) I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,
 (18) and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

One thousand years later, Abraham descendent King David purchased the Moriah site to build a Temple for God. His son Solomon would complete the Temple in 960 B.C., the Babylonians would destroy the Temple in 586 B.C. along with the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem at that time was destroyed city and could have easily vanished from history like thousands of other cities in the world. The city of Jerusalem is mentioned by name 810 times in over 763 verses.

Promises for Jerusalem

Over 2500 years, after Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon, God sent Zechariah the prophet, along with others back to the destroyed city. Sixty years before Zechariah's arrival Jerusalem the city, its walls and buildings along with the Temple built by Solomon was destroyed by the armies of Babylon. When he arrived it was collection of ruins, but God through Zechariah promised big things for this abandoned city.

Zechariah 8:3-8

- (3) Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain.
 (4) Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age.
 (5) And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.
 (6) Thus says the LORD of hosts: If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in my sight, declares the LORD of hosts?
 (7) Thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west

country,
 (8) and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness."



God promised he would dwell in the city and the Jews would return to the city again. Zechariah also wrote Jerusalem would be the focus world attention in the last days.

Figure 3 Israel and Jerusalem surrounded by Muslim nations.

Jerusalem the focus of the world

Zechariah arrived in Jerusalem in 520 B.C., along with other Jews from Persia, the situation seemed bleak. Jews did not want to return to a city with no walls, surrounded with enemies and surrounded with enemies on every side, they had grown accustomed to the peace and security of the Persian Empire. Zechariah returned to proclaim the future of the city, the peace and prosperity when God would dwell in the city. Zechariah also promised a day of when the nations of the world would gather against it.

Zechariah 12:1-3,9-10 Jerusalem and the one pierced

(1) The oracle of the word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him:

(2) "Behold, I am about to make **Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples**. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah.

(3) On that day **I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples**. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And **all the nations of the earth will gather against it**.

(9) And on that day **I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem**.

(10) "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when **they look on me, on him whom they have pierced**, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Zechariah wrote 2500-years ago that this abandoned destroyed city would be the focus of world attention. He described events taking place 2500 years in the future. Today Jerusalem is the focus of the world; over ½ the earth's population has a spiritual link to the city. 1.5 Billion Muslims, 2 Billion Christians and 20 million Jews.

Zechariah wrote over 550-years before the death of Jesus Christ and the beginning of Christianity, he wrote over 1000-years before Islam's founder Mohammad was even born. He wrote when the Jews were a small helpless people under the control of the Persian Kingdom. How could he have known the significant role of the city Jerusalem two thousand years in the future?

Why is Jerusalem the focus of the world?

Zechariah could not have known what would take place in the future, unless he received the information outside of the natural order.



Figure 4 The Pope and Muslim leaders at site of the Third Temple

world.

3. In 1948, after World War II, the nation of Israel was established by a vote of the nations. After a series of wars, the Jews took East Jerusalem from the Arab Muslims, including the Dome of the Rock. This was the first time a Jewish nation had control of the site in over 2000-years. A growing movement of Jews in Israel has the goal to rebuild the Temple, making it the *Third Temple* on the site since King David's Solomon built the first Temple 3000-years ago.

1. Christianity became the dominant religion in the world linking Jerusalem with over 2 billion of the earth's 7 billion people.

2. Islam began in 610 AD and spread after the death of Mohammad from Mecca to Europe by 732 AD. Islam claimed to be the final and true religion, succeeding both Christianity and Judaism. Mohammad claimed to ascend from Mt. Moriah into heaven, where God confirmed to him the faith of Islam. Muslim's when they conquered Jerusalem from the Romans (Byzantines) built the Dome of the Rock on the location of Solomon's Temple, the most holy place to the Jews.

Jerusalem is viewed as a Muslim city, by the Muslim



Planning the Temple

Figure 5 Jewish plans for the Third Temple with Dome of the Rock burning in the background (Artist rendering)

4. Muslim's and the world (United Nations) consider East Jerusalem a Muslim possession despite the fact that the nation of Israel controls it. The Jews who are in the land consider Jerusalem a Jewish city and the eternal capital of Israel.

5. The only claim the Jews and Israel have to the city of Jerusalem is the Bible, God gave the city to the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) as the capital city of the nation. The world rejects the authority of scripture; therefore the world rejects the claims of the Jewish people. This put the Bible and the Jews at odds with the world.

Old City - Temple Mount

