

The History Channel: Messages of Israel's Historians
Shockwave: The Sacking of Jerusalem
2 Kings 25:1-21

Intro: These five dates will help you in your reading of the Old Testament and keeping the history straight. They are marked on the timeline in the lobby.

2000 B.C.—Call of Abraham

1000 B.C.—Coronation of David

922 B.C.—Divided Kingdom (Judah in south, Israel north)

722 B.C.—Fall of Samaria (capital of Israel)

587 B.C.—Fall of Jerusalem (capital of Judah)

Moving from Solomon to the destruction of Jerusalem means we are jumping over some 350 years of history concerning the descendants of Abraham. The next three weeks we will be looking at books which deal with the time of the Exile in Babylon and the return from Exile. These events take place from about 550 B.C. to 400 B.C. Then we will jump back in time to touch the Books of Poetry, the Writings of the Old Testament: Job, Ps, Pr, Eccl, &SS. (Remember, you should submit your poetry, songs, paintings, etc., for display in our lobby and on our web site during this series).

Jerusalem is the center of the religious universe in both the ancient and the modern world. For the Jews, it is Zion, the place where Solomon built the Temple. For Christians it is the place where Jesus died and rose from the dead. For Islam it is "the land of the prophets," the place Muhammad ascended to heaven to visit with the prophets gone before him, and one of the three holiest sites of their religion.

No other city in the world stirs such deep emotion, devotion, and passion.

David made Jerusalem his capital city. This is the most significant step in its ascendancy among the Hebrews. His son and successor, King Solomon, built the Temple in Jerusalem. Prior to this the Hebrews had only tents where the Ark of the Covenant resided. This was their first permanent house of worship.

I have never been to the Holy City physically, though in my mind and imagination I often walk its streets. Jerusalem is important to me, not because it was the site of the temple, but because Jesus my Lord walked and taught and died there.

I. Houses of Worship Are Temporary Structures--Nothing Here Lasts Forever

A. This building in which we now worship is supported by 800 pilings driven 80 feet into the earth. Pile caps on these pilings are as large as rooms in your home. The superstructure is supported by enormous steel trusses that run from a common point above the organ bay and fan out to rest on steel supports along the southern perimeter of the building.

Above these three catwalks that you can see delineated in the ceiling is a space 15 feet high filled with triangles of steel. All floors in this building, including the elevated floors, are poured concrete. All studs in this building are steel.

And one day this building will become rubble just like Solomon's Temple became rubble.

B. Virtually all existing cities on this planet are built on the rubble of previous generations. That is why we so frequently dig up graves, pottery, and artifacts when we shape the earth.

C. Objects and buildings sacred to us may not be sacred to the coming generations. They may be discarded, turned into amusements or displays, or converted to museums.

D. All places of worship are temporary on this planet.

***In Mexico City sits the oldest cathedral in this hemisphere. It sits next to the site of the holy shrines of the Aztecs, the temples to the gods of water and sun. You can tour those ruins. The enormous stones from those temples, along with their precious metals, were dragged about 200 yards and used to construct the cathedral that dominates the center of the largest city in the world. It is literally built from materials salvaged from the pagan temples.

***While I was preparing this sermon at my kitchen table, a dove flew up to the door of the kitchen and beat on its window panes with her wings. She was looking for a flimsy nest that she built in our garage, but the garage door was closed. I got up and opened the garage door. She looked at that open door from her perch on our neighbor's roof, and flew right in to check on her nesting place. Then she began to fly back and forth, in and out, building her nest one strand at a time.

The doves build a nest of sticks and straw on top of our garage door opener every year. It shakes every time the door goes up and down. We have to be careful not to run over the chicks when they finally tumble off the garage door opener and flutter to the concrete floor. These bird nests seem so insubstantial, but they illustrate the true nature of all things terrestrial.

II. The True House of Worship is the Human Heart

A. We have been talking about the *leb*, the heart. We saw that David was described as “a man after God’s own heart,” that he was chosen for the kingship by God who looks, not on outward appearance, but on the heart. We saw that Solomon, David’s son, having picked up from his father this all-important perspective on the heart, when he was given the opportunity to have whatever he wished, asked God for a discerning heart. Even though this father-son team built the temple in Jerusalem, they knew that the human heart was the true seat of devotion and worship.

B. Another son of David, Jesus of Nazareth, strolled down the streets of the Holy City, Jerusalem, and saw the rebuilt temple. His disciples, mostly boys from the outback in Galilee, were so impressed with this massive place of worship. They called it to the attention of Jesus. He said, “Do you see all these things? I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2).

Jesus cleansed that temple, driving out the moneychangers, and the caretakers of the temple challenged his authority to do so. He told them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:19). The religious authorities were amazed and angered by his remarks. John the Apostle explains, “But the temple he spoke of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken” (John 2:21-22).

These remarks about the temple were brought up at the trial of Jesus and were largely responsible for the intense hatred that the religious authorities harbored in their hearts against him.

C. When Jesus died upon the cross, the VEIL OF THE TEMPLE was torn from top to bottom.

1. This was the veil that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies. It was the most sacred—and most protected—spot in all of the Hebrew nation.

2. The veil was torn from top to bottom indicating that God did the tearing on the day that Jesus died.

3. The true veil, the true Holy of Holies, was Jesus Christ himself. Through his death he gained access for all of us to the very heart and presence of God. We come boldly to the throne of grace because of what Jesus did.

D. The first martyr of the church, Stephen, stated it plainly, and they killed him for it: the tabernacle “remained in the land until the time of David, who enjoyed God’s favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built the house for him.

“However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord (Isaiah 66:1).

III. We Look for a New Jerusalem without a Temple

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God (Revelation 21:1-3).

A. It is amazing what heat will do. Boiling water will melt away the chocolate on any pan. A smelting fire will melt any pan. The fires of Mount Doom will melt Frodo’s ring. And the City of Jerusalem was destined for burning no matter what the king of Babylon did.

B. The true Holy City is the place where God dwells and where we will one day dwell. This is the sacred place where God wants us gathered.

C. The true temple is the temple of our hearts. All God ever wanted was for us to be his people. All along he has wanted to be our God, the desire of our hearts. He wants to be with us. That is the end that he seeks.

Conclusion: Does the God of this universe own your heart?