

*“I did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).*

## The Third Temple - Physical or Spiritual?

“But the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says, ‘Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool. What house will you build Me, says the Lord, or what is the place of My rest? Has not My hand made all these things?’” (Acts 7:48-50 MKJV)

**Has God ordained** that there should be a third Temple on the Temple Mount, where Solomon’s Temple once stood and where the Muslim Dome of the Rock (Mosque of Omar) and Al-Aqsa Mosque now dominate the Jerusalem landscape? Should there be a physical third Jewish Temple anywhere for that matter? How does a restored Temple square with the belief that God did away with the earthly Temple in 70 A.D. to be no more, seeing Christ fulfilled all things?

At His crucifixion, the veil to the Holy of Holies was torn in two from top to bottom. According to the New Testament, Jesus’ death and resurrection fulfilled the ceremonial sacrifices and solemn feasts of Israel performed by the Levitical priesthood over the previous fifteen centuries. These sacrifices and feasts pointed to the offering up of the Lamb of God for the sins of Israel and the world. What further need is there of a restored Temple, with priesthood and sacrifices? Would this not be an effrontery to God?

Forty years after Christ’s time on earth, God’s wrath was poured out in full on Israel for having turned away from Him to other gods. Rome came and destroyed everything - the Temple, the city, and the nation. This was prophesied by Jesus and Israel’s prophets centuries, even millennia, before Him.

But in this century, the nation and the city have been restored to the Jews. The establishment for the Jews of a portion of the original nation of Israel was declared by a majority vote in the UN on November 29, 1947, and on May 14, 1948, Israel was reborn. After 1900 years of being scattered to the ends of the earth, the Israelites have returned to their land.

The throne of Israel at Jerusalem has been referred to, in Scripture, as King David’s. The Scriptures declare that Jesus Christ would return, not as a lamb for sacrifice to take away sin, but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to sit on the throne of David. The name of the first Prime Minister of modern Israel was David Ben Gurion. Ben Gurion means “son of a lion.”

I’m not saying Ben Gurion was the Messiah Yeshua (he wasn’t), but I suggest that God isn’t above putting His mark on historical events, in order to let mankind learn He’s in control of all matters, great and small.

**I’ve been reading** *Messiah’s Coming Temple: Ezekiel’s Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple* by Schmitt and Laney. This book declares the Temple will soon be rebuilt. It is reported that all materials for the construction are ready and persons in place to perform the ceremonies. More specifically, the authors believe it’ll be the Temple described in

Ezekiel's vision, one that has strikingly different features from the former first and second Temples, and one that has never existed to this day.

What gives? Aren't born-again believers in Christ the new and permanent Living Temple of God, made without hands? Aren't they His Body, His Church, His Assembly, replacing the old that was done away to make room for the fulfillment of the real and permanent, as determined from above? John records an event between Jesus and the Jews:

“And His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘The zeal of Your House has eaten Me up.’ Then the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do you show us, since you do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘This Temple was forty-six years building, and will you rear it up in three days?’ But He spoke of the temple of His body” (John 2:17-21 MKJV).

They killed Jesus and, in three days, He raised Himself from the dead, as He, by the Spirit of the Father, prophesied He would. But there is a spiritual Body of Christ now, comprised of those who believe in Him, which the New Testament teaches is the Temple of God.

“And what agreement does a temple of God have with idols? For you are the Temple of the living God, as God has said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (2 Corinthians 6:16 MKJV).

Ephesians 2:19-22 MKJV

(19) Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,

(20) and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

(21) in Whom every building having been fitly framed together, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord;

(22) in Whom you also are built together for a dwelling place of God through the Spirit.

“For having been drawn to Him, a living Stone, indeed rejected by men, but elect, precious with God; you also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4-5 MKJV).

**Can we reconcile** Ezekiel's vision of the Temple with the Spiritual Reality that saints experience today? Though Schmitt, Laney, and many others expect Ezekiel's Temple to be built on its former site where the Mosque of Omar sits, they also express what they see as the fulfilled spiritual reality of Ezekiel's Temple vision. So which will it be - the physical Temple, the spiritual reality, or both?

Ezekiel's description of the Temple contains several significantly new features\omissions compared to the Temple Solomon built. These characteristics didn't exist in the second Temple, which replaced Solomon's when Israel returned from Babylonian captivity. And they didn't exist when King Herod refurbished and altered the second Temple centuries later, just before Christ came into His ministry.

Schmitt and Laney present the significances of the major changes, and we lay out those below with which we agree, with further thoughts, revelation, and Scriptures. Consider as

you read this: Is the Lord speaking of a physical third Temple on earth, or is He giving a representation of the Temple of God, which all those born-again are, corporately and individually?

If each of us is created in the image of Jesus Christ, then each is the Temple of God as He is, with all the features of Ezekiel's Temple spiritually within. At the same time, we corporately make up the Body of Christ, the Assembly, the spiritual Temple of God.

Here are some of the interesting features of Ezekiel's Temple, which represent the finished work of the cross. Curiously missing are several items from Solomon's Temple:

## The Wall of Partition

“For He is our peace, He making us both one, and He has broken down the middle wall of partition between us....” (Ephesians 2:14 MKJV).

Where once was a wall of partition between the outer and inner courts of the Temple, there is none recorded by Ezekiel. Gentiles and Jews are no longer separated. We know God intended that the Gentiles be brought into His Kingdom.

Isaiah 56:6-8 HNV

(6) Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the Name of the LORD, to be His servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath from profaning it, and holds fast My covenant;

(7) even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

(8) The Lord GOD, Who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, Yet will I gather others to Him, besides His own who are gathered.

Romans 15:8-12 ESV

(8) For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,

(9) and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your Name.”

(10) And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.”

(11) And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol Him.”

(12) And again Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse will come, even He Who arises to rule the Gentiles; in Him will the Gentiles hope.”

Within us, thanks to the willing sacrificial shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ and His gift of faith, there is no more a division, within the believer, between soul (Gentile) and spirit (Jew). The partition has been removed within many, and the two are reconciled. In due time, this reconciliation will be manifest in the world.

## Court of the Women

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:27-29 ESV).

In Solomon's Temple, there was a court for the men in view of the altar of sacrifice, and a court on the other side of a wall for women. In Ezekiel's vision, there is no longer a wall separating men and women.

In Christ, there is neither male nor female.

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon My slaves and My slave women, and they shall prophesy'" (Acts 2:16-18 MKJV).

"And I also beg you, true yoke-fellow, help those women who labored in the gospel with me and with Clement, and others of my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the Book of Life" (Philippians 4:3 MKJV).

And again, within the believer, woman represents the soul and man, the spirit. The two come into harmony by the blood of Christ.

## The Laver

"And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11 ESV).

In Ezekiel's Temple, the bronze laver (wash basin) in the inner court isn't mentioned, signifying there's no need for it anymore. Those who are Christ's are washed clean by His blood and by His Word.

Ezekiel 36:24-27 MKJV

(24) For I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all lands, and will gather you into your own land.

(25) And I will **sprinkle clean waters on you, and you shall be clean**. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from your idols.

(26) And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

(27) And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them.

"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the **washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit**, Whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7 ESV).

Hebrews 10:19-22 MKJV

(19) Therefore, brothers, having boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus,

(20) by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;

(21) and having a High Priest over the house of God,

(22) let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies having been washed with pure water.**

Jesus said to His disciples, “Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3 MKJV).

When cleansed within, what further need is there of symbolic washing? This goes for both the individual and the Body of Christ.

## The Golden Lampstand

“Then Jesus spoke again to them, saying, I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12 MKJV).

Despite the many details included in his vision of the Temple, Ezekiel makes no mention of another very important furnishing in the Holy Place of the former Temple - the golden lampstand, representing the Light of the World, Jesus Christ.

Jesus has come to make our eye sound or single, attentive to Him: “The light of the body is the eye. Therefore if your eye is sound, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:22-23 MKJV)

Jesus is the antidote to darkness: “All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. **In Him was life, and the life was the light of men**” (John 1:3-4 MKJV).

“And they will see His face, and His Name will be in their foreheads. And there will be no night there. And they need no lamp, or light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light. And they will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:4-5 MKJV).

In Christ, as His brethren, born of God, we become children of Light, so we need no other candlestick in the Holy Place, for He is our Golden Candlestick.

These are wonderful revelations Schmitt and Laney are sharing with us of Ezekiel’s Temple, aren’t they?

## The Table of Showbread

Jesus said, “‘For the Bread of God is He Who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.’ Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, evermore give us this bread.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes on Me shall never thirst’” (John 6:33-35 MKJV).

In the former Temple, on every Sabbath, the priests prepared 12 loaves of bread and placed them on a golden table in the Holy Place. This signified that God was the Sustenance of Israel, the Bread from Heaven. The vision of Ezekiel’s Temple makes no mention of the table of showbread.

Schmitt says, “**There will be no need of a table of showbread in Messiah’s future Temple because Jesus Himself will be there to shepherd and feed His people.**”

I say he is right and wrong - right in that there is no further need of the symbolism or shadow, but wrong because the Temple is not future; it is the present spiritual reality, and

Jesus is here and now both shepherding and feeding His people, the members of His Body, the Temple.

Back in 1982, Marilyn and I were telling the Ratzloffs, a Missionary Alliance couple, that we hadn't been attending church for years (since 1975). Mrs. Ratzloff was rather taken aback by that, asking, "Well, where or how do you get fed, then?"

My immediate reply was, "The Shepherd feeds us!"

How does He feed us? He is that Bread of Life, and we are His Temple. We have the table of showbread within; He is the Bread within. We aren't hungry, but full.

After all, He promised, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness! **For they shall be filled**" (Matthew 5:6 MKJV).

And we have no need of a "church building" or temple.

John 6:54-58 MKJV

(54) Whoever partakes of My flesh and drinks My blood *has* eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

(55) For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.

(56) He who partakes of My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me, and I in him.

(57) As the living Father has sent Me, and I live through the Father, so he who partakes of Me, **even he shall live by Me.**

(58) This is the Bread which came down from Heaven, not as your fathers ate the manna, and died; **he who partakes of this Bread shall live forever.**

## The Golden Altar of Incense

"Therefore He is able also to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25 MKJV).

Like the golden lampstand, the altar of incense is also missing from the Holy Place in Ezekiel's Temple. Why?

We understand that incense offered up daily, morning and evening, represented prayer:

"And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having harps and golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:8 MKJV).

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer. And many incenses were given to him, so that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints on the golden altar before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God from the angel's hand" (Revelation 8:3-4 MKJV).

More specifically, the incense represented intercessory prayer, for the priests were mediators for the children of Israel. Their job was to offer sacrifices and pray for Israel. But they only represented temporarily Him Who was to come, the Perfect Priest and Sole Mediator between God and man. Jesus Christ our High Priest ever lives to make intercession for us, having offered Himself to the Father on our behalf once for all.

In Him, the saints function as priests, as God's emissaries to the world:

"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6 MKJV).

"To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:6 MKJV).

Schmitt and Laney conclude, "During the messianic kingdom there will be no need for the altar of incense in the Temple because the Messiah Himself will be present in Jerusalem and available to hear the petitions of His people. In Ezekiel's future Temple, Jesus Himself takes the place of the altar of incense."

Indeed, Jesus Christ is here and has established Himself in the hearts of the saints by the new birth and maturity in Him. We are in Jerusalem now, the New Jerusalem, the City of God, Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:22), we being the Temple of God, and within us go forth His prayers:

"Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He searching the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27 MKJV).

Ezekiel prophesies, "And the name of the city from that day shall be the LORD IS THERE" (Ezekiel 48:35 MKJV).

This prophecy has come to pass in Christ. "THERE" is a spiritual place, the Heavenly Jerusalem coming within, made possible by His sacrificial death and resurrection from the dead.

"Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you shall neither worship the Father in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem.... But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him" (John 4:21,23 MKJV).

## The Veil

"Since then we have a great High Priest Who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16 MKJV).

Ezekiel doesn't mention the veil covering the entrance to the Holy of Holies in his vision of the Temple. One may wonder why he speaks of so many other lesser details than these. This being a vision of God, we can only conclude that the exclusion of these significant items holds an important message for us. These things are no longer needed, because they have been fulfilled.

How can that be, except the Temple described is the spiritual one - His Heavenly Body made without hands - not the one built of earthly elements constructed by man? Man's hand can't perform the crowning touch of God's finished work.

We know the veil was torn from top to bottom at the crucifixion, signifying the end of the purpose it served. Jesus represented and fulfilled the Perfect Sacrifice within the veil, for our sakes:

“Therefore, brothers, having boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Hebrews 10:19-20 MKJV).

As is also said:

Hebrews 9:6-12 MKJV

(6) Now when these things were ordained in this way, the priests always went into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

(7) But once in the year into the second the high priest goes alone, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people

(8) the Holy Spirit signifying by this that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest **while the first tabernacle was still standing.**

(9) For it was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him who did the service perfect as regards the conscience, (10) which stood only in meats and drinks, and different kinds of washings and fleshly ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

(11) But when Christ had become a high priest of good things to come, **by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle**, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building

(12) nor by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered once for all into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Hebrews 9:24-26 MKJV

(24) **For Christ has not entered into the Holy of Holies made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into Heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

(25) Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, even as the high priest enters into the Holy of Holies every year with the blood of others,

(26) for then He must have suffered often since the foundation of the world, but now once in the end of the world He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

“And letting out a loud voice, Jesus expired. And the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Mark 15:37-38 MKJV).

With veil torn, the Holy of Holies was now open to all those chosen of God to enter. By Jesus Christ and His blood, all men in their appointed time have access to the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies in Heaven.

Is it Scriptural to suggest the throne of the Lord is equivalent to the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant? Here’s what Jeremiah prophesied:

“And it will be when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD! Nor shall it come to mind; nor shall they remember it; nor shall they visit it; nor shall it be made any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all nations shall be

gathered to it, to the Name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. Nor shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart” (Jeremiah 3:16-17 MKJV).

Jerusalem was the capital of God’s country, Israel, the Temple was the center of worship in Jerusalem, and God met with Moses in the Holy of Holies:

“And you shall put the mercy-seat above, upon the Ark. And in the Ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. And **I will meet with you there**, and I will talk with you from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubs on the Ark of the Testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the sons of Israel” (Exodus 25:21-22 MKJV).’

## The Ark of the Covenant

Hebrews 9:3-8 MKJV

(3) And after the second veil was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies,

(4) having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid all around with gold, in which was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.

(5) And over it were the cherubs of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat (about which we cannot now speak piece by piece).

(6) Now when these things were ordained in this way, the priests always went into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

(7) But once in the year into the second the high priest goes alone, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people,

(8) the Holy Spirit signifying by this that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

Ezekiel makes no mention of the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, and the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat, which were in the Holy of Holies.

The ark of the covenant represented the very Presence of God. Within it were the two stone tablets Moses had received, upon which were written the Ten Commandments (God’s Law); the budded, fruitful living olive wood rod Aaron once possessed, and the bowl of manna, all of which represented God’s nature, life, power, and authority. Once a year the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat, which covered the ark of the covenant, to atone for his sins and those of the children of Israel.

Jesus Christ fulfilled these articles of furnishings and their functions for us. That’s why they’re missing in Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple.

One may ask why there would even be a Temple with all the details Ezekiel mentions. Wasn’t the Temple also fulfilled? If the Assembly of God, the Body of Christ, is the New Temple, why do we need any description of the building anymore, though we no longer need the important features and furnishings omitted from it?

Doesn’t the question point to its own answer? While there is the present Temple made in Heaven, composed of Living Stones, which we are, the furnishings within the former earthly Temple represented temporary shadows and needs that exist no longer, because they’re fulfilled in the end product God desired. Ezekiel’s vision speaks of that which *is* - the Heavenly Temple, not of that which *was* and which only served to form what is.

Consider how the physical Temple came to be. God didn’t initiate it, as with the tabernacle

He commanded Moses to build in the wilderness. The Temple was first brought up by King David, who said he wanted to build a house for God. Here's what God replied, through the prophet Nathan:

2 Samuel 7:5-11 MKJV

(5) Go and tell My servant David, So says the LORD, Shall you build Me a house for My dwelling?

(6) For I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up the sons of Israel out of Egypt until this day, but have walked in a tent, even in a tabernacle.

(7) In all places in which I have walked with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the tribes of Israel, those I commanded to feed My people Israel, saying, Why do you not build Me a house of cedars?

(8) And now so shall you say to My servant David, So says the LORD of Hosts: I took you from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel.

(9) And I was with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies out of your sight, and have made you a great name like the name of the great ones in the earth.

(10) **And I will appoint *a place for My people Israel*, and will plant them so that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more. Neither shall the sons of wickedness afflict them anymore, as before.**

(11) And even from the time that I commanded judges to be over My people of Israel, so will I cause you to rest from all your enemies. **Also the LORD tells you that He will make *you* a house.**

God didn't need a house built by men. ***Men need a house built by God***, which the Lord promised to David and his people, Israel, a place of permanent peace and safety. This obviously doesn't describe any of the physical incarnations of the Temple, all ending in violence for Israel, but speaks of the spiritual one in Ezekiel's vision and the Book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 3:1-6 MKJV

(1) Therefore, holy brothers, called to be partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,

(2) Who was faithful to Him Who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house.

(3) For He was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, because he who has built the house has more honor than the house.

(4) For every house is built by someone, but He Who built all things is God.

(5) And Moses truly was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken afterward.

(6) But Christ was faithful as a Son over His own house; **Whose house we are**, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

God went on to say to David: "And when your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your Seed after you, Who shall come out of your bowels. And I will make His Kingdom sure. He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-13 MKJV).

## The Third Temple - Physical or Spiritual?

There was a physical fulfillment of this prophecy in Solomon, but the complete fulfillment comes only through Jesus Christ, also known as the Son of David.

“He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33 MKJV).

The Temple of God is within, the result of God’s work of salvation through Christ, a new man who walks in the fear of God:

“Thus says the LORD, Heaven is My throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will you build to Me? And what place shall be My rest? For all these things has My hand made, and so all these things came to be, says the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word” (Isaiah 66:1-2 HNV).

With all these things being so, could there then be, as Schmitt and Laney assume, a physical Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem patterned after the New Living One? Our answer would be, “What for?” There’d be no more need of sacrifices or priesthood; those comprising the New Temple are free to come and go by the Spirit, which fulfills the words the Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman:

John 4:21-24 MKJV

(21) Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you shall neither worship the Father in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem.

(22) You worship what you do not know, we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

(23) But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.

(24) God is a spirit, and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.

Wouldn’t the purpose of a temple in Jerusalem be worship? Schmitt and Laney concede that. But the Lord says true worshipers worship in spirit and in truth, not in a temple in Jerusalem.

Schmitt and Laney also believe Jesus Christ will physically dwell in Jerusalem with the physical Temple being His operational headquarters. But if there is to be no worshipping in Jerusalem, according to the One alone worthy of worship, why would He be there in human form, and what need would there be of such a place of worship?

Which leads us to conclude that we are to worship Him in spirit and in truth, wherever we are:

“For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there I am in their midst” (Matthew 18:20 MKJV).

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8 ESV).

Schmitt, Laney, and many millions of nominal Christians are locked into a carnal expectation of the physical return of the Messiah, even as the Jews expected and were disillusioned when their imagined political/military hero didn't show. These all, both "Christians" and "Jews," expect to be worshipping the Messiah in the flesh, but what does Paul say?

"So as we now know no one according to flesh, but even if we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we no longer know Him so. So that if anyone is in Christ, that one is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:16-17 MKJV).

Schmitt writes, "The reason that the ark of the covenant is missing from the future Temple is because the throne of the Lord is present. The Lord Jesus, the Righteous One, shall sit upon His throne as King Messiah in Ezekiel's Temple."

In Revelation 22, John writes that Christ *is* the Temple of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem from above. This Jerusalem is the home of the saints of God, those born again. The Lord dwells within - "Christ in you, the hope of glory." That's the Jerusalem Jeremiah prophesied of (Jeremiah 3:16-17). The Lord is present and on His throne within Ezekiel's Temple, which, thankfully, we are.

## The Altar of Sacrifice

"And if you will make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of cut stone. For if you lift up your tool upon it, you have defiled it. And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness be not uncovered on it" (Exodus 20:25-26 MKJV).

*Messiah's Coming Temple* points out that the altar of sacrifice situated in the inner court of the former Temple was approached from the south by a ramp, whereas Ezekiel's vision shows the altar approached by steps from the east (Ezekiel 43:17).

So now there are steps, whereas previously they were forbidden because of nakedness. Which means the Lord has removed our nakedness, or perhaps better put, we're in a state of nakedness now as were Adam and Eve before they sinned, wherein is no shame. We no longer fearfully conceal ourselves from the Lord, being justified by His sacrifice. We walk in newness of life, understanding and accepting that all things are naked before Him. We are restored to godly fidelity and inherent honesty, in purity of mind, soul, and spirit.

Notice it's His work and not ours - He shapes the stones. Any work on our part in the building of the altar, by our wisdom and labor, is not only unacceptable to the Lord, but He calls it defilement. Cut stones are the stuff of Cain's altars.

Schmitt and Laney point out something interesting. Whereas in every other instance in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated "altar" is "mizbach" (meaning "altar"), the Hebrew word translated "altar" in this case is "ariel," meaning "lion of God." The authors point out that Jesus Christ came as the Lamb of sacrifice for our sakes in the days of old, but in these last days, He finalizes His work as the Lion of the tribe of Judah:

"And one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals of it" (Revelation 5:5 MKJV).

## The Third Temple - Physical or Spiritual?

The authors say Ezekiel speaks of an earthly Temple to come, but we say he speaks of the Temple that now is. The altar of Ezekiel 43:15-16 is the altar of the New Spiritual Temple of God.

Laney and Schmitt also point out that in the earthly Temple, the priests approached the altar from the south when sacrificing at the altar of sacrifice. The Lord in the Holy of Holies would be at their left hand. Ezekiel's altar is set up so the steps face east, and the priests face west towards the Holy of Holies, or directly towards the Lord. This is the True Sacrifice, in Him, by His Spirit, worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. This is that overcoming:

“Him who overcomes I will make him a pillar in the Temple of My God, and he will go out no more. And I will write upon him the Name of My God, and the Name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from My God, and My New Name” (Revelation 3:12 MKJV).

We now see Him face to face:

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall fully know even as I also am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12 MKJV).

It shouldn't be difficult to understand the vanity of a physical temple. Do people really believe the Lord will be literally sitting on a throne in the Holy of Holies out of the sight of worshippers offering sacrifices on an altar outside? Isn't that simply ridiculous?

Imagine for a bit the utterly preposterous notion of Jesus being literally, physically in human form in Jerusalem at a temple, ruling the whole earth from His “headquarters.” Consider that if He is there, it will be a sheer miracle, or at least some sort of spectacle many will wish to confirm. Many people will flock there for healings. Let's say there are six billion people on earth. Those who expect this physical, human-body return of Jesus will number in the hundreds of millions, if not billions.

Think of the logistics. Divide the number of minutes in a year by say, just one billion souls, and see how much personal time one gets to spend at the temple with Jesus. Go ahead - use your computer calculator.

And how many jumbo airliners will it take to get the people there? And where will they (yes, both people and jumbo liners) stay? And what airport could possibly handle the traffic? How many have thought of these things?

And do they really think blood sacrifices ought to be offered Him when He has fulfilled the Great Sacrifice for them? Isn't He now looking for the true worship in spirit and truth, fellowshipping with Him everywhere, 24/7?

“By Him, then, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, confessing His Name” (Hebrews 13:15 MKJV).

Do you expect to see Him bodily? Really? Here's what Paul said of that very thing:

“So as we now know no one according to flesh, but even if we have known Christ according to flesh, **yet now we no longer know Him so**” (2 Corinthians 5:16 MKJV).

“And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and the living creatures and the elders. And the number of them was myriads and myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing” (Revelation 5:11-12 MKJV).

Of what worth would physical sacrifices be, when all things are fulfilled? Hasn't Christ done away with that?

Hebrews 10:4-12 MKJV

(4) For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

(5) Therefore when He comes into the world, He says, “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but You have prepared a body for Me.

(6) In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have had no pleasure.

(7) Then I said, Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God.”

(8) Above, when He said, “Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings and offering for sin You did not desire, neither did You have pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the Law),

(9) then He said, “Lo, I come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first so that He may establish the second.

(10) By this will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

(11) And indeed every priest stands daily ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

(12) But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right of God.

Many make the case that these sacrifices would serve as reminders of what the Lord has done for us. But aren't new godly natures His accomplishment? Does a living tree need a shadow as a reminder of what it now is? Will it forget itself? And if so, will its shadow indeed enlighten it?

This is the testimony, without need of reminders:

2 Corinthians 5:16-20 MKJV

(16) So as we now know no one according to flesh, but even if we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we no longer know Him so.

(17) So that if any one is in Christ, that one is a new creature; **old things have passed away [shadows included]**; behold, **all** things have become new.

(18) And all things are of God, Who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

(19) whereas God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and putting the word of reconciliation in us.

(20) Then we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as God exhorting through us, we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

The old is done away when the permanent has arrived, never to be reinstated:

Hebrews 8:4-13 MKJV

- (4) For if indeed [Christ] were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the Law,
- (5) **who serve the example and shadow of heavenly things**, as Moses was warned of God when he was about to make the tabernacle. For, He says “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you in the mountain.”
- (6) But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by so much He is also the Mediator of a better covenant, which was built upon better promises.
- (7) For if that first covenant had been without fault, then no place would have been sought for the second.
- (8) For finding fault with them, He said to them, “Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, and I will make an end on the house of Israel and on the house of Judah; a new covenant shall be,
- (9) not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took hold of their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not regard them,” says the Lord.
- (10) “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” says the Lord. “I will put My Laws into their mind and write them in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
- (11) And they shall not each man teach his neighbor, and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest.
- (12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.”
- (13) In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first one old. **Now that which decays and becomes old is ready to vanish away.**

We no longer deal in shadows. We are no longer shadows. Saints no longer need shadows of His coming, He being within by a new birth. Our work is now in the Reality, as originally purposed. We are His reminders in our living, fully appreciative minds focused on Him, minding Him in spirit and in truth by nature. This is what He promised us.

Those who look for a physical Jesus have never known Him. They’ve never been born again.

## The River of Life from the Throne of God

“And he led me again to the door of the house. And behold, water came out from under the threshold of the house eastward. For the front of the house is east, and the water came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.... And he measured a thousand; and there was a torrent which I was not able to pass; for the water had risen, water to swim in, a torrent that could not be passed.... And all trees for food shall go up by the torrent, on its bank on this side, and on that side. Its leaf shall not fade, nor its fruit fail. It will bear by its months, because its waters come out from the sanctuary. And its fruit shall be for food, and its leaf for healing” (Ezekiel 47:1,5,12 MKJV).

Revelation 22:1-3 MKJV

- (1) And he showed me a pure river of Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

(2) In the midst of its street, and of the river, from here and from there, was the Tree of Life, which bore twelve fruits, each yielding its fruit according to one month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

(3) And every curse will no longer be; but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will serve Him.

The New Temple of God is within, here and now for those in Christ's Body. From where flows that pure river of Water of Life? Jesus told us:

“And *in* the last day of the great Feast [signifying the New Day and the fulfillment of Christ in us], Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, “**Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.**”’ (But He spoke this about the Spirit, which they who believed on Him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified)” (John 7:37-39 MKJV).

The healing Water of Life is the Word of Truth coming forth from the new heart of man by the Spirit of God.

“And they will see His face, and His Name will be in their foreheads” (Revelation 22:4 MKJV).

“And there will be no night there. And they need no lamp, or light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light. And they will reign forever and ever. And he said to me, These sayings are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show to His servants the things which must shortly be done” (Revelation 22:5-6 MKJV).

Would there be need of light on earth with an earthly Temple? I should think so. Isn't John speaking of the Light within, the Light of all men?

Revelation 21:22-26 MKJV

(22) And I saw **no temple** in it, for **the Lord God Almighty is its Temple**, even the Lamb.

(23) And the City [Heavenly Jerusalem] had no need of the sun, nor of the moon, that they might shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

(24) And the nations of those who are saved will walk in the light of it; and the **kings of the earth** [the Heavenly Temple is on earth] bring their glory and honor into it.

(25) And its gates may not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there.

(26) And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.

Zechariah 14:6-9 MKJV

(6) And it will be in that day, there shall not be light; the glorious ones shall shrink.

(7) And it will be one day which shall be known to the LORD, neither day nor night; but it will happen that at evening time it shall be light.

(8) And it shall be in that day, living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them shall go toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea. In summer and in winter it shall be.

(9) And the LORD shall be King over all the earth; in that day there shall be one LORD, and His Name shall be One [not two or three].

## The City of God

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (Hebrews 12:22-24 MKJV).

Hebrews 11:8-10 MKJV

(8) By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he was afterward going to receive for an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he went.

(9) By faith he lived in the land of promise as a stranger, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of the same promise with him.

(10) For he looked for a City which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Where shall we find the ark of the covenant but in the Holy of Holies? Where shall we find the Holy of Holies, but in the Temple? Where shall we find the Temple, if not in Jerusalem, the City of God? Where is this City that every son and daughter of faith, son and daughter of Abraham, have sought for since the beginning of time?

Hebrews 11:13-16 MKJV

(13) These all died by way of faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. And they were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

(14) For they who say such things declare plainly that they seek a fatherland.

(15) And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

(16) But now they stretch forth to a better fatherland, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, **for He has prepared a City for them.**

Zechariah (chapter 14, particularly) speaks of the coming of the Lord. If we speak in physical terms, surely time must be in the equation. In Revelation 22:6, it is said these were “things which must shortly be done.” Is 2,000 years “shortly”? Was it soon enough for John and those to whom he was sent with the Revelation message? But these things **were** shortly done. They were and are done within:

“And being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, He answered and said, ‘The Kingdom of God does not come with observation. Nor shall they say, “Lo here!” or, “Behold, there!” For behold, the Kingdom of God is in your midst **[within]**’” (Luke 17:20-21 MKJV).

He said He would come quickly:

“Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the Words of the prophecy of this Book” (Revelation 22:7 MKJV).

“Behold, I come quickly. Hold fast to that which you have, so that no one may take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make him a pillar in the Temple of My God, and he will go out no more. And I will write upon him the Name of My God, and the name of the City of My

God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from My God, and My New Name” (Revelation 3:11-12 MKJV).

He declared He would come quickly to those who were unrepentant, and promised to come quickly to those who needed encouragement to continue. Are these not the things of God within, which come in a timely fashion for each person, in His time?

Did He keep His promise, or are all men still waiting? We testify that He kept His promise and came quickly to those in John’s day and to us in ours. We have and are His promise - “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). He has come and does come and will come:

“I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, says the Lord, **Who is and Who was and Who is to come**, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8 MKJV).

“And each one of the four living creatures had six wings about him, and within being full of eyes. And they had no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, **Who was and is and is to come**” (Revelation 4:8 MKJV).

Those who have overcome in Christ have entered the City of God. In the Heavenly Jerusalem is the Temple of God, which is comprised of every born-again son and daughter of Abraham, our father in the faith and the friend of God.

The Hebrews writer says his listeners have come to the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem - the City for which every spiritual sojourner has sought. But then he says:

“Therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, **but we seek one to come**” (Hebrews 13:13-14 MKJV).

So by faith, saints have arrived; by faith, they seek to arrive; and by faith, they will arrive. Are the saints looking for a physical temple in physical Jerusalem where Jesus said we would no longer be worshipping - here on earth where there is “no continuing city,” or do we seek the City that comes down from Heaven?

Has He come? Yes, He has! Is He coming? Yes, He is! Will He come? Yes, He will! “I Am That I Am,” and, “I Will Be That I Will Be,” the Beginning and the End of all things, Jesus Christ, Almighty God, All in all. Amen!

Victor Hafichuk and Paul Cohen

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