

## Jerusalem -- Past, Present and Future

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Jesus said to a woman in Samaria that the time would come when God would be worshiped neither on Mt. Gerizim nor in Jerusalem but the true worshipers would worship the Father in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-23). Paul wrote to Christians in Hebrews 13:14, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come." In Hebrews 11 Paul wrote that Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, "...for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God" (verse 10). Read Hebrews 11:13-16. Patriarchs were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Desired a better, that is, a heavenly country. God has prepared a city for them.

The country we seek, along with our spiritual forebears, is the Kingdom of God. The city God is preparing is the capitol of that Kingdom, a Jerusalem exceeding in glory anything from its ancient past. From very early in history Jerusalem has been a focal point of activity as far as God's dealings with mankind is concerned. And in the future it is destined to be restored to prominence in that respect only more so. God's love for Jerusalem and it's people Israel is a major factor behind his promise to intervene in man's affairs through the second coming of Jesus Christ (Zechariah 1:14-17).

In today's sermon I want to sketch out the story of Jerusalem, past, present and future -- with a special emphasis on the future of the city which is destined to become the capitol city of the entire world under the rule of the Kingdom of God, and eventually the site of the capitol of the entire universe.

According to some traditions Jerusalem was the site of the Garden of Eden -- although I don't know of any evidence that confirms that with certainty. Archaeological evidence of occupation in the area has been found dating from the very earliest times, perhaps from the pre-flood era (*The Mountain of the Lord*, p. 43). In ancient times the hills of Jerusalem were forested with oak, cypress, myrtle and Jerusalem pine. Springs, waterholes and brooks dotted the area. One of its primary features is the Gihon spring overlooking the Kidron valley on the east. From earliest times the Mount of Olives was covered with olive groves (*The Earthly Jerusalem*, pp. 14-15).

Abraham sacrificed to God at Moriah, apparently on the same mountain upon which Solomon later built the Temple (Genesis 22:2; 2 Chronicles 3:1). By the early second millennium B.C. the area was inhabited by the Jebusites, one of the Canaanite tribes, and Jerusalem, developed into a well-populated and fortified city. Although the tribe of Judah burned the city when the Israelites came into the land of Canaan (Judges 1:8); the Jebusites were not driven out and soon recovered (Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21). The city remained under Jebusite control until David took it in the eighth year of his reign (c. 1002 B.C.) and made it the capitol of his kingdom (2 Samuel 5).

Jerusalem was ideally located geographically to serve as the capitol of the united kingdom, as it was on the border between the northern and southern tribes and was relatively easy to travel to from both north and south. It's a natural fortress and relatively easy to defend. It was a politically neutral site, because although it lay in the territory of Benjamin, due to its history it had not been strongly associated with any of the tribes, north or south.

Sometime after taking the city from the Jebusites, David bought the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite on Mount Moriah, where he built an altar (1 Chronicles 21), and where Solomon later built the Temple. Upon the dedication of the Temple God said "I have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice" (2 Chronicles 7:12), and from that point on the Temple in Jerusalem was the only legitimate place for regular animal sacrifices. It was not only the political, but also the religious center of the nation.

Under David and Solomon God greatly blessed Israel. Jerusalem became the capitol of the world's most powerful empire during that brief period. The kings of Israel gained control of territory stretching from the Euphrates river in the north to the eastern branch of the Nile river in the south, the coastal plain and Mediterranean ports on the west and the transjordan area on the east, including the territories of the Ammonites and Moabites. Due to the strategic location of Palestine they controlled major trade routes between Africa, Asia and Europe, which enhanced the power and wealth of the kingdom. Vast quantities of wealth poured into the city of Jerusalem. All of King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, for this was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon. Silver was as common as stone, and cedar as abundant as sycamore wood (1 Kings 10:21, 27). His kingdom was in some ways typical of the future Kingdom of God, and Solomon himself typical of Jesus Christ reigning in his glory. However, all was not well.

Ezekiel said of Jerusalem "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite" (Ezekiel 16:3), because Jerusalem had been in the midst of Canaan. The Amorites and Hittites were two of the strongest and most wicked of the Canaanite tribes, and the people of the Israelite kingdom, of which Jerusalem had become the capitol, forsook God to follow the wicked ways of the Canaanites.

The Canaanite religion was a profligate idolatry which encouraged all sorts of sexual license, including sodomy and prostitution. The Canaanites sacrificed their children to their false gods, and often buried them underneath the floors or walls of their houses. Solomon, in the height of his power and glory, built high places -- or you might say -- church buildings -- for these heathen gods in the city of Jerusalem (1 Kings 11). Because of God's anger at Solomon's apostasy, the kingdom was divided after his death and Jerusalem was thence the capitol of the southern kingdom of Judah only.

Jerusalem means "city of peace." But it is named "city of peace" not for what it has been historically but for what it will be in the future. Historically Jerusalem has been one of the most war ravaged cities in the world. Possibly no other major city has been conquered or ravaged more often than Jerusalem. Read 1 Kings 14:22-26. The wealth of the city and Temple was stripped by Shishak of Egypt only about four to five years after the death of Solomon.

Between that time and the time of its destruction at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., the city was plundered seven more times. Why did God allow the destruction of his beloved city? Jeremiah 7:30-31; Ezekiel 22:1-16.

After the Jews resettled Jerusalem beginning in 539 B.C. they rebuilt the Temple. Although the city continued as the center of Jewish faith and worship, it was alternately crushed and restored in the years leading up to the time of Jesus Christ. By the time of Christ Jerusalem was under Roman domination. At that time Temple worship flourished, and up to 3,000,000 people were drawn to the city for keeping the feasts. But Jesus warned concerning the buildings of the Temple, "not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2).

In 70 A.D. the Romans, having laid siege to Jerusalem because of a Jewish revolt, prevailed and destroyed the city and the Temple. Just as Jesus had predicted, not a stone was left standing of any building on the Temple mount, except the foundation rock itself. The only thing remaining was a portion of the retaining wall surrounding the Temple mount.

According to Josephus there were about three million people in Jerusalem at the time of the Roman siege, because it began at the time of the Passover. More than a million died in the siege and many thousands were taken captive and sold as slaves. It's said that at that time the price of a slave was less than that of a dog.

Since the time of the Roman destruction Jerusalem has changed hands numerous times as successive armies have swept over it. Near the end of the seventh century the Arabs, having taken the city, initiated Muslim worship on the temple mount. A Muslim mosque called the Dome of the Rock now sits on the spot where the Temple once stood.

With the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948 the city of Jerusalem was divided into Jordanian and Israeli sectors. In the 1976 war the Jews took possession of the Jordanian sector, but the Islamics still control the Temple mount. Today Jerusalem is a city plagued by violence and hate. In Revelation 11:8 it is said to be spiritually the equivalent of Sodom and Egypt.

Matthew 24:15-21, abomination of desolation (false prophet, cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9). Tribulation begins, Judah taken.

Daniel 11:31, Antiochus Epiphanies in 167 B.C. took away daily sacrifice, set up an idol of Jupiter in the Temple, also proclaimed himself a god, compelled idol worship and persecuted and killed those who refused. A type of the end time beast and false prophet.

Verses 36-45, beast power shall enter holy land. Note: Verse 45, “between the seas and the glorious holy mountain,” i.e., like Antiochus, who set up his headquarters between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas, at Emmaus, near Jerusalem, as he sought to destroy the city, the leader of the beast power will near the end establish his base somewhere near Jerusalem between the two seas (Matthew Henry's Commentary).

Revelation 16:12-16, Satan, beast and false prophet are used to gather nations to do battle against Jerusalem. Note: “Armageddon,” from the Hebrew “har,” mountain, and “Megiddo,” slaughter, overlooks the plain of Megiddo, also called the plain of Esdraelon, about 50 miles north of Jerusalem, which shall be a gathering place for armies from all over the world, leading up to a climactic battle centered in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12:2-3. Eventually more and more nations shall become hostile toward the Jews. Jerusalem will become the focal point of a worldwide conflagration.

Joel 3:1-3, 12, 16-17. Valley of Jehoshaphat = Kidron valley between city proper and Mount of Olives. God will intervene to save Jerusalem, and mankind, from complete annihilation.

Zechariah 14:1-5, 8-14, 16. Safety, wealth, nations worship God in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 8:1-8 God dwells in Jerusalem. Psalm 102:15-16, 21-22. Jerusalem becomes the political and religious center not just for Israel but for the entire world. Isaiah 62:1-4, hephzibah = my delight, beulah = married, 6-7, 11-12. Later on, after the Millennium, Revelation 21:1-3.

The future of Jerusalem is indeed bright. There's much more detail that could be discussed. But from what we've covered everyone should have a general idea of what's in store for Jerusalem after the return of Jesus Christ. Revelation 22:14. If you overcome, if you remain faithful, doing the commandments of God, you can be there to not only witness, but to be a part of Jerusalem's glorious future!