

The Jerusalem Temple and the End of the World

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In several formal public debates, my opponents have totally disparaged the significance of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70, arguing that “it was just another Jewish city that was destroyed” and most of the ancient world could have cared less, most especially the Gentiles. See my debate with Mac Deaver, Amillennialist, that was held in Carlsbad, NM, in 2008. [Contact me](#) to order a copy of this debate in MP3.

The fact is that when we look closely at the Jerusalem Temple from the Hebraic perspective, it soon becomes indisputably clear that to them, the City and the Temple was far more than just another Jewish city, far more than just another Temple. That Temple in Jerusalem represented / symbolized her covenant relationship with YHVH, and, it represented “heaven and earth.”

The Jerusalem Temple as the Symbol of God’s Covenant with Israel

Kenneth Gentry correctly appraises the symbolic significance of the Jerusalem Temple in regard to Israel and *their covenantal relationship* with YHVH: “In essence the temple itself is a symbol: it symbolizes the covenantal relationship of God with His people. The heart of the covenant appears in the most important promise: ‘I will be your God, you will be my people. The temple is the special place where God dwells among His people’” (Kenneth Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, Draper, VA., Apologetics Group, 2009, 362, his emphasis).

The Jerusalem Temple as a Symbol of “Heaven and Earth”

To drive home the point even more, consider that the Jews viewed the Jerusalem Temple as the place where heaven and earth met. Timothy Grey shares some great thoughts on this:

“The end of the temple and the end of the world are not unrelated events, according to Jewish and early Christian thought. The temple, both in the OT and Second Temple Judaism, symbolized the cosmos.” Much of the architecture and artistry employed in of the tabernacle and the temple’s design point to an embodiment of the cosmos. For instance, the molten washbasin is called “the sea” and the altar “the bosom of the earth. (1 Kings 7:23-26). The twelve bulls supported the washbasin were divided into groups of three, each group faced on direction of the compass (1 Kings 7:25, thus signifying the four corners of the world. The seven lamps on the menorah are referred to as ‘lights’ (Exodus 25:6; 35:8;, 14, 28; 27:20; 39:37; Leviticus 24:2; Numbers 4:9) by the Hebrew word which besides the sanctuary lights is used only in reference to the ‘lights’ spoken of in the fourth day of creation, where the sun, moon, and stars are also called ‘lights.’” The seven lights were also seen as representing the five known planets as well as the sun and moon. Josephus and Philo both saw the temple as a symbolic microcosm of the cosmos.....

“If Mark recognized the temple as a microcosm of the world, then the end of the temple could not be disassociated from the end of the world– at least not symbolically. Indeed, what better symbol for the end of the world than the demolition of its prototypical representation? This would explain the reference, in the midst of the discourse, about the temple’s destruction, to the end of the world. Although these two events seem unrelated to our modern sensibilities, they may well be

closely associated within the milieu of first century Judaism” (Timothy Gray, *The Temple in Mark*, (Baker Academic, 2008)148f).

In other words, in the mind of the Jews, if the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, then symbolically, heaven and earth was destroyed! This is incredibly important! But, there is more. Josephus, first century Jewish historian, tells us that the Jews looked upon the Jerusalem Temple as “heaven and earth” itself! (Think of this in light of Matthew 24:35!)

Read a few of the comment he wrote concerning the Jerusalem Temple:

Josephus, Ant. Bk. 1, chapter 7, 7 (p. 180-181; also see 90-91) – Josephus says that the Temple and even the garments of the priest represented land, sea and heaven.

Whiston, Josephus Antiquities, Bk. 3, chapter 6:4, (P. 87)– “However, this proportion of the measures of the tabernacle proved to be an imitation of the system of the world: for the third part thereof which was within the four pillars, to which the priests were not admitted, is, as it were, a Heaven peculiar to God; but the space of the twenty cubits, is, as it were, sea and land, on which men live, and so this is peculiar to the priests only...”

Antiquities, Bk. 3, Chpt 7:7- (p. 90)– The veils too, which were composed of four things, they declared the four elements; for the fine linen was proper to signify the earth, because flax grows out of the earth; the purple signified the sea, because the color is dyed by the blood of the sea shell fish; the blue is fit to signify the air...; And for the ephod, it showed that God had made the universe of four (elements)... the breastplate was made to resemble the earth, the girdle represented the ocean, the Sardonyx the sun and moon, the twelve stones the months...”

Josephus, Whiston, Ant. Bk. 3, chapter 6, 4 (87, p. 123) The Temple was “an imitation of the systems of the world. The rest was sea and land” Thus, the Temple was “heaven and earth.”

When we honestly consider this Jewish concept of the Temple, it is little wonder that when Jesus predicted the destruction of that City and Temple, the disciples immediately connected that impending disaster with the “end of the age!” In their mind, and from prophecy, the two events were most definitely linked (See Daniel 12 and [my YouTube video](#) on whether the disciples were confused, or simply wrong, when they mentally linked the coming of the Lord and the end of the age with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple). See my book, [The Elements Shall Melt With Fervent Heat](#), for a fuller discussion of how the first century Jews viewed the City and Temple. It behooves Bible students to better understand these issues. To the Jewish mind, the **Jerusalem Temple** was far, far more than just another city, or just an ancient Temple, it was their world!