

Jesus, Jerusalem and Fulfilled Prophecy

by Tim King

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For 30 years there has been a revival of fulfilled Bible prophecy, largely coming from the U.S. And while the prevailing religious convention still thinks of Bible prophecy as something yet future, a growing number of scholars are showing that all things related to redemption were fulfilled in the forty year transition from the Old to New Covenant.

Today this paradigm is known as Transmillennialism™, in contrast to Premillennialism, Amillennialism or Postmillennialism. Transmillennialism™ points to the transformation of the ages, which occurred by the time Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70.

Recently some forty authors, pastors, broadcasters and publishers came together in Ohio to form the Council on Transmillennialism™. Its purpose is to encourage networking among leaders in the fulfilled Bible prophecy world. This report on "Jesus, Jerusalem and Fulfilled Bible Prophecy" is written for participating ministries of the Council and for anyone interested in biblical renewal, with respect to the church in the Middle East.

This paper was written as a summary of lessons learned on the basis of a seven-day ministry trip to Israel by *Presence Ministries*.

AS MINISTRY LEADERS WITHIN THE FULFILLED BIBLE PROPHECY WORLD, we spent a week in Jerusalem from September 20 – 27th, 2000, assessing how the Transmillennial® movement could relate to the church in the Middle East. We divided our time between on-site study of biblical archaeology as well as first-hand meetings with both Arab and Jewish Christian leaders.

This ministry trip was timely in view of the fact that Israelis and Palestinians are seeking to finalize negotiations toward a comprehensive and just peace. This press toward common ground, rather than culture wars, was reflected in many of the church leaders we met.

[Editor's note, Oct 02: The day after this visit, Ariel Sharon provoked the start of the second Intifada, and things have taken a downhill slide since then. The U.S. has done little to stop the bloodshed.]

After being polluted by a generation of End-Time toxic waste, Jerusalem is fighting to regain its health. The long night of apocalyptic scapegoating and "holy war" ideology promoted by religious extremists of Christian, Jewish and Islamic persuasions may be coming to a close. After nearly a half-century of being wrapped in burial clothes, Jerusalem, could emerge like Lazarus from its "end-the-world" grave and become a city of God and symbol of peace for the 21st century. We came to Jerusalem asking ourselves these five questions:

- In what way can the land of the Bible verify fulfilled prophecy?
- What are Christians in America not being told about Jerusalem?

- What do Israeli and Palestinian Christians have to teach us?
- How should a Transmillennial® Study Tour to the Holy Land be different?
- How can Covenant Eschatology best be taught in a Middle East context?

1. In what way can the land of the Bible verify fulfilled prophecy?

In chiding those who were impressed with the beauty of Herod's Temple, Jesus said "As for all these things you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down." (Luke 21:6) Earlier as he entered Jerusalem, he had told the Pharisees, "I tell you, if these [disciples] were silent, the stones would shout out."

The witness of scattered stones was not lost on the early church. Around A.D. 300, Eusebius wrote in *The Proof of the Gospel*, "The lamentation and wailing was predicted for the Jews, and the burning of the Temple and its utter desolation, can also be seen even now to have occurred according to the prediction." (Bk. VIII, Ch.4, sect.412.) Eyewitness accounts of that day saw the site of the former Temple and City of Jerusalem as a Roman farm, plowed by cattle, as Micah 3:12 had predicted. The destruction of Jerusalem to the point of becoming suitable for plowing became a proverb among Jews and Gentiles as early as the second century. One Roman coin minted in Palestine around A.D. 130 shows the image of Hadrian on one side, and then on the other it depicts him plowing the ruined city with a team of cattle!

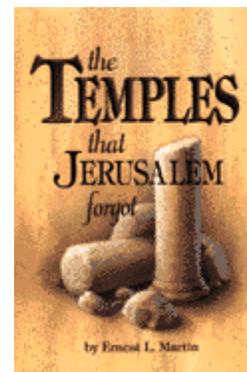
Today, however, when visiting the Holy City, one is struck by the grandeur of the ancient archaeological remains. Standing on the Mount of Olives one observes a massive rectangular fortress wall surrounding the Muslim Dome of the Rock, know as the Haram al-Sharif or the Noble Enclosure. The very size of the Haram in comparison to the Old City is overwhelming, encompassing 36 acres of sacred space. It is thought by archaeologists that some 10,000 stones, forming the lower courses are still in place from the time of Herod and Jesus.

Those who know the prophecies of Jesus and visit Jerusalem sometimes ask, "Why do these gigantic walls still exist when Jesus prophesied that "not one stone would remain upon another?" This was the reaction several years ago of Arlen Offutt. He told his tour guide, "I want to see Jerusalem as God left it—not one stone upon the other!"

Who are we to believe—the Bible or today's religious authorities? Is it possible that the Jewish Wailing Wall is really not part of the Temple? Could it be that the Dome of the Rock is really not built over the ruins of the Second Jewish Temple? Could it be that since early Christian times the exact locations of the ancient temples of Jerusalem have remained a mystery?

In preparing for this trip to Jerusalem one of *Presence* partners recommended I read a newly released book, *The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot*. Written by a 40-year veteran of biblical history and archaeology, Dr. Ernest L. Martin offers an alternative theory about the location of the Temple Mount.

Based on historical research, Martin claims that the original Temple Mount of Herod (and Zerubbabel and Solomon) was located 1/3 mile south of the Dome of the Rock over the Gihon Spring, outside the so-called "Temple Mount" of today. Working from the hunch that Jesus and the host of earlier eyewitnesses must be right, Martin reread the Jewish historian Josephus and



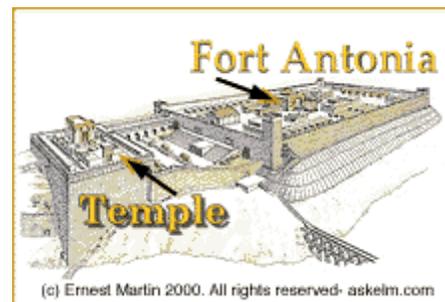
began taking his descriptions of Jerusalem seriously.

Josephus stated that David originally built Jerusalem on a crescent shaped southeast ridge, across from the Mount of Olives. This ridge was shaped like a camel with two humps. The small one to the north was the Orphel mound, where the Temple of Solomon was built. The lower mount was known as Mount Zion, before it was literally cut down in the second century B.C.

Martin traces how the Roman legion in 70 A.D. dismantled the 40-story holy sanctuary down to its very bedrock level. After this destruction, there were no longer the dual mountains on the southeast ridge. According to Eleazer, the military commander of the Jews at Masada, the only thing Titus left standing in Jerusalem was the Roman Fort Antonia.

Through some 35 chapters, Martin shows that the present day walled enclosure thought to be the Temple Mount was actually the Roman Fort Antonia. In a recent email, Dr. Martin wrote us, "I have not the slightest doubt that my thesis on the Temple site will stand. Too many top scholars have now favorably reviewed it that I see no problem with it academically and historically." I took 15 copies of Martin's book with us to Jerusalem and put them in the hands of top religious and civic leaders.

I also spent time in the old city of David, which most tourists ignore. I went down to the bedrock level of the original Temple site and stood in Gihon Spring, at the bottom of Kedron Ravine. Symbolically representing the Transmillennial™ movement, I stood at the water source of the original Jewish Temple, and claimed its fulfillment for Transmillennialists™ everywhere, as Jesus said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38)



After returning to the U.S., I am more convinced than ever that the ancient stones of Jerusalem testify that God's promises of redemption are "Yes in Christ Jesus" and full of life for all who draw near to His presence.

2. What are Christians in American not being told about Jerusalem?

Due to End-Time fear most American Christians do not believe there can be peace in the Middle East. They feel that God has destined the descendents of Abraham, namely Isaac and Ishmael, to always be at war. This is contrary to the unfolding will of God. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the restoration of both the descendents of Isaac *and* Ishmael in the New Covenant Age (Isa. 60:6-7;19:19-25).

End-Time stereotypes of Arabs have been magnified since 1967, when Israel occupied Jerusalem and the West Bank, land belonging to Jordan, and in the post-cold war period following the Gulf War. In 1993, the Oslo peace process brought Israelis and the Palestinians to the table to negotiate a complete and comprehensive settlement to the conflict that has wounded both sides for much of the 20th century. Both parties have come to an uneasy mutual understanding on most issues, including the return of occupied land, compensation for Jewish settlements, and statehood for the Palestinian people. The only remaining obstacle to negotiations is who will control Jerusalem's Old City and Temple Mount, originally part of the West Bank.

America has been told that it cannot be faithful to God unless it supports Israel, a misapplication of Genesis 12:2-3. In his book, "Anxious for Armageddon," (Herald Press, 1995, p. 25) Don Wagner writes: "According to futurist premillennial scenario, once Israel became a nation in 1948, the movement toward the last days of history was set in motion. Israel would gradually attain international acclaim and become God's chosen instrument to fight the Antichrist. Each modern war won by Israel (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982) provided sufficient evidence... that Israel was becoming a significant military power and might play the predicted role..."

The millennium myth about Jerusalem being the stage for the Final Battle beyond the first century is finally unraveling. Just this year Israel withdrew from occupying south Lebanon since 1982. Beirut was their Vietnam. American Christians don't realize that a growing percentage of Israeli Jews, reflected by such peace groups as [Gush-Shalom](#), do not support the 33-year military occupation of the West Bank. This half of Israeli society also opposes Israeli police tactics of beating Palestinian prisoners, financing illegal settlements on Arab land, and forcing Jerusalem born Palestinians out of their homes in the Old City.

In addition to confusion over eschatology, there is also double standard in regards to ethics among American Christians. We rightly embrace civil rights, criticize apartheid and resist ethnic cleansing, but when it comes to Jerusalem, the City of David, we overlook "redemptive violence."

In his book, *Israeli Peace, Palestinian Justice*, (Clarity, 1994, pp. 31-32) Thomas Are writes, "For over forty years, Israel has projected itself as the clean-cut, faithful-to-God David, forced to fight with a slingshot the uncivilized giant, "Goliath," with a big bad sword. A closer look at little innocent David and... well, when David grows up, there is another side to him, not quite so innocent." The dark side of David was Joab, his military general and personal enforcer. Joab seldom did anything through negotiation that he could achieve quicker through bloodshed, as the story of Abner illustrates (2 Samuel 3). Thomas Are asks, "Does Israel pretend to oppose terrorism while Joab carries it out?"

This point was driven home when on the second day of our visit over lunch. We were half way between the Sea of Galilee and Nazareth and pulled into a McDonalds. Before us stood six Israeli soldiers, outfitted in green fatigues and machine guns. They were casually leaning on the counter waiting for their order. During lunch we commented to Wael, our 28-year-old Arab driver, how bizarre this looked. He told us that six years ago he had a run in with a young soldier at an Israeli security checkpoint. In interrogating him, the soldier broke the handle on his driver side door. Wael demanded reparations, but the soldier became more indignant. Wael challenged him to lay down his machine gun and fight him, man to man. The soldier accepted. As the fight began, a crowd of Israeli soldiers circled the fight. Within two minutes Wael had bloodied and decked his opponent. In retaliation the soldiers beat Weal unconscious with their gunstocks. He spent the next 15 days in a hospital and was sentenced to a year in prison for striking an Israeli soldier. When asked about how he now deals with Israeli soldiers, Wael said, "If they hit you, I say 'thank you' and drive on." Wael has learned from Jesus to turn the other cheek.

Thousands of Christians like Wael suffer from Israeli occupation of their homeland. This is a direct result of a century of End-Time toxic teaching. Palestinian Christians are being driven from the Holy Land, through religious persecution, harassment and economic closures.

American Christians do not realize that there has been nearly 2,000 years of Arab Christian presence in the Holy Land. This is in danger of being wiped out, as the percentage of Christians in Israel and the Palestinian territories has dropped from 30% of society a hundred years ago to 3% today.

Christians in America are not hearing the Apostle Paul today, when he writes about Jerusalem, "Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is slavery with her children." (Gal 4:25)

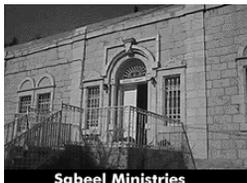
Instead they are getting a Zionistic reading of Bible Prophecy from End-Time believers who think that the political state of Israel is preparing the way for Messiah's Second Coming. They have no understanding of what Paul meant when he spoke about the New Covenant and Jerusalem being fulfilled, "But the other woman, corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free and she is our mother." (Gal 4:26). In their zeal—not according to knowledge, they demonize all Arabs as having no inheritance in God.

We must not let postponement eschatology or lack of biblical ethics undercut the church. The spirit of Joab should be exposed and opposed. Transmillennialists™ should be both pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian. We can support all God's people in the Middle East by helping Americans get over their unbiblical End-Time addictions. In the place of false prophecy being used for political purposes, we can encourage the emergence of a pan-Abrahamic culture of peace, which is faithful to biblical truth.

3. What do Israeli and Palestinian Christians have to teach us?

I studied Covenant Eschatology for nearly 30 years, but I didn't realize how priceless our heritage was until the 2nd of June. On that day I met a man from Galilee—Naim Ateek. In May of 1948, Naim had just turned eleven years old. Two days before Israel was declared a state, Zionist troops occupied Naim's hometown of Beisan, in Galilee. Within days he and his family were forced to leave the home they owned. Like cattle, they were forced onto buses for evacuation. Like Jesus, Naim grew up in Nazareth. He lived in exile in his own country. Fear and uncertainty, anger and bitterness gripped his people.

Western Christians told the Palestinians that the God of Israel had promised the land to the Jews. Naim couldn't accept that half-truth, and later discovered the God of the Bible was not partial to any people. Today Naim lives in Jerusalem and directs "Sabeel"—the leading Christian ministry throughout Israel and the West Bank. Over breakfast in Washington, D.C. this past June we explained covenant eschatology to him. The more Naim heard, the more he beamed. He stopped us at one point and exclaimed, "I've always believed in the climax of the covenant!"



That day I received our Macedonian call—"come over and help us."

While in Jerusalem I had opportunity to visit the Sabeel Center, just north of the Old City, and leave Naim several of Max King's books he requested. We have a lot to offer the Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land. With Jewish Zionists claiming divine right to the land from the Scriptures, many Palestinians have had trouble applying the Old Testament to their lives. We can give back the Old Testaments to them and counter the false notion that God loves one people over another.

At the same time, Naim can teach us as much or more. We can learn from him what it meant to be a follower of Jesus in conditions of oppression, like the Jews and Christians faced in the first century

One of the great meetings we had was with Abuna Elias Chacour, president of Mar Elias College in Galilee and author of *Blood Brothers*. Chacour is a three times Nobel Peace Prize nominee and leading advocate of non-violence. We left Jerusalem at 7 am on our sixth day to meet Abuna Chacour up in Galilee, not far from Mt. Carmel.

In 1981, Abuna Chacour opened a high school for Palestinian youth in his part of Israel that were not getting a chance to move beyond eighth grade. Today the Mar Elias School and College enrolls over 2,000 students, who commute to school daily from all over the country. We got caught in traffic approaching Tel Aviv, so we were 50 minutes late for our appointment. We were told we would have five minutes with him. After presenting him the framework of Covenant Eschatology, he said, "I need to hear more. Can you come with me this next hour and we can meet after I speak with some teachers who are waiting for me.

Over lunch, I explained to Abuna Chacour how bad politics in America comes from bad religion and how covenant eschatology is the antidote to untempered Zionism. He said that the first Christians in Galilee and patristic fathers saw the consummation of the ages very similar to what I laid out.

Rather than seeing Transmillennialism™ as something foreign, he said, "Nothing truly comes back to Galilee that did not originate here!" There is so much we can learn from Chacour, "another man from Galilee." He invited us to bring back our tour to Ibilin this coming year and spend an afternoon at Mar Elias.



from study

Another leader I met with was Dr. Salim Munayer, director of Musalaha, premier ministry of reconciliation in the land. For the past five years has brought together Messianic, Arab and Western Christians to work toward a theology that repudiates violence and embraces the Word of

the Salim God.

Starting in 1996, Salim launched a series of theological meetings, summarized recently by the book, *The Bible and the Land: An Encounter* (Jerusalem: Musalaha, 2000). Folks have come together from across the Middle East to discuss contrasting views on the "Theology of the Land"—an emotional issue which has deeply divided Israelis and Palestinians. I met with Salim in South Jerusalem on the third day of our visit.

After hearing me out for 40 minutes, Salim told us, "Musalaha does not take an eschatological position. We bring people together to discuss the implications of what they advocate. But you need to come to our next consultation and write a chapter for our next book."

And then he added with a smile, "Some of my friends will probably crucify me for inviting you!" In humor, we responded, "Let them crucify us instead!" We have a lot to learn from leaders like Salim. He graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary and recently earned a PhD from England in Christian formation, applied to Palestinian Christian youth. He serves as the Dean of Bethlehem Bible College.

I have invited him to minister to us at the next Transmillennial™ national conference. Pray that his schedule will allow him to join us.

4. How should a Transmillennial® Study Tour to the Holy Land be different?

The Gospel of John records Jesus went up to Jerusalem five times to worship the Living God at Feasts. These included an early Passover visit (chps. 2-3), an unnamed festival (chp. 5), a feast of Tabernacles (chp.7), a feast of Dedication (10:22-39) and the final Passover visit during Passion Week (chp. 12-20). As a Jew, it was Jesus' sacred duty to go up to Jerusalem. But he indicated to the Samaritan woman "the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." (John 4:21) Jesus knew that the New Covenant fulfillment would mean that God would no longer be seen as confined to this place or that, but could be approached wherever "two or three gather in His name."

Unlike the magnet that Mecca is for Muslims or Jerusalem for Jews, Christians have no specific holy places, in a strict biblical sense. "He is not here, he is Risen" (Matt. 28:6). But this theology of the incarnation, this reality of salvation that "God is with us," did not prevent the emergence of pilgrimage as a part of the Christian life.

Well before Constantine made Christianity an adopted state religion various church fathers visited the Holy Land, "so as to establish the books of the Old Testament and to examine the relevant places." Church historians record Origen traveling around Palestine to "seek out the location of events recorded in the Scriptures."

The first journal of a Christian pilgrim to the Holy Land was written in A.D. 333. The "Bordeaux Pilgrim," as he is known in historical literature, came from France to Jerusalem to view the land. His journal is little more than a list of places to which he attached incidents local from the Bible, with no record of his praying at sites or worshipping with Christians in the Land.

In the next three centuries to follow, with the support of Byzantine emperors, Christian life flourished in Jerusalem. Monasteries and schools and beautiful churches were built. This golden age of Christianity ended with the Persian invasion of A.D. 614. Nearly 400 years later, the Crusaders sought in vain to recapture this lost era. Despite the tales of journeys to Jerusalem over the centuries, from Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" to Bunyan's "Pilgrim Progress," Protestants did not develop a taste for traveling to the Holy Land until the nineteenth century.

When British and Americans did venture to Jerusalem, they went on the heels of End-Time missionaries they had sent ahead. As western pilgrims, the sight of Eastern Christians worshipping in their native languages and liturgies was bizarre. Evidence of this is Mark Twain's 1869 travel memoirs, "Innocents Abroad"—where he gives a humorous but irreverent account of his experiences in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Then in our time, especially after 1967 when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, Jerry Falwell defined the typical Bible Prophecy tour, taking his supporters to Israel to hob-knob with Israeli generals and visit Megiddo and hear how military maneuvers might be used in the Battle of Armageddon.



incidents
local

emperors,
beautiful

Given this mixed heritage of journeys to Jerusalem, how should a Transmillennial™ Study Tour be different? This past June, *Presence* announced its first study tour, Holy Land 2001, a 7-day experience in September 2001, designed to "Study Bible Prophecy where it was fulfilled." See: <http://www.presence.tv/cms/tour2001.shtml>

This Transmillennial™ tour will be distinct from other End-Time pep rallies or high church pilgrimages in that we will aim to see the biblical places in context of fulfilled Bible prophecy. In visiting Megiddo, we will reflect on how Satan was defeated. In visiting the Sea of Galilee, we will give attention to how those who first heard Jesus say, "Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand" would have understood him. We will visit Bethsaida, which was just discovered in 1987 and walk among ruins of a home town, where more than half of Jesus' apostles came from.

No eschatology study tour of the land of the Bible would be complete without staying on the Mount of Olives. Here Jesus had the most to say about the End of the Age and predicted the fall of Jerusalem. And after A.D. 70, here the early church returned to claim the new Mt. Zion, or the "Jerusalem above." So five of the seven nights of our tour we will stay at the Seven Arches Hotel on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the "Jerusalem below." Below the Seven Arches lie some 450,000 Jewish graves, on the eastern side of Kidron Valley. A young Arab shopkeeper told us, "Yea, Seven Arches is the quiet place in Jerusalem—all your neighbors are sleeping!"

One day of our tour in 2001 will take us down to the Dead Sea to reflect on messianic alternatives facing Jesus. There you find the strongholds of Masada, En Gedi and Qumran. Many End-Time tours visit Masada and glory in the "proud party of Jewish patriots that resisted the Romans" and took their lives in mass suicide in A.D. 73. Rather than treat Masada as an End-Time icon or sign of Israeli resistance, we will reflect on how senseless zealotry and "causeless hatred" brought the Jewish State to its end. In the *Minor Tractates of the Babylonian Talmud*, Rabbi Johanan asks, "What was the cause of the first destruction of Jerusalem? Idolatry. And of the second destruction? Causeless hatred." Jesus did not embrace the way of flight from society, nor of fighting Israel's enemies. We will reflect on his third way, marked by the Cross, Resurrection and Parousia.

We will build on this theme of resisting millennium madness in a visit to a Jewish Settlements in Erfat and a Palestinian refugee camp in Deheisheh and reflect on the ill effects of western "God-at-War" theology and "End-Time" beliefs on both present-day Jewish and Arab communities.

Taking a trip to Jerusalem is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Our hope is that when you go to the Holy Land, you will do it in a way that gives you something to share when you return home, having visited the biblical places and that illustrate the Bible prophesy passages you know so well.

5. How can Covenant Eschatology best be taught in a Middle East context?

Our visit to Jerusalem in September and our Study Tour in 2001 are part of a larger aim—to see the good news of the change of ages once again ring forth "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

We realize this desire to see biblical renewal sound forth where the New Covenant was first born is a long-term project, not a short-term crusade. We go as learners, servants and storytellers, not as teachers, masters or doctrinaires. The Holy Land has experienced far too many Crusades, the

latest being Jewish and Christian Zionism. Transmillennialism™ will not walk that path. The fulfilled life in Christ that comes from covenant eschatology should not only be taught, it should be caught through life-to-life encounters.

In a way, I feel like it's the early years of the gospel again, as Paul said to the Philippians. In this seed sowing stage, we will continue to look for opportunities to spend time with the church in the Holy Land. This coming February, we will return to participate in an International Conference that Sabeel is convening. Leaders from 40 countries are expected to attend this conference in Bethlehem run and taught by Palestinian Christians. We will find where God is already working and encourage its fulfillment based on eschatology.

We will seek the welfare of Jerusalem—of all its citizens. We hope that others can follow us, not just on brief study tours, but on sabbaticals at places like Tantur—the Institute for Theological Studies. And in years to come, we hope to invite Bible scholars from the Middle East to come and minister at our national Transmillennial® conferences.

Besides these opportunities there is a big need for youth and young adults to take a year or more in Jerusalem and serve as self-supported interns to Arab or Messianic ministries. Some of the most effective work being done today by westerners has come through this doorway, and through American-Palestinian or Israeli marriages!

Based on what we have seen, now is the time to believe God for the growth of Transmillennialism™, 30-60-100 fold in the Holy Land. Our invitation to Jewish Christians is nothing more than to rediscover Jesus as a Jewish Messiah in the context of Second Temple Judaism. And our message to Arab Christians is nothing more than to rediscover their own heritage and what Jesus' fulfilled message was to the first Palestinians who followed Jesus. And our invitation to the American church is nothing more than, "Don't let the feast begin until all God's children are at the table."