

## Chapter 13

### Jerusalem, Jerusalem

We're several months into the "Tribulation" now, though almost nobody knows it yet. *Tribulation?* Actually, things are looking pretty rosy since the new European leader pushed through his historic peace plan for the Middle East. The world, it seems, has finally relaxed. They've decided to "give peace a chance."

And why not? The world's *real* troublemakers, the Christians (at least the intolerant, narrow-minded variety) disappeared some time back. But there have been no other incidents since then, and the world has finally stopped holding its breath. It looks like it was a one-time phenomenon. Understandably, there was widespread panic immediately after "the Event," but things have settled back down; everyone has had a chance to reflect. Now people are starting to openly admit that they're kind of glad those people are gone. The media's coverage of the aftermath has managed to subtly shift everyone's real recollection of the missing people toward a caricature of unbalanced religious fanaticism. *Who knew that a relative handful of lunatic-fringe religious radicals could cause so much divisiveness in the world? Their snooty "God-loves-me" pretensions turned out to be completely backward, didn't they? If their god was real, and if he really loved them, he would have protected them from whatever it was that killed them all. All that talk about sin, repentance and salvation—what a load of holy hogwash! We don't need to be saved from anything. We're just fine the way we are.*

Strangely, though, this "cult" is proving hard to kill. Here and there, little pockets of new believers are spontaneously springing up. Quite a few of them are Jews—surprising because of their previous animosity toward the Church's view of Yahshua of Nazareth. But now that a *real* Church split has taken place, it's getting easier to separate the doctrine from the dogma—the core beliefs of Christianity from the liturgy and tradition that had made it so hard to see for so long. Christianity, they're discovering, was never about genuflecting, attending mass and reciting the rosary; it had nothing to do with catechisms, funny backward collars, and cathedrals with stained-glass windows. It had everything to do with what this Jesus guy did—or did not do—a long time ago. These Jews (and a fair number of equally insubordinate gentiles) are finding it hard to explain how a simple itinerant rabbi could still be causing such obvious discomfort among the ruling elite—two thousand years after he was executed as a common criminal—if there weren't something more to the story. Could it be true? Was Yahshua actually God in the flesh?

I'm admittedly speculating here, but I have reason to believe that many of the world's Jews will be driven to introspection during these days. Obscure passages

from prophets like Hosea could begin to take on new meaning, if only they're willing to give them a fresh look: **"Then Yahweh said to me, 'Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of Yahweh for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.' So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. And I said to her, 'You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man—so, too, will I be toward you.' For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king. They shall fear Yahweh and His goodness in the latter days."** (Hosea 3:1-5) The prophet was told to buy a prostitute/slave and marry her, a picture of God's redemption of unfaithful Israel. Just as the woman would have to live in celibate seclusion for "many days," Israel would live without her "husband" Yahweh, bereft of the temple sacrifices and priestly intercession, until the "latter days." But at that time she would seek God and His Messiah once again. Thoughtful Jews can't help but wonder at the events that are shaping their lives and ponder the ramifications of prophecies like this. Some of them, few and scattered at first, follow the trail of their scriptures to the cross of Christ.

But becoming a worshiper of Yahshua in the New Age is not without its consequences. It's kind of like the days of the early Church under Roman persecution, only worse because Nero and Domitian didn't have sophisticated electronic eavesdropping capabilities. Now, in every "civilized" country in the world, the dawning era of utopian "peace and safety" is so jealously guarded by the ruling elite that new believers in Christ are regarded with suspicion, if not outright hostility. They're soon dubbed "fundos" by the cynical media—short for fundamentalists—to keep them from being confused with the peace-loving and cooperative mainline Christian churches, the Catholics, Protestants, and "independents" (i.e., the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other quasi-Christian denominations). As the weeks turn into months since the signing of the historic Mid-East peace accords, nation after nation declares the fundos to be an illegal terrorist group, though they've never blown anything up or even threatened anyone. In the name of religious tolerance, these believers in the deity of Yahshua find themselves being feared and persecuted—even by their own families.

Yahshua had warned them what it would be like: **"When they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."** (Mark 13:11-13) We should not be shocked by the lack of loyalty Yahshua predicted here. The Nazis during World War II taught us how it works: if you were caught harboring a

“criminal”—in their case, a Jew or a member of the underground resistance—your whole family, or perhaps even your whole village, would be punished without mercy. As Muhammad once observed, “He who fears will mind.”

Another outgrowth of our present politically correct insanity may come to fruition by this time. As indicated by such recent books as Dr. Dean Hamer’s *The God Gene: How Faith Is Hard-Wired Into Our Genes*, the current thought is that the propensity for “spiritually” is genetic. This follows the same line of reasoning that says that homosexuality (like cancer and heart disease) is a matter of genetic predisposition—thus there is no choice or responsibility involved. (How convenient.) But by the Tribulation, the shoe could be on the other foot: Christianity could eventually be considered a disease rather than an intellectual choice one makes based on logic, evidence, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Developing a trust in Yahweh for one’s salvation will come to be classed as a mental illness, sort of like believing you’re Santa Claus. *You’d have to be nuts to believe this stuff. You people need to be watched—closely!*

People who come to faith after the rapture will be in for a hard time. The “fundos” (the epithet is my invention, you understand—I have no idea what the Tribulation saints will really be called, but I’ll bet it won’t be pretty) will take comfort in Yahshua’s words, **“He who endures to the end shall be saved.”** We can’t expect them to have a very good handle on the nuances of eschatological chronology, of course, especially now that being found with a Bible in your possession can get you sent “downtown.” Many won’t even know that they’ll need to hide out for the better part of seven years if they expect to “endure to the end” of the Tribulation. Somehow, though, they’ll know that Yahshua can be trusted to keep His word. And they’ll hang on to that for dear life.

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As we have seen, there are undeniable indications that the Jewish temple will stand once again on Mount Moriah during the Tribulation. And if my deductions are correct, the Antichrist himself will be the one who makes it happen; the Jews may (or may not) want it, but he *needs* it.

We saw the first indication of T3 (the third temple) in Daniel’s prophecy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. type of the Antichrist: **“He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.”** (Daniel 8:11-12)

Although this is now history (it happened in 168 B.C.) we're pretty sure that the temple and "abomination of desolation" references also apply to one coming after Antiochus because they were repeated in Daniel's description of the yet-future 70<sup>th</sup> week: **"Then he [the prince who is to come, i.e., the Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [seven years]; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."** (Daniel 9:27) As I have pointed out before, you can't bring an end to something that hasn't begun. T3 is required if the prophecy is to be fulfilled as literally as those that have already come to pass.

We'll discuss these "abominations" a few chapters hence. For now, just notice that Yahshua referred to this very prophecy during His Olivet discourse. **"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.**" (Matthew 24:15-16) The "holy place" is a specific room within the temple. Thus the Messiah Himself is confirming that T3 must be in place in the last days (and when it is, be prepared to run for your life if you happen to be anywhere near Jerusalem).

One final confirmation comes from Paul, who tells us *why* the Antichrist needs the temple. **"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away [apostasy] comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."** (II Thessalonians 2:3-4) That's right. If you want to pass yourself off as Zeus, you've got to sit yourself down in the temple of Zeus. If you want people to believe you're Aphrodite, you need to show up at her temple. But if you covet the adoration of those who would worship the true and living Creator of the universe, you're going to have to convince everybody that you are Yahweh himself, come in the flesh. And to do that, you'll need to show yourself off in His temple, built where His word says it belongs, on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.

Observant Jews know that a rebuilt temple is in their future, and they're expecting the Messiah Himself to build it. **"And He [the 'Branch,' i.e., Messiah] shall build the temple of Yahweh.... He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne."** (Zechariah 6:12-13) Moreover, they're expecting this temple to be spectacular, even more so than Solomon's: **"[The nations] shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says Yahweh, Lord of hosts. 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says Yahweh. 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former... and in this place I will give peace....'"** (Haggai 2:7-9) This can't be referring to the temple Herod remodeled (just in time to be visited by Yahshua), for no "peace" was forthcoming from the temple during His first-century advent.

None of this expectation will be lost on the Antichrist. In fact, I believe (SF5) that in the wake of (or perhaps as a part of) his landmark treaty assuring peace between the Jews and Muslims, he will persuade the world to turn the temple mount into some kind of ecumenical worship center. The Dome of the Rock, the third-“holiest” site in Islam, is already there, of course, built in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century to commemorate Muhammad’s “night’s journey.” (This is the hallucination he had in which he went to the temple, which wasn’t there at the time, and from there to heaven, upon a mythical flying jackass called a *buraq*. Mind you, he was at the Ka’aba when he had the dream—effectively demonstrating that you can’t get to heaven from Mecca.)

The question of the hour will be: must the Dome be destroyed in order to make room for the Jewish temple? Many temple enthusiasts today insist it must, because (they say) it occupies the exact spot upon which Solomon’s (and Ezra’s) temples were built. It is reasonably certain that the Dome *was* built upon the foundation of the second-century Roman temple to Jupiter (read: Tammuz), right down to the octagonal footprint. A nearby Roman basilica on the southern end of the temple mount provided the foundation for the al-Aqsa Mosque. The traditional view is that both the Roman temple (which was retasked to “Christian” purposes after Constantine’s “conversion”) and the subsequent Muslim shrine were built at the site of Herod’s grandiose redo of the second temple. Two questions remain. Was it? And if so, did Herod build at precisely the same place Solomon had? There are at least two other theories that are clearly plausible.

Bear in mind that the temple mount is huge—it covers forty-five acres. (To help you get a clear picture of this, a football field is about one acre.) It is a roughly trapezoid-shaped platform surrounded by a retaining wall. Its width is 910 feet on the south side and 1,025 feet on the north; the length is 1,520 feet on the east and 1,580 feet—about 3/10 of a mile—on the west. Considering the relatively small footprint of Solomon’s temple (if you exclude the court of the gentiles) there would be plenty of room to put a new Jewish temple—*plus* a Christian cathedral, *plus* shrines for several other popular religions—up there without removing the Dome of the Rock, and without any serious overcrowding. I believe that this is precisely what the Antichrist will propose: a place where all of the world’s great religions can come together in peace and harmony, a sort of equal-opportunity new-age Acropolis. If truth is relative and god is all in your mind, it makes perfect sense. Devout Jews, of course, will be mortified, but they will have little choice in the matter; by the time this happens, their very existence will be endangered. It will literally be a case of put up or shut up.

Mount Moriah is actually a ridge running roughly north to south through old Jerusalem. Its highest peak is actually a few hundred yards north of the temple mount—*outside* the old city wall—near the ancient limestone quarry once known

as Golgotha, the place of the skull. The mount's bedrock base is relatively flat on the northern end; it peeks through the pavement inside the Dome of the Rock. But south of the shrine, the natural mountain slopes downhill. The platform there is supported by pillars and arches—the southeast corner of the temple mount is a good 150 feet higher than the bedrock that supports it.

So where was the temple? Tuvia Sagiv, a prominent Israeli architect, has championed a site to the south of the Dome of the Rock. Though tradition places the Roman garrison, the Antonia Fortress, to the north and adjacent to the temple mount, Sagiv places it in the center of the temple mount, right where the Dome of the Rock stands now, with Solomon's temple at a lower elevation, down the hill to the south, closer to the City of David. Some background: ancient sources report that Herod's temple was the highest building in Jerusalem—that is, until he, in deference to his Roman masters, built the Fortress of Antonia even higher. Josephus says that the view of the temple from the north was blocked by the "Bizita Hill" (which is the summit of Moriah, just behind Golgotha). What view Moriah didn't block, the tower of Antonia would have.

I'm having trouble buying into Sagiv's southern theory for several reasons. First, David and Solomon, out of reverence for Yahweh, would have placed the temple on the highest bedrock they could find within the city walls (Golgotha/Bizita, though higher, is outside the old city). Second, the southern end of the temple mount was built up to a level platform only in the days of Herod (you can still see the signature Herodian beveled edges on the huge foundation stones of the western wall), so there would be no elevation differential to speak of over the whole 45-acre complex. Indeed, the place called "Solomon's stables" were *beneath* the arch-supported southern end of the mount. I can imagine that the high priests might have had something to say about placing the holy of holies over a stable. Remember, Herod was a practical man: the whole reason for remodeling the second temple in the first place was to bribe the Jewish establishment into accepting him (an Idumean, not a Jew) as their king. (And *that* scenario is starting to sound awfully familiar.)

Sagiv has other reasons for suggesting a southern temple site, but most of them seem to me to be based on assumptions concerning present-day landmark elevations in Jerusalem. The modern city is built many feet above the actual historical locations. The rubble from being razed and rebuilt again and again over the last three millennia makes elevation calculations a highly speculative endeavor. And I can't get over the fact that ancient temples were *never* built halfway down a hillside when there was a convenient bedrock summit nearby: look at the Greeks' Parthenon.

That brings us to the second non-traditional site for the temple—the "northern conjecture." Dr. Asher Kaufman, former professor of physics at Hebrew

University, has for several decades been advocating a location 330 feet *north* of the Dome of the Rock. (I *told you* the place was big). The bedrock of Mount Moriah's summit is just beneath the paving stones for that whole distance. Kaufman places the holy of holies at the small Muslim-built structure called the Dome of the Spirits (alternately called the Dome of the Tablets).

This octagonal shrine lines up precisely with the eastern, or “golden” gate facing the Mount of Olives, the one the Muslims filled in with stone centuries ago. The eastern gate is a source of Muslim concern and Jewish hope because of the words of the Prophet Ezekiel: **“Afterward he [the angel] brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.... And the glory of Yahweh came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of Yahweh filled the temple.”** (Ezekiel 43:1-2, 4-5) This explains why, from time immemorial, the Jews have buried their dead on the slopes of the Valley of Kidron right outside the eastern gate—they want to be the first to experience the returning Shekinah, the glory of Yahweh.

It also explains why Muslim graves crowd the opposite side of the valley, and why they've blocked the eastern gate with massive stones: they want to *stop* God from entering their city. I don't get it. If Allah and Yahweh are the same (which is what they'd like you to believe), then they're trying to stop their own God. If Yahweh isn't God, they've got nothing to worry about—there's no point in trying to prevent the arrival of Someone who doesn't exist. But if Yahweh really *is* God, how do they expect a bit of masonry and a few Muslim ghosts to stop Him? Logic has never been the Islamic strong suit.

The eastern gate *will* be shut, but not by Muslims. **“Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And Yahweh said to me, ‘This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because Yahweh, God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut.’”** (Ezekiel 44:1-2) As we shall see in chapter 26, Millennial temple architecture, including its location, won't have a whole lot in common with what we see in historic Jerusalem. Ezekiel's eastern gate and Herod's are two different things. But if you're interested in how the gates of Jerusalem figure into coming events, ponder this: **“Have mercy on me, O Yahweh! Consider my trouble from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the gates of death, that I may tell of all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. I will rejoice in Your salvation.”** (Psalm 9:13-14)

Besides the prophecy concerning the direction from which the Spirit of God will enter the temple is the fact that the door of the temple—all the way back to the wilderness tabernacle—was supposed to face the east. Lining it up with the eastern entrance to the mount therefore makes perfect architectural sense. The fact

that the Dome of the Spirits lines up with the eastern gate, then, is significant circumstantial evidence.

It should be noted that the temple mount today is under the supervision of the Waqf, the Supreme Muslim Council, who have consistently forbidden any systematic archaeological investigation of the site. But Yahweh, who is not particularly impressed with Muslim councils, has providentially (if not miraculously) opened some avenues of insight. A few years back, during a severe drought, four cisterns atop the temple mount began mysteriously filling with water. The Muslims, whose god doesn't *do* miracles, envisioned a massive plumbing leak in pipes beneath the platform. Panicked, they started pumping out water and tearing up paving stones, trying to find the problem. In their quest for the leak, the Muslim technicians inadvertently unearthed the south foundation wall of Solomon's temple—only a few meters north of the Dome of the Spirits. This confirmed Kaufman's hypothesis that the Dome of the Spirits marked the location of the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of Solomon's temple. (The water, by the way, was no miracle. It turned out that somebody had been overwatering the olive trees on the north end of the temple mount.)

Michael Rood, a self-described Messianic rabbi, happened to be in Jerusalem at the time, and heard about the strange goings on. Rood says that he, pretending to be an ignorant American tourist, went up onto the temple mount and examined the Dome of the Spirits, or more specifically, its floor. The Dome of the Spirits is an eight-sided structure, but a careful examination of the floor revealed that its base is actually one large square stone whose corners project out beyond the Dome's supporting pillars. In the center of each edge of the floor stone is a square keystone. Rood sensed that there was more to this pattern than mere aesthetics, since the whole floor of the temple would have been covered with cypress planks (I Kings 6:15). After being chased off the temple mount by angry Muslim watchmen (he actually had to be rescued by the Israeli police), Rood formed a hypothesis he hoped would unlock one of the greatest mysteries of all time: what ever became of the ark of the covenant?

The story of the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar's Captain of the Guard, Nebuzaradan, in 586 B.C. contains this record: **"The bronze pillars that were in the house of Yahweh, and the carts and the bronze Sea that were in the house of Yahweh, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried their bronze to Babylon. They also took away the pots, the shovels, the trimmers, the spoons, and all the bronze utensils with which the priests ministered. The firepans and the basins, the things of solid gold and solid silver, the captain of the guard took away. The two pillars, one Sea, and the carts, which Solomon had made for the house of Yahweh, the bronze of all these articles was beyond measure."** (II Kings 25:13-16) Sometimes lists are significant for what they *don't* contain. What's missing here? Only the most important stuff: the ark of the

covenant (with the integral mercy seat), the solid gold lamp stand, the altar of incense, and the table of showbread—things that since the days of the wilderness wanderings had been crucial to Jewish ritual worship as outlined in the Torah. You'd think that if Nebuzaradan had found these things, they would have been listed along with the spoons and shovels. Otherwise it's like reporting a burglary in the Smithsonian and somehow forgetting to mention that the thieves got away with the Hope diamond.

Shishak of Egypt and Sennacherib of Assyria had also taken booty from the temple, but the ark wasn't mentioned then, either. Actually, the last Biblical mention of the ark of the covenant is in II Chronicles 35, during the reign of Josiah (about 621 B.C.). That leaves only thirty-five years unaccounted for, increasing the likelihood that its disappearance had something to do with the final Babylonian siege. It is therefore with great interest that we read this tidbit from the Apocrypha:

“...The prophet [Jeremiah], having received an oracle, ordered that the tent and the ark should follow with him, and...he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God. Jeremiah came and found a cave-dwelling, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense; then he sealed up the entrance. Some of those who followed him came up intending to mark the way, but could not find it. When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: ‘The place shall remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy. Then Yahweh will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated.’” (II Maccabees 2:4-8)

It's not scripture, but it may provide us some clues. At first glance, it seems to be saying that Jeremiah took the ark to Mount Nebo, the place (in modern Jordan) from which Moses viewed the inheritance of Israel. But the countryside was crawling with Babylonians at the time. A siege wall had been built to prevent just such movements. So a journey like this seems highly unlikely. More probable is that Jeremiah's *oracle* is being described—he was seeing things that, as with Moses, you couldn't really see from where you were standing. Equally possible is that the II Maccabees passage has been mistranslated—that the actual meaning is, “He went out to the mountain which Moses had seen when he had gone up to view the inheritance of God,” i.e., Moriah, which is easily visible from Nebo on a clear day.

If that's the case, here's what's happening: Jeremiah got a revelation from Yahweh about how to protect the ark until “God gathers His people.” Solomon had provided a “specially consecrated” place, a “cave-dwelling,” where the ark and the other tabernacle furnishings could be hidden until God chose to disclose

them. But where? And how? You didn't just move the ark on a whim; it took four consecrated priests and a great deal of care—people had died just by touching it. Further, it had been over four hundred years since Solomon had designed the temple. Any special arrangements he had made for the ark's safety had been long since forgotten. But Nebuzaradan and Company were beating down the door. That's why, as it says in II Maccabees, Jeremiah needed an "oracle" from God. Well, what's a prophet for, after all?

Lots of seemingly unrelated factors came together in Rood's mind to solve the puzzle (I'm presuming he figured this out—I know *I* didn't). Puzzle piece #1: Solomon's treaty with Pharaoh and subsequent marriage to his daughter. This apparently happened before Solomon's famous request for wisdom (I Kings 3:9). What did Pharaoh have that Solomon needed that was so proprietary it required a royal marriage alliance?

Puzzle piece #2: The two hollow bronze columns that stood outside the entrance to the Holy Place. They were mentioned above among the things that were hauled off to Babylon. They held nothing up, and had no apparent symbolic function. Worse, there are textual discrepancies concerning their height: are these contradictions or clues?

Puzzle piece #3: Geology. Jerusalem is built on limestone. Local quarries like the one near the top of Mount Moriah produced huge amounts of a beautiful off-white stone that lent a certain architectural continuity to the city—one that continues to this day. Limestone is not like granite: it is relatively easy to cut and excavate, and ground water can create natural tunnels and caverns through it. Moriah is riddled with underground passages, both natural and manmade.

Puzzle piece #4: Tectonics. Jerusalem sits upon a major fault system and it's situated only a few miles from the edge of a continental plate. It has seen many earthquakes in its history. Two in particular are important to our study, the one on Passover, A.D. 33, and a future one that will split the Mount of Olives.

Okay. Enough with the mystery. First, it's clear that Solomon didn't have a problem with asking for directions. If there was a technology or discipline he needed that the Jews hadn't mastered, he used consultants from neighboring nations, like Hiram of Tyre (not the King of the same name, but a craftsman whose mother was Jewish), who knew how to cast and fabricate the large bronze items Solomon needed for the temple. Second, whenever Pharaoh's daughter is mentioned in scripture, it's invariably in the context of building the temple. What ancient and esoteric art did the Egyptians hold the patent on? How about sand hydraulics?

Hold that thought for a moment while we look at the two bronze columns, or pillars, standing outside the front door of the temple. In I Kings 7:15-16 they are

described as being hollow and eighteen cubits tall (somewhere between 27 and 31 feet, depending on the length of your standard cubit). The lily-shaped capitals were cast of solid bronze and were said to be five cubits tall. But in II Kings 25:17, where we're reviewing what the Babylonians hauled away, they're described as being *three* cubits tall. What gives?

Rood put two and two together and came up with this: the pillars and their capitals were part of an elaborate fulcrum and lever system that Solomon built beneath the temple. When sand was released from within a piston beneath the Holy of Holies, the lever began to move. The force was supplied by the weight of the capitals as they began to sink into the hollow columns. That's where the two missing cubits went. The immense mass of the solid bronze capitals depressed the short end of the lever (requiring the fulcrum to be somewhere beneath the Holy Place). The long end raised a subterranean room (an elevator, if you will) about eight feet—right into the Holy of Holies. Jeremiah and four priests then placed the ark and the other pieces into the “elevator.” At this point, sand was released from within the pillars, allowing the lever to return to its original position, in turn lowering the elevator with the sacred furnishings inside. Obviously, this procedure could only be done once.

I may be reading too much into this, but when Solomon was dedicating the first temple, he announced, **“Yahweh said He would dwell in the dark cloud (Hebrew *araphel*, a gross, thick darkness). I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to dwell in forever.”** (I Kings 8:12-13) The first statement could be construed (in hindsight) to mean that Yahweh knew the ark of the covenant would be hidden in a dark cave for thousands of years. And Hebrew poetic structure notwithstanding, the couplet that follows could actually mean what it seems to—that Solomon made *two* places for the Shekinah, the Holy of Holies and a secret hiding place. Bear in mind that “forever” in Hebrew doesn't necessarily mean “until the end of time,” but merely a very long, undetermined span of time.

If Michael Rood is correct, the square floor slab that he saw in the Dome of the Spirits is actually the roof of Solomon's elevator. He surmises that having four priests stand on the four keystones at the edges of the slab was the trigger mechanism that released the sand in the piston, starting the whole process. This is all only a theory, mind you. The Waqf isn't about to let a bunch of infidel archaeologists tear up the Dome of the Spirits so they can test their hypothesis. And frankly, if this is all we had to go on, I probably wouldn't have brought it up. But there's more to the story. Much more.

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Back in 1978, amateur archaeologist Ron Wyatt and his two sons were in the Sinai Peninsula searching for the site where the nation of Israel crossed the Red Sea two steps ahead of the pursuing Egyptian armies. (He found it, by the way—right down to the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty chariot wheels strewn across the sea floor of the Gulf of Aqaba. It's a fascinating story, but alas, beyond the scope of this book). Wyatt got severely sunburned and had to return to Jerusalem. There, he was strolling near the escarpment known as "Gordon's Calvary" with a local authority, chatting about Roman antiquities, when he stopped, pointed, and said, "That's Jeremiah's grotto, and the ark of the covenant is in there."

Wyatt later said he had no idea why he had blurted out such a ridiculous thing. He had never even contemplated a search for the ark. But his companion's response was equally baffling. Rather than laughing in his face, he offered Wyatt the chance to dig for it, promising the permits, lodging, and even meals. Wyatt, an anesthetist by profession, went back to the U.S. with a head full of questions. After studying for a year, he returned to Israel. One fact that had intrigued him was his discovery that King Uzziah, a hundred years before the Babylonian onslaught, had built an armory of siege-defense weapons capable of wreaking havoc over a thousand feet out from the city walls. Therefore, it made sense that Nebuzaradan would have built his siege wall at least that far back from the city wall. The prophet Jeremiah had been warning the city populace for forty years about their impending doom—he *knew* the city would be totally destroyed. Therefore, the only safe place for the ark would be underground, in a cave or tunnel somewhere beneath no-man's land—between the city wall and the siege wall. The location Wyatt had spontaneously singled out fit that description.

He and his sons began the excavation uphill from, i.e. west of, the famous "skull face" that's eroded into the limestone quarry wall behind what is now Jerusalem's central bus station. As they dug down, they found the remains of an ancient building that had once covered the whole site, finally coming upon a platform-like shelf of bedrock sticking about eight feet out from the cliff face. In this shelf he found a squarish stone—too regular to be a natural feature. It turned out to be a cover for a hole that had been cut into the bedrock, twelve or thirteen inches square and twenty-three and a half inches deep. This hole had a large crack running off to one side, which Wyatt surmised to have been caused by an earthquake since there were no tool marks on it. He could see that the crack extended far deeper than the two-foot hole. It was pretty obvious what they had discovered: a place of Roman execution—crucifixion. The holes were there to hold the crosses upright. More holes were soon found, in front of and spread out to the left and right of the first one. There were three niches about fourteen feet above the central cross hole that could have held large signs describing the crime of the "guest of honor." The location was perfect: not too far from the Damascus Gate of the old city, on the main road north out of town. This execution site would

have been at about street level at the time of Christ, though it was many feet underground now.

The building they found could well have been a church or shrine once erected over the site—long before Constantine’s mother came and declared another place to be where Christ’s crucifixion had happened. They found several Roman coins, but none was dated after the year 135—when Hadrian had finished what Titus had started in 70, squashing Bar Kochba’s rebellion, expelling all of the Jews from Jerusalem, and renaming Judea “Palestina” after the long-extinct Philistines. Team Wyatt found what appeared to be a stone-slab altar positioned above the center cross hole. They also discovered a huge round stone disk, almost two feet thick and some thirteen feet in diameter, which Ron speculated could have been the stone that had been rolled against the entrance of the tomb of Yahshua—which was only a short walk from the dig. (The groove in front of the tomb door, by the way, fits perfectly.) If it was, it would have been over twice the size of the biggest seal-stone they’d ever found, but then again, both Matthew and Mark had described the stone as being “*very large*.”

The dig was now approaching its third year. The team moved out beyond the bedrock platform with the cross receptacles and continued clearing rubble, meticulously sifting through tons of debris and cataloging numerous finds such as Roman coins and nine-inch nails. They dug until they hit bedrock, that is, the lowest level to which the old quarry had been mined. A word of explanation is in order here. Old Jerusalem was built on a hill, Moriah, surrounded by valleys on three sides, Kidron on the east, curving around to the south, meeting the valley of Hinnom (a.k.a. Gehenna) on the west. The Tyropean, or “Cheesemaker,” valley runs up the middle. But on the north, Mount Moriah continues rising well beyond the city walls, making defense problematical. The solution was to quarry the limestone for the walls and buildings from near the summit of Moriah, forming a broad trench, or “dry moat,” across the north side of town, making what would have been a ten-foot-high wall into a sixty-foot barrier. This also made moving the quarried stones to their intended building sites a downhill proposition. It was the original win-win scenario.

At the bottom of their dig, team Wyatt had reached an impasse. They knew that the ark, if it were here at all, would have been hidden in a cave, though they hadn’t encountered one as they dug down through the rubble. Wyatt’s sons, Ronny and Danny, suggested chiseling directly into the limestone quarry face—an arduous undertaking with a slim probability of success. After all, they weren’t even sure there was a cave, much less one here in this spot. But with no other options, Ron finally agreed.

Their efforts were rewarded. Soon after they began tunneling into the rock face, they broke into an open space about fifteen feet high and equally wide. They

had discovered the first of a series of natural caverns within Mount Moriah. It took over a year to open and explore what turned out to be an extensive labyrinth of caves and tunnels beneath the mountain. With 1981 drawing to a close, all three researchers were showing the strain of their labors. Ron's sons were both sent home to the U.S. with severe pneumonia-like symptoms, while he continued excavating with the help of an intrepid and trustworthy local man they called "James."

Ron continued exploring the caves with James, climbing up a natural chimney into a tunnel so tight he had to exhale to get through. Breaking off a sixteen-inch stalactite that blocked a small hole leading to another cave, he peered inside. It appeared to be a large chamber, filled to within eighteen inches of the top with rocks, softball-sized and larger. Wyatt enlarged the hole with a hammer and chisel enough for his slender assistant to slide himself in. The normally unflappable James didn't stay inside for long. Almost immediately, he scrambled back out of the hole trembling and shouting, "What's in there? What's in there? I'm not going back in there!" James insisted he had seen nothing, but he was nevertheless consumed with terror, a terror so real that he beat a hasty retreat from the entire cave system and refused to go back in—ever.

It was January 6, 1982. Ron Wyatt was now all alone in a cave that had just given his trusted assistant a terminal case of the willies. He reflected that without James' uncharacteristic reaction, he would never have given the chamber a second glance. His flashlight beam caught something shiny beneath the pile of stones, and he started removing them, one by one. It wasn't long before he encountered some wooden timbers, dry-rotted with age. Next he found animal skins, so old that they turned to powder when he touched them. Beneath the skins Wyatt saw what few archaeologists had seen since the days of Howard Carter: the glint of gold.

In the confined space, Ron examined what he could of the object, which wasn't much. The gold overlaid a wooden structure. It had a flat top and a raised molding down the side: a bell, a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate—the same pattern that had been prescribed for the robe of the High Priest's ephod in Exodus 28:33. This obviously wasn't the ark of the covenant, but could it be the table of showbread, one of the other original pieces of furniture from the wilderness tabernacle? Ron's heart raced.

Without removing the rocks, Wyatt couldn't be sure of what he was looking at. That would happen, of course, but on this day it was all he could manage to take a cursory survey of the situation. Sweeping his flashlight across the small gap between the rock pile and the top of the chamber, he noticed something else—not down among the rocks, but on the ceiling. There was a large crack in the limestone, reminiscent of one he had first seen many months before—the crevasse

that had intersected the square hole the Romans had chiseled into the bedrock for their cross to rest in. Although it was hard to keep your bearings in the twisting maze of tunnels, it seemed to Wyatt that the cavern he was in was somewhere directly beneath the crucifixion site. This could well be the other end of that same earthquake crevasse.

Slowly, painfully, the archaeologist crawled over the top of the rocks toward the rear of the chamber to get a better look at the crack. But when he got there, something else caught his eye, a large flat stone, obviously man-tooled. It was broken in two pieces, the smaller of which had shifted slightly to one side. Though it was too close to the ceiling of the cavern to get a good look inside, it was immediately apparent to Wyatt what this was: the lid of the stone case that enclosed the ark of the covenant itself. He examined what he could from his cramped position, taking note of some black stains splashed onto where it had split apart. And then he remembered the crack in the ceiling, directly above it. Rolling over and shining his flashlight onto the crevasse, he noticed that its inner walls were coated with the same sort of blackish substance.

Before returning to Israel, Wyatt had studied the ark and its function for months. Basically, it was a wooden box, covered with gold, with gold rings at the corners. If it had to be moved, four priests used two poles placed through the rings. Attached to the box was a golden “mercy seat” running its entire four-foot length. It had a solid gold winged angel standing at each end, facing each other; the wings on the side facing the front of the ark rested at the angels’ sides, and the wings toward the back reached out and touched each other, meeting in the center.

The Torah had described it like this: **“Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits was its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold all around it. And he cast for it four rings of gold to be set in its four corners: two rings on one side, and two rings on the other side of it. He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. And he put the poles into the rings at the sides of the ark, to bear the ark. He also made the mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits was its length and a cubit and a half its width. He made two cherubim of beaten gold; he made them of one piece at the two ends of the mercy seat: one cherub at one end on this side, and the other cherub at the other end on that side. He made the cherubim at the two ends of one piece with the mercy seat. The cherubim spread out their wings above, and covered the mercy seat with their wings. They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat.”** (Exodus 37:1-9)

One day each year, the blood of the sacrifice was to be physically applied to a particular spot on the mercy seat by the High Priest: **“He [Aaron] shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. Then**

he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.” (Leviticus 16:14-16) Yahweh had provided this way for the sins of the people to be covered, albeit temporarily. The blood bulls and goats couldn’t atone for our sins perfectly, however. Perfect forgiveness would require a perfect sacrifice.

Suddenly, Wyatt saw it all. The cave, the crucifixions, the crevasse...the dark stains could be only one thing: blood. And the crack? Had not the gospel writers recorded an earthquake? Yes. That’s when the veil hiding the Holy of Holies had been ripped apart: **“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.”** (Matthew 27:51) Not just any rocks had fractured, but the bedrock outcropping supporting the cross of Christ—the very rocks the gospel witnesses were so intently watching. The lid of the stone sarcophagus that had contained the ark of the covenant for over six hundred years shattered. And the blood of Yahweh’s perfect sacrifice had poured from Yahshua’s wounds, flowed through the heart of the earth, and one final time had been sprinkled by the ultimate High Priest upon the mercy seat. God had made His sacrifice. It was finished.

If he hadn’t already been lying on his back upon a bed of angular fist-sized stones with the ceiling of the chamber inches from his face, Ron Wyatt would have fallen to his knees. As it was, he merely fainted. Indiana Jones, he was not.

Wyatt was eventually able to explore the room and its contents more thoroughly. The chamber turned out to be twenty-two feet long and twelve feet wide at one end, narrowing somewhat at the other. It was obvious that the artifacts had not been brought in (nor could they be removed) the way he’d entered. Ron located the cavern’s original entrance and found that it opened onto a passageway, a large tunnel that was blocked with stones in both directions. There had to be an underground passage leading off in the direction of the city, because that’s where the artifacts had come from. (When Jeremiah had moved the ark, Jerusalem was under a state of siege—nobody was wandering around outside the walls.)

Later, using a colonoscope to look inside the stone case, Wyatt was able to see enough to convince him that this was indeed the resting place of the ark of the covenant. He was also able to positively identify the table of showbread, the golden altar of incense, the golden censer, the seven-branched menorah, a large sword, and an ephod, among a large collection of ancient Hebrew artifacts.

He also verified that the earthquake crevasse in the cross hole *was* the other end of the crack he saw in the ceiling of the chamber. By feeding a tape measure into the crack, he determined that the quake had split twenty feet of solid bedrock.

Even before the permit for his original dig was rescinded, Ron had established to his own satisfaction that the original tunnel to the cavern would have begun in Zedekiah's Cave, an immense underground arm of the quarry that extends some 750 feet into the heart of Mount Moriah. He believed that the ark would have been disguised, carried through the streets from the temple mount (perhaps masquerading as a funeral procession), lowered down through a secret passage into Zedekiah's cave, and taken to its hiding place from there. Rood's hypothesis on the other hand would require a tunnel (presumably built under Solomon's directive) from the Holy of Holies to Zedekiah's cave—a distance of some 1,500 feet—and from there to the place where Wyatt discovered it. Either way, the passageway from Zedekiah's cave would have been carefully concealed to keep the Babylonians from finding it.

At this point you're asking, as I did, "Why didn't I see all of this announced on the evening news? Why is the greatest archeological find since King Tut's tomb still virtually unknown? Why haven't the ark of the covenant and the other pieces been brought out?" After all of Wyatt's years of labor, there isn't a shred of physical proof that the ark of the covenant has been found. The photographs that were taken were all mysteriously overexposed—blurred images of unidentifiable shapes (though the cave walls and ceiling in the picture are perfectly clear). No one has actually seen it but Ron Wyatt himself, and Yahweh has now called him home.

God impressed upon Wyatt in the years prior to his death that these things would be made public—and play their part in Yahweh's plan—in His good time and not before. Ron was content with that. Others were not—at least five people have mysteriously died while attempting to exploit the find. The Israeli authorities are naturally reluctant to pursue anything with the explosive emotional potential of the ark. Wars have started over less. So for now, the site remains undisturbed; Wyatt's entrance to his discovery is hidden. Wyatt Archaeological Research, Inc. ([www.wyattmuseum.com](http://www.wyattmuseum.com)) is making plans to continue Ron's work, but they, like their founder, are content to wait upon Yahweh's timing.

And what is Yahweh waiting for? I think it can be safely assumed that He is not interested in having the ark of the covenant—*His* covenant—hailed off to some museum and displayed like a cheap trinket for people to gawk at. *Don't forget to pick up your gold-anodized plastic replica of the ark at the museum gift shop—Get 'em while they're hot.* No, I think he has something a bit more provocative in mind.

It was an eye-opener to me to discover that most Jews today could care less if the temple ever gets rebuilt. It's not so much that they're opposed to it, but they can't see that it would do anything for them. After all, many Jews are practicing atheists, and many of those who are not have devised clever ways to help them cope with the fact that without the temple, they've got no mechanism for atoning for their sins as the Torah prescribes. They couldn't keep the Law of Moses if they tried. Willingly unaware that Yahweh has already fulfilled the Law with the sacrifice of Yahshua, today's devout Jews must engage in a regimen of intense mental gymnastics in order to deal with the fatal conundrum: God has apparently made it impossible to do what He's required them to do. That's why they find it easier to merely follow the traditions that have been handed down to them; they observe their Passover Seders, wear canvas shoes on Yom Kippur, and refrain from eating bacon cheeseburgers...but they don't dare to think too deeply about their sins.

Realistically, this has been the status-quo for Jews since long before the A.D. 70 sack of Jerusalem. It goes all the way back to their 586 B.C. deportation to Babylon. Without the ark of the covenant upon which to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices, they were just going through the motions, like playing soccer without a ball. How could they be sure their sins were being atoned? They weren't performing the rituals properly, and they knew it.

The rituals, though, were never more than symbols, pictures, rehearsals of something else Yahweh had planned. Their prophets had told them that Yahweh was never interested in the blood of bulls and goats, only their love, shown through their obedience. But they never really got it. **"With what shall I come before Yahweh, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"** (Micah 6:6-8) That being said, the letter of the Law still required the ark of the covenant to be there if the temple sacrifices were to be performed "for real." Without it, there's not much point.

But what if the ark were found? What if every Jew on earth suddenly *knew* that it was sitting in a safe place somewhere in Jerusalem, ready to resume its ancient role in the atonement for their sins? Would that change their attitude toward building the temple? I think it would. Instead of a mere handful of zealous enthusiasts like the Temple Faithful (who tried unsuccessfully to blow up the Dome of the Rock a few years back posing as National Geographic researchers) I think the majority of the world's Jews would now find themselves in favor of

rebuilding their holy shrine. Even the atheists would have to think twice. Fundamentalist Muslims, of course, wouldn't like the idea very much.

To get the job done, it would take the greatest feat of diplomatic daring-do of all time. What kind of man could pull it off? The good news is that just such a man is prophesied in the Bible. The bad news is that he's Satan's answer to Yahshua: the Antichrist. Remember what the Antichrist wants to do? He wants to be accepted—worshipped—as the world's Messiah. And how will he do this? **“He sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”** (II Thessalonians 2:4) For that he needs a “temple of God,” and something to sit upon that will show the world that he is God. What better than the ark of the covenant—the mercy seat? You can't say you weren't warned.

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So we've established that the third temple will be built, a project instigated by the Antichrist, hailed by the Jews, and agreed to (perhaps grudgingly, and unquestionably with deceit) by the Muslims. The temple services and sacrifices will be reinstated. And between the time the temple is “opened for business” and the time that the Antichrist declares himself to be God, the temple will function much as it did during the days of Herod—lots of pomp, heavy on the pageantry. The new Jewish priesthood will be giving the Vatican a run for its money.

Will the ark Ron Wyatt found be a part of all that? I'm speculating, of course, but I doubt it seriously. I'm certain Yahweh won't allow the ark to be moved until and unless He's good and ready. After all, it has been sprinkled with the most precious substance on earth, the blood of Yahshua. Maybe it will never be moved. But it doesn't have to be for the Antichrist to capitalize on the situation. For him to achieve his purposes, all he has to do is make the world believe it's there in his new Holy of Holies. If he can't move the real thing, he'll simply have a replica made.

I imagine that some of the Jews will initially have a problem with gentile participation in the building of their holy shrine. But if they look back into their history they'll begin to realize that gentiles have always had a part to play. The tabernacle in the wilderness was “funded” by gentiles (Egyptians) who gave gifts to the departing Israelite slaves after the tenth plague took their firstborn sons; it was their way of encouraging the Jews to go away and never come back. The immense wealth that David poured into Solomon's temple was derived from the conquest of the surrounding pagan gentile nations. The second temple, though much humbler than Solomon's, was made possible by the good graces of the Persians, who had inherited the Jewish captives from the Babylonians. And

Herod's magnificent remodeling of T2 was the transparent tactic of a gentile king who wanted to placate and impress his Jewish subjects.

The new temple will become the center ring of a huge media circus, of course. Its reopening will be the biggest "religious news" story since Constantine. But the world will take one look at the bloody animal sacrifices that have been reinstated and declare the whole thing primitive, cruel, and evil. A new wave of anti-Semitism will begin to feed upon the graphic carnage that's happening up there on the temple mount. The blood of bulls and goats will lubricate the hate machine, but its fuel will be the same thing that drives the persecution of the new Christians: the implied need for salvation, of atonement for sin. The very idea that there's a God who has standards of behavior, a God who wants his creation to live righteously, will be ridiculed. The editorials will rant: *Religious traditions are fine if you need them to feel good about yourself, if you need a crutch to get you through the day. But when you sacrifice an innocent lamb and say that it's atoning for your sins, you're calling us sinners, too. That's hateful and mean spirited, and it needs to be stopped....*

One question remains. Is the temple sponsored by the Antichrist *The* temple, the one from which Yahshua will reign during the Millennium? (I know, I *know*. I haven't established any of that yet. Trust me; it's coming.) The answer is no.

T3, the Tribulation temple, is mentioned only once in Revelation: **"Then I [John] was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months."** (Revelation 11:1-2) In John's vision, he was told to measure the temple proper, but to disregard the surrounding unsanctified courtyard. This development dovetails nicely with the hypothesis that the Antichrist will turn the temple mount into a multi-religion ecumenical center. Strangely, we are not told what dimensions John came up with. Why?

First, some background. In the final chapters of Ezekiel we're given a very detailed description of the temple and its environs—and indeed the whole geographical layout of Israel, a plan that is obviously Millennial, (that is, it clearly can't become a reality until Yahshua has returned). There we read, **"When you divide the land by lot into inheritance, you shall set apart a district for Yahweh, a holy section of the land; its length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits, and the width ten thousand. It shall be holy throughout its territory all around. Of this there shall be a square plot for the sanctuary, five hundred by five hundred rods, [The word "rods" is supplied; "cubits" is probably the correct meaning. Compare this with Ezekiel 42:20 if you don't believe me] with fifty cubits around it for an open space.... You shall appoint as the property of the city an area five thousand cubits wide and twenty-five thousand long, adjacent to the district of the holy section; it shall belong to the whole house of Israel."**

(Ezekiel 45:1-2, 6) I'll get into the millennial temple later (*much* later), but for now, merely observe that Yahweh has set aside a territory roughly eight miles long and five wide, none of which was "given to the gentiles." Obviously, John and Ezekiel are talking about two different things. (In case you were wondering, the 500 by 500 cubit sanctuary plot *does* fit on the temple mount—barely—but the Dome of the Rock would have to go.)

So why didn't John give us the dimensions of T3? I believe Yahweh is saying, "As of now, this temple is mine; I will regard the sacrifices made there in the spirit in which they're offered. I won't lay claim to the surrounding area now—I'll be back for that in a few years." When John reports that **"They [the gentiles] will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months,"** (Revelation 11:2) we are being given a bit of intriguing information and a very significant clue as to the timeline. Remember, what we call the "Tribulation" is, according to the seventy-weeks prophecy of Daniel 9, a seven-year period, in the middle of which the "covenant with many" is broken. In other words, forty-two months into it—the halfway point—is when the Antichrist will seize control of Jerusalem, leaving forty-two months left to go. This second half is referred to as the "Great Tribulation" (perhaps implying that as tribulations go, the first half may have been *good*, but it wasn't *great*). We get this phrase from Matthew 24:21, where Yahshua says of this time, **"For then [i.e., after the abomination of desolation] there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."** Considering the tribulation the world has seen in the past, that's a pretty scary thought.

So which forty-two month period was John talking about, the first or the second? In a very real sense, the holy city has been dominated by gentiles ever since the Babylonians invaded it. And just because the Israelis took it back in 1967, it doesn't mean the city hasn't continued being "trampled down by gentiles," most significantly, Arab Muslims. I believe the phrase means, **"They will tread the holy city underfoot for [only] forty-two [more] months,"** after which time they will tread it down no longer. As we shall see, Jews in Judea will have to run for their lives when they witness the abomination of desolation, so we can assume the gentiles will still be there. Therefore, John is identifying the second half, or "Great" Tribulation—or at least a period of time that overlaps it to a great degree. (It will become apparent as we put the pieces together that Yahweh has given us a very precise timeline, far more detailed than mere first-half/second-half generalities.)

But I'm getting ahead of my story—about three years ahead. All I really want to do at this point is to establish that the temple *will* be rebuilt by the Antichrist (or under his protection) but this temple *won't* be utilized by the reigning Messiah

after His return in glory. A lot will happen between the time T3 is built and the middle of the Tribulation.

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There's another loose end that needs to be tied up, and this is as good a time as any. I've stated unequivocally that people will come to a saving knowledge of Yahshua after the rapture. It's a good news-bad news story, for the primary evidence for this lies in the prophecy of their martyrdom: **"When He [Yahshua] opened the fifth seal, I [John] saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed."**

(Revelation 6:9-11) I believe that "fellow servants" could refer to the gentile martyrs, and "brethren" means Jews slain for their belief in their Messiah. We are within the last of Daniel's seventy weeks here; Yahweh is dealing with the Jews separately from the Tribulation (or Laodicean) Church.

At some point, the last Tribulation martyr will have given his life. **"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!' All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.'** Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" (Revelation 7:9-14)

The scene is in heaven, so it's clear that we are witnessing the souls of those who have been killed for their faith. One detail should ring a loud bell. Remember what Christ said to the apostate church at Laodicea? **"I counsel you to buy from Me...white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed."** (Revelation 3:18) Here we meet those who took his advice, opting to sell what they could not keep in order to buy what they could never lose.

But where did this "great multitude" hear the truth? In a previous chapter, I described how the first post-rapture believers might have figured it out using logic

and clues left behind by the missing Christians. But I can state with grim certainty that this method will be hit or miss at best, and won't have a chance in places that didn't host significant numbers of believers before the rapture. As time goes on, truth will be harder and harder to come by. Christian writings will come to be considered seditious and inflammatory. The Bible itself will be suppressed, much as it was by the Church itself in the middle ages. At best, it will be relegated to the ranks of quaint ancient lore and put on the shelf along with Homer and Plato. At worst, it will be burned in the streets.

But God is not without resources. If people can't get to the Word, the Word will have to come to them: **"Then I [John] saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.'" (Revelation 14:6-7)** I have a hunch that angelic preaching will intensify as the Tribulation wears on. The reference to "springs of water," though it may seem to us an odd thing to say, will hit especially hard in the later years, when the earth has become such an ecological disaster area that even getting a drink of water is problematical.

It has been suggested that the "angel" (Greek *aggelos*, a messenger) flying through the sky is a communications satellite, broadcasting the gospel. Although that's certainly possible, my opinion is that the angel is just that, a spirit sent from God to deliver His message. Yahweh has used this sort of messenger many times before, though never to the whole world. But the times call for the biggest guns in the arsenal. Yahshua described these dark days: **"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."** (Matthew 24:9-14) Some things never change. God is not willing that any should perish—even now, with lawlessness abounding—so He makes sure that the whole world hears the Good News, using His most reliable messenger (one, by the way, whose signal the Antichrist can't jamb).

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The angelic preacher isn't the only way Yahweh intends to get the word out. At some point in the Tribulation, He sets aside 144,000 young Jewish men for His purposes, "sealing" them, that is, placing the mark of his ownership upon them.

John witnessed their selection and sealing. After being shown a sweeping view of Tribulation torments—the first six “seal” judgments—he was shown this vignette:

**“After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.’”** (Revelation 7:1-3) I believe that John is being shown a flashback, or at least a parenthesis. “After these things I saw...” refers to the order in which he was shown things, not necessarily the order in which they will occur. The sixth seal, as we shall see, depicts the horrible realization, universal among men, that all the bad things that have been happening to the earth are actually the wrath of God. There is reason to believe mankind doesn’t figure that out until near the end. But I think what’s happening here is that before the winds of God’s judgment are released—before one blade of grass is damaged—something will be done to protect the “servants of God” from the calamity that will soon surround them.

Who are these people? **“And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.”** (Revelation 7:4-8) It’s amazing how many groups have come out and declared that *they* were these 144,000 servants of God. *Never mind what scripture says; being singled out like that has a nice ring to it, don’t you think?* But as long as you’re sealed by God, you cannot die. When the first Jehovah’s Witness died, he proved that their claim to this special prophetic anointing was a lie.

I don’t know how Yahweh could have made it any clearer: these are all Jews (or more correctly, Israelites) 12,000 each from twelve tribes of Israel. It doesn’t really matter if the participants know what tribe they’re from, although at some level, the record is written in their DNA. God knows who they are.

The list of tribes is a little strange. If you recall, Jacob/Israel had twelve sons, but one of them, Joseph, received a double portion of the inheritance. Joseph’s tribe was therefore split in two and named after his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. That made, for all intents and purposes, thirteen tribes; but then the tribe of Levi (Moses’ tribe) was set apart as being Yahweh’s (that is, God claimed

all the firstborn of Israel, man and beast alike, but He chose to substitute the tribe of Levi for the firstborn of all the tribes—Numbers 3:12-13). So what do we see in John's list of twelve? There's no Ephraim, but there is a tribe of Joseph, so with Manasseh in the list their double portion remains. Levi is in the list. The tribe that's missing is Dan.

Are the Danites extinct by the time the prophecies of Revelation get fulfilled? No: we will learn from the millennial geography lessons of Ezekiel 48 that Dan is still around—all of the tribes are. So what heinous crime did the Danites commit that got them aced out of the list? Bad things can be traced back to virtually every tribe—even Judah, Yahshua's tribe. But if we look for what sets Dan apart from the other tribes, we soon discover a rebellious streak a mile wide. Perhaps the most famous Danite was Samson, who, like the 144,000, was gifted and set apart for God's purposes. But Samson wasn't known for his sensitivity to the leading of Yahweh—he was known for his headstrong and self-centered misuse of God's gifts, an insubordinate nature that killed him in the end. Dan was the one tribe who, after being allotted their territory in Canaan, along the coast just north of Judah, decided after a time that the competition was too tough for them. So they sent spies to the far north, found a poorly defended city (Laish), invaded it, and renamed it Dan. At the same time they showed a remarkable lack of loyalty to Yahweh, embracing the idolatry of the area as soon as they arrived—and holding on to it for centuries until they were swept away by the Assyrians. The whole sordid affair is recorded in Judges 18. The Danites proved that they couldn't be trusted with the oracles of Yahweh. Perhaps that's why He chose not to let them participate at the end, when refusal to compromise with the world would become the greatest of virtues. *My, what a long memory You have!*

We see the 144,000 again a bit later in John's narrative, this time at their moment of triumph. **"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads."** (Revelation 14:1) Here we're given more insight about their "sealing." In this scene, Yahshua has returned in glory to the earth, and He's seen standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. With Him are the 144,000; every last one of them made it through to the end of the Tribulation alive, and they're all in town. That's what it means to be sealed, to have Yahweh's name written on one's forehead—it means you're His possession, and you're under His protection. Is this writing visible? I have no idea. Many expositors insist that it is; I suspect that it's not. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in Daniel 3, you don't need a tattoo on your face for God to protect you.

**"And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one**

could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (Revelation 14:2-5) This is admittedly a tough one to figure out. John was just looking at a scene on the earth; has it shifted to heaven? Not exactly. I think what we’re seeing here is a rare interplay between earth and heaven. Standing there on Mount Zion with Yahshua, the 144,000 hear the audible voice of God from heaven. This is followed by the sound of the heavenly praise band, singing a song that only they can comprehend.

In these verses, we’re given a bit more information about them. Because they are described as “virgins, not defiled with women,” we can deduce that all 144,000 are men, and that most of them are young—called to this service in their teens (SF2). This is admittedly an extrapolation. The logic is that (1) because they’re on the earth, they were unsaved (for whatever reason) at the time of the rapture. (2) The chances of men being both uninterested in the things of God and remaining virgins past the age of twenty or twenty-five in the world we live in are slim. (3) The rapture would be more of an epiphany for them if they were young and impressionable; it’s an event likely to have a big impact on their spiritual outlook. (4) If there is a gap of a few years between the rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation, Jewish lads past their bar-Mitzvah but under about seventeen years old at the time of the rapture would make ideal candidates.

Interestingly, we aren’t told much in Revelation about what these folks will do. There has been speculation about 144,000 “Jewish Billy Grahams” evangelizing the earth. I wish that were true, but I don’t think it is, at least not in an organizational sense. These guys won’t be filling stadiums and televising the gospel freely to millions of homes. To get closer to the truth, try to imagine what someone with the anointing of a Jonathan Edwards or D.L. Moody would do as an individual if he found himself in Iran or Saudi Arabia. He would share the love of Christ one-on-one, hiding out from the authorities when he had to, preaching boldly on the street corners when he could, and relying on God’s grace and the shelter and supply of His people to keep him alive until tomorrow.

That’s how it will start. But the 144,000 will discover through trial and error (their trial, their adversaries’ error) that they are indeed under Yahweh’s protection—they can’t be touched. This knowledge will give them the boldness to speak out in situations that would (and will) get ordinary men killed. Some will receive their words with joy; others will reject the message. It bears mention that even though these people have Yahweh’s hedge of protection around them, that’s not necessarily true of the people who are in a position to shelter them. They will

have to make a choice: to do what they know is right, despite the risks, or to play it safe.

Yahshua sent His twelve disciples out on just such a mission, giving them very clear instructions as to what to do and say. But before He was done, it was abundantly clear that His words were not just for the present group. They would apply to some extent throughout the church age, and then to the 144,000—*especially* to the 144,000.

**“These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!’”** (Matthew 10:5-15) Will the 144,000 be sent only to the lost sheep of Israel? Considering the fact that Yahweh is once again dealing with them “officially” within this seven-year period (see Daniel 9), and noting that they will all be in Jerusalem to meet Him, it seems possible, even likely, that they are. If this is the case, it would work out to roughly one witness for every one hundred Jews alive on earth at the start of the tribulation. Don’t forget, the angels have the gentiles covered.

On the other hand, their testimony will not be lost on the gentiles. Even if the 144,000 are sent only to the Jews, remember that (at least for now) half the world’s Jews live outside of Israel—among gentiles. Here’s what Yahshua said next: **“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”** (Matthew 10:16-23) Clearly these are dangerous times. Gestapo tactics will be the order of the day. These witnesses of

Yahweh's can't be killed, it's true, but harboring one of them—even giving him a cup of cold water—can get you in big trouble with the authorities. And it won't require anything as sophisticated as NSA electronic surveillance to catch you. All it will take is your kids, your parents, your best friend. Many will be sent “downtown” to answer a few routine questions. Many won't come back.  
*Harboring religious terrorists is a Federal crime, you know.*

**“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”** (Matthew 10:24-31) When the 144,000 start seeing their protectors getting hauled off, tried, and executed for taking them in, they might be tempted to lay low, to water down the message, to quit. *Everywhere I go, people die for supporting me. Is it worth it?* Yahshua is telling them to speak out boldly, regardless of the apparent consequences. This body is fragile and temporary; it matters not what happens to it. Of critical importance is the condition of the soul and the presence of the spirit. Don't endanger people's eternal destinies by refusing to speak out.

**“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man's enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”** (Matthew 10:32-39) Many twentieth-century Christians, especially in America, got very skilled at sitting on the fence, developing a knack for practicing a religion that didn't offend anyone (except Yahweh—see Revelation 3:16). With luck, you could go through your entire professional career without anyone at work finding out you were a follower of Christ. Church and “state” were strictly separated; our jobs were given Monday through Friday, we took Saturday for ourselves, and God got a couple of hours on Sunday morning (unless the weather was really bad—or really good).

Things have changed. Now you either *are* or you *aren't* a follower of Yahshua. (Of course, it was always that way in God's eyes). Don't take me wrong here, but the age of grace is past. Yes, Yahshua is still the only door to the Father, but now that the Tribulation has begun, what you *think* doesn't count for much any more. It's what you *do* that will identify you.

**“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”**

(Matthew 10:40-42) The only commentary I can offer on this is something else Yahshua said. I'll revisit this when we reach the end of the Tribulation in our timeline, but for now, I'll give you the Reader's Digest version:

**“When the Son of Man sits on His throne of glory, all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You in need like that and we took care of You?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’**

**“Then He will say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was in need and you refused to help Me.’ Then they will say, ‘Lord, when did we neglect You?’ He will answer, ‘Inasmuch as you refused to help the least of these, you neglected Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”** (Matthew 25:31-46, abridged)

It seems likely that the people Christ sees as his surrogates on the earth in these verses are none other than His 144,000 sealed witnesses. They have needs: food, water, shelter, clothing, medical aid, and encouragement—simple things that any decent human being would gladly give another if asked. Yet during these terrible days, many will deny the most basic courtesies to these young men in the name of prudence, political correctness, or self preservation. *I heard about you people on the TV news. They said you were dangerous hate-mongering religious terrorists, and I could get in big trouble just by talking to you. Now get off my front lawn before I call the cops. I'm late for church.*