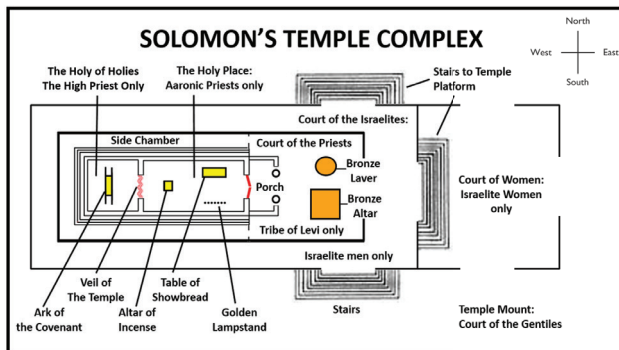


EXPLORATION: BIBLE

By Chip Thompson

Jesus and the Jerusalem Temple Mount

The Temple in Jerusalem was the center of Jewish religious activity. Jesus, therefore, spent much time at the Jewish Temple. Before we delve into stories that connect Jesus with the Temple Mount, we need to clarify one crucial point. In the Bible there is a clear distinction made between the Temple courts and the Temple building. Unfortunately, in some of our English Bible translations, this distinction is not clear. When speaking of the entire Temple Mount, the Greek word 'hieron' is used – this area was about thirty-four acres in size. The Greek word for the Temple Building is 'naós' – this was specifically the Temple edifice itself.



(Temple Image: The Quest, Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, by Leen Ritmeyer)

Jesus and his disciples often entered the 'hieron' (the Temple courts), but Jesus and his disciples NEVER entered the 'naós' (the Temple building). Only male priests who were in the direct family lineage of Aaron (the brother of Moses) were allowed into the Temple building. All others were restricted to the courts assigned to them – the Court of Gentiles, the Court of Israelite Women, the Court of Israelite Men, and the Court of the Levites (which was only Israelite males from the tribe of Levi).

The first time Jesus came to the Jewish Temple was when he was a newborn baby. During this first visit to the Temple, an elderly man named Simeon being, "moved by the Spirit, went into the temple courts... He took Jesus in his arms and praised God saying: 'Lord, now You can let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.'" (Luke 2:21-32)



This is the Temple Mount. Today it is an Islamic Holy Site. The paved platform is the same size as it was in Jesus' Day. In 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed the Jewish Temple. Then in 688 A.D., Muslims built the (golden) Dome of the Rock where the Jewish Temple once stood. (photo by permission, SourcFlix.com)

When Jesus was a twelve year old boy, his parents brought him to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. Following the feast as they travelled home, The Bible says, "Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem." Joseph and Mary thought he was among their relatives. When they discovered that Jesus was missing, they rushed back to Jerusalem in a panic.

Then, "after three days they found Him in the temple courts, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions... And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." When Mary asked Jesus why he had worried them so, He said, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:41-50).

On another occasion, we see the righteous anger of Jesus when he drove from the temple courts those who were buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.'" (Mark 11:15-17).

Jesus also healed many during his visits to the Temple Mount. Matthew 21 tells us, "The blind and lame came to Jesus in the Temple Courts, and he healed them all," which made the religious rulers jealous. Three days before His crucifixion, in the Temple Courts, Jesus publicly rebuked the Jewish rulers, which infuriated them.

He said, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, for you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in... Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are... Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give your tithes, but you neglect the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness... Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean... You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape the condemnation of hell?" (selected passages from Matthew 23).

Just days later, these religious rulers condemned Jesus to death and crucified Him. They sealed His tomb and placed a Roman guard at the tomb's entrance in a vain attempt to stop the inevitable. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead.



This is what the Temple Mount looked like in the days of Jesus. In the future, Jesus himself will rebuild the Jewish Temple. He will then rule our world from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and ALL will bow the knee before Him. (photo by Chip Thompson, 2016)

When Jesus left this earth as the resurrected living Savior, He told His disciples that He would one day return. We anxiously await His return. Jesus could return at any moment; and when He does, will you be ready to stand before Him? Will Jesus be your judge or your Savior? Your eternal destiny can be certain if you will only read the words of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and believe by faith all that he said.