

# Watch Jerusalem

## Matthew 24:15-16

When Jesus told His disciples and us about the future he built every word of it around one spot on earth. In theological circles this message (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) is called the Olivet Discourse. Jesus framed His words about the rest of the history of this planet by the sight of Jerusalem in all its earthly glory spread in front of Him.

Look again at Christ's very first words in Matthew 24:2. All that He says about His second coming is introduced by those words. He said keep your eye on Jerusalem. I am ascending from the Mount of Olives (the center of Jerusalem then and now) and I am returning to the Mount of Olives.

As we turn to the subject again of Christ's coming and those incredibly detailed snapshots He left us in Matthew 24, we are focusing upon Jerusalem. According to the Lord, the end of the world centers around Jerusalem.

The most mentioned place in the Bible is a city called Jerusalem.

The center of the world and the prophetic universe is the same city.

Jerusalem should be your favorite city. After all, it's the city that God has chosen for Himself in 1 Kings 11:13 However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”

Ancient maps put Jerusalem In the center of the world, and I think they were right.

Jerusalem is also God's timepiece. The final events of world history will culminate there with the glorious return of Jesus Christ to the Mount of Olives.

Mentioned over 800 times in God's Word<sup>1</sup>—Jerusalem is a very important place. It was in Jerusalem that God promised Christ's coming as the Lamb of God to Abraham. It was here that David was promised a future son that would have an endless kingdom. It was here God has worked. In:

*Jerusalem! Three thousand years of lifetimes! Abraham and Isaac upon the altar of Moriah, a stone's throw from here! David, the shepherd-king, watching Bathsheba from a distance. Jeremiah, mourning for the exiles. Jesus, teaching in the Temple.*

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<sup>1</sup> Jerusalem: 814 times in 766 verses; Zion: 160 times in 160 verses; City of David 46 times in 46 verses.

*Peter's betrayal. Jesus, walking the Way of Sorrows! Dying with forgiveness on his lips. Peter, shouting the good news in the streets on Pentecost! He is risen! Call on His name and live forever with Him!*<sup>2</sup>

But today all that is left from Christ's Jerusalem is called the Western Wall. If you go there one of the first things you notice are several large signs that have been affixed near the entrances to Jerusalem's Western Wall plaza. In addition to the usual guidelines regarding modesty and respect for the sanctity of the holy site, the centrality of the Temple Mount to Judaism and the Jewish people is clearly expressed. The signs, ten feet tall, read:

*"**Jewish tradition** teaches that the Temple Mount is the focal point of Creation. In the center of the mountain lies the 'Foundation Stone' of the world. Here Adam came into being. Here Abraham, Isaac and Jacob served G-d. The First and Second Temples were built upon this mountain. The Ark of the Covenant was set upon the Foundation Stone itself. Jerusalem was chosen by G-d as the dwelling place of the Divine Presence. David longed to build the Temple, and Solomon his son built the First Temple here about 3,000 years ago. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The Second Temple was rebuilt on its ruins 70 years later. It was razed by the Roman legions over 1,900 years ago. The present Western Wall before you is a remnant of the western Temple Mount retaining walls. Jews have prayed in its shadow for hundreds of years, an expression of their faith in the rebuilding of the Temple. The Sages said about it: 'The Divine Presence never moves from the Western Wall.' The Temple Mount continues to be the focus of prayers for Jews all over the world."*

JERUSALEM should be to each of us a LESSON IN GOD'S KINGSHIP. When you are chosen by God there is no limit to what all He can do with you! When God picked Jerusalem it was unknown and would have ended up like any other of the vanished cities whose ruins dot the globe. But no, He said I put My name here forever! And what has happened? JERUSALEM has become:

1. The SALVATION center of the world SPIRITUALLY. *John 4:20-24 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in **Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.**" 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; **we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.** 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*
2. The NERVE center of the world GEOGRAPHICALLY. *Ezekiel 5:5 "Thus says the Lord God: '**This is Jerusalem**; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her.*

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<sup>2</sup> Bodie & Brock Thoene, *Jerusalem Vigil*. New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2001, p. 186.

3. The GLORY center of the world ULTIMATELY. *Isaiah 2:1-5 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz **saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.** 2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." **For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.** 4 He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. 5 O house of Jacob, come and let us walk In the light of the Lord.*
4. The STORM center of the world PROPHETICALLY. *Zechariah 14:1-8 Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst. 2 **For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem;** The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 **Then the Lord will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle.** 4 **And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east.** And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. 5 Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, And all the saints with You. 6 It shall come to pass in that day That there will be no light; The lights will diminish. 7 It shall be one day Which is known to the Lord Neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen That it will be light. 8 And in that day it shall be— That living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern sea And half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur.*

*Back up with me to Zechariah 12:2-3. God has promised that at the end of the world Jerusalem would become a source of fear, vexation, and stress for the whole world.*

*Zechariah 12:2-3 "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. 3 And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.*

When were these words spoken? Actually it was 2500 years ago, after Babylon has torn down the city and burned it. While Zechariah wrote Jerusalem lay in ruins and was surrounded by wilderness. Jerusalem remained desolate century after century,

especially after the Roman destruction two thousand years ago. "Zechariah's prophecy seemed to be utter madness even after Israel's rebirth in 1948. Yet today, exactly as foretold, a world of nearly 6 billion people has its eyes upon Jerusalem, fearful that the next world war, if it breaks out, will be fought over that tiny city. What an incredible fulfillment of prophecy!"<sup>3</sup>

"Jerusalem is a small city of neither commercial importance nor strategic location. Yet the eyes of the world are upon it as upon no other city. Jerusalem is indeed a "burdensome stone" around the necks of all nations of the world, the most vexing and volatile problem the United Nations faces today."

"There is no ordinary explanation for this! What the Hebrew prophets declared thousands of years ago and what seemed utterly fantastic in their time is being fulfilled in our day. This is only part of the evidence, as we shall see, that the prophesied "last days" are upon us and that our generation will likely see the remainder of Bible prophecy fulfilled."<sup>4</sup>

Now, with that in mind, open with me again to the greatest sermon on the end of the world ever preached—Matthew 24. Jesus is mapping out the future. He is walking His disciples through a long and complex answer to their simple question in v. 3:

Matthew 24:3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

As Jesus proceeds through this answer He gets to an amazing sight, He sees a future Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. And He sees a future antichrist defiling that temple. Look at that section with me in Matthew 24:15-16.

Matthew 24:15-16 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

**When Christ Returns there is-- the Return of the Wandering Jews to the Promised Land.** God promised over 26 centuries ago that at the end of the world--Jews would begin to regather in Israel. Open with me to Matthew 24 and notice the "orientation" of this text. Matthew 24:15-16 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), **16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.** Before we look at all the promises that God would regather His Jewish people back to His Land—notice that Jesus spoke of them at the end as—already there and with a Temple!

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<sup>3</sup> Hunt, Dave, A Woman Rides the Beast. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1994, p. 21-26.

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- *Jeremiah 31:7-10 For thus says the Lord: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, And shout among the chief of the nations; Proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O Lord, save Your people, The remnant of Israel!' 8 Behold, **I will bring them from the north country, And gather them from the ends of the earth**, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child And the one who labors with child, together; A great throng shall return there. 9 They shall come with weeping, And with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn. 10 "Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, And declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.'*
- *Ezekiel 37:21-22 "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "**Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land**; 22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.*
- *Ezekiel 38:8 After many days you will be visited. **In the latter years** you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, **which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations**, and now all of them dwell safely.*

Since 1948 the world has witnessed the call of God deep within the hearts of 5.4 million Jews who have done everything they could to get to the Promised Land. And more arrive each day!

What is one of the greatest signs of God's Word being true? God predicted over and over again the preservation of His people the Jews. And He especially tells us about their return to their land. We hear that but have you thought about how amazing it really is?

**When Christ Returns there is-- the Third Temple built in Jerusalem.** What did Jesus, Daniel, Paul, and the Apostle John all have in common? Each of them saw a future Temple of God standing in Jerusalem at the end of earth's days. Plans to rebuild the temple in Israel anticipated in many Scriptures. *Matthew 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, **standing in the holy place**" (whoever reads, let him understand),*

- *Daniel 9:27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; 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."*
- *2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for*

that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 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.**

- Revelation 11:1-2 Then I 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.** 2 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.

Early this year the rise of a Jewish Sanhedrin after 2,000 years of absence has sent tingles up and down the backs of those who know God's Word. Last week I told you that for the first time in 1,600 years, the Israeli Sanhedrin was re-established. It occurred in Tiberius, the site of the Sanhedrin's last meeting in AD 425. On Jan. 20, 2005 IsraelNN.com reported that the religious authorities believe it was necessary to re-establish the Sanhedrin because only this properly ordained body of sages can authenticate a Messiah when he comes. There is a growing expectation of the long-awaited Messiah to appear among devout Jews. The rebirth of the Jewish state and recapture of Jerusalem has increasingly influenced this conviction.

On Feb. 9, just a few weeks after the Sanhedrin's re-establishment, another enormously important development took place. The religious sages began to consider the rebuilding of the Temple and reinstatement of ancient animal sacrifices as prescribed in the Law of Moses.<sup>5</sup>

### **When Christ Returns there are--temple sacrifices reinstated in Israel.**

*Matthew 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),* Daniel foresaw the Antichrist ending the daily sacrifices. Therefore, the Jewish sacrificial system must have first been restored in the last days. Currently, the Temple Institute has created all the temple furniture and vessels. There are also several hundred young Jewish men in training for the Levitical priesthood.

- *Daniel 9:27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; 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 12:11 "And from the time that **the daily sacrifice is taken away,** and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.*

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<sup>5</sup> Hal Lindsey, Posted: February 17, 2005 By Hal Lindsey © 2005 WorldNetDaily.com

To have sacrifices as prescribed in God's Word there must be a Temple. To have a Temple it must be where God told Abraham, David, and Solomon it was to stand. The only problem is, it seems that something else is standing on that spot—a Dome of the Rock mosque. But that isn't as big a problem as we think of God. The Sanhedrin constituted this year, decided to "determine with certainty exactly where the previous Temple's foundations are. Muslims have not allowed Israeli archeologists to do archeological research on the Temple grounds. As a matter of fact, the Muslim custodians of this area, which they believe is their Third Holiest site, have systematically sought to destroy and remove any archeological evidence of Israel ever having a Temple there."

"The Sanhedrin determined that there are only two viable theories as to where the Temple stood. One teaches that the Temple stood on the same basic site on which the Muslim mosque known as the Dome of the Rock was built.

"The second theory (which appears to be the most accurate) is that the Temple was built north of the Dome of the Rock. Dr. Asher Kaufman developed this theory, using certain archeological evidences that he found before the Muslim's destroyed them. However, the most important archeological sign is the position of the Eastern Gate. According to ancient accounts of the Temple, its east-west centerline passed through the center of the Eastern Gate.

"We have absolute evidence as to where the ancient Eastern Gate stood. The remains of the ancient Eastern Gate are located under the modern Gate that was built on top of its ruins. The east-west centerline from the Eastern Gate. "I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, 'Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.'" (Revelation 11:1-2 NIV).

"If you measure the distance from the centerline to the point where the wall of the inner court would stand. There was at least 6 meters clearance from the nearest points of the Dome of the Rock and the Temple inner-court wall. The Apostle John clearly predicts that "the outer court was not to be included in the rebuilt Temple, because it was given to the Gentiles."

"So what does all this mean? The Temple can be rebuilt and stand alongside the Dome of the Rock without disturbing it. And since the outer court, also known as the Court of the Gentiles, is given to the Gentiles in this period just before the Messiah comes, it infers that there would be a Gentile building there, i.e., the Dome of the Rock.

"The fact that a re-established Sanhedrin is now considering the rebuilding of the Temple after 2,000 years is extremely important to students of Bible prophecy. I believe that we are very near the final climactic events that end with the Second

Coming of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Keep your eyes on Jerusalem—it is God’s reminder of His faithfulness.

God will keep His promises. Jerusalem is a vivid reminder of that.

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<sup>6</sup> Hal Lindsey, Posted: February 17, 2005 By Hal Lindsey © 2005 WorldNetDaily.com