

## PART THREE



# *The Biblical History of the Temples unto Herod the Great*

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*Chapter 15*

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# THE GARDEN OF EDEN, THE TOWER OF BABEL AND THE TEMPLE OF GOD

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**W**E NOW COME to a necessary part of this biblical and historical research that will show why Solomon and then later Herod built the Temple of God in the manner they did. They were actually preserving a form of “Temple” that God had designed for mankind to be aware of from the very beginning of human existence. The later Jewish authorities came to realize that in the time of Adam and Eve, God presented to mankind his first design of a “Temple.” This was a geographical location that was intended to represent on earth a replica of God’s divine residence in heaven. That first “Temple” was the Garden of Eden and a larger region called the Land of Eden. Let us see how the Jewish authorities recognized the fact that the Temples of Solomon and Herod were built in a fashion to resemble the Garden in Eden and the Land of Eden. This matter will help us appreciate

what the Temple structure itself was designed to present in a symbolic fashion to all mankind.

### **The Symbolism of the Temple**

The three divisions of the Tabernacle (and later the Temple of Solomon as well as the Temple of Herod) were recognized by the early Jewish authorities as equated in a symbolic sense with the three divisions of the Land of Eden mentioned in the early chapters of Genesis. Geography is the key that helps to understand these points. The first geographical fact is the biblical account that the Garden associated with Adam and Eve was located within an extensive area called the Land of Eden. We must be careful to recognize that the Garden of Eden and the Land of Eden are not the same in meaning. The Garden was actually situated within the boundaries of Eden and it made up only a part of Eden.

Look first at the Garden. Close examination shows that the Garden had two sections to it. The first and principal portion was its inner area where God periodically met with Adam and Eve. This interior region in the Jewish symbolism associated with the Tabernacle and Temples answered to the inner Holy of Holies where God was supposed to have his residence. The second section of the Garden was the remainder of the outer Garden area and it had boundaries that separated the Garden from the rest of the Land of Eden. This second section of the Garden answered to an area located just east of the Holy of Holies and called the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and Temples. This is where the priests performed all their ceremonial duties. Outside the Garden one would come to the territory that was called the Land of Eden itself. This Land of Eden surrounded the Garden, and in the Book of Genesis, this was called "the Land of Eden" proper.

The biblical account tells us that Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden but they were able to make their home in the rest of the Land of Eden. It was in this area of Eden just outside the eastern gate of the Garden where Cain and Abel built an altar to petition God whom they considered to be still in the Garden. This altar was built at the east entrance to the Garden and there they

offered their sacrifices. This altar of Cain and Abel came to be analogous to the Altar of Burnt Offering located just east of the Holy Place in the Tabernacle and the later Temples.

Now look at the Land of Eden itself. The early Jewish authorities understood that the whole area of Eden was symbolic of the Court of the Israelites in the Tabernacle and Temples and it also included the extended area around the sanctuaries that came to be called the "Camp of Israel." So, the two parts of the Garden with the Land of Eden (when combined together) were identified as representing the three compartments in the Tabernacle and later Temples: 1) the Holy of Holies and 2) the Holy Place represented the two parts of the Garden, and 3) the Court of Israel and the rest of the "Camp of Israel" represented the totality of the Land of Eden. Let us now look at this extensive area called the Land of Eden.

### **The Land of Eden Had Borders Around It**

Recall that Cain was expelled from the Land of Eden (which the Court and Camp of Israel came to represent). This forced Cain outside the borders of Eden into the Land of Nod that meant the "Land of Wandering." This land was located *east* of Eden. In the time of the later Temples, this region answered to the lands of the Gentiles outside the sanctified region at Jerusalem (that is, outside the "Camp" area of Israel). It was in this outer area *east* of Eden that God said Cain would be provided with an animal sacrifice that would "lie at the door."<sup>325</sup> The Hebrew of this verse actually suggests that this sacrificial animal would be "couching at the door" and that it would be under a heavy weight. Since Cain by murdering Abel had sinned against his brother, and consequently Cain had sinned against God by his murderous act, the animal sacrifice that God would provide for Cain was understood to be a type of sin offering bearing a heavy weight of sin. God told Cain that this sin offering was to be presented alive "at the door." This "door" was an entrance into a region that the Book of Genesis does not specify. But there is no problem in recognizing the area where this "door" was located. This entrance was actually the "door" that led

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<sup>325</sup> Genesis 4:7.

from the Land of Nod back into the Land of Eden. Remember, Cain had been expelled *eastward* from Eden and he could not re-enter the Land of Eden.

This “door” before which Cain’s sacrifice was to be placed was positioned at the *eastern* boundary line between the Land of Eden and the Land of Nod. Since it was understood by Cain that God dwelt in the Garden which was within the interior of Eden, this sacrifice for Cain was to be located on an altar facing God at his dwelling place within the Garden which was in Eden. Cain with his sacrifice was to petition God who dwelt in the Land of Eden, west from the Land of Nod. In a word, the sacrifice of Cain was to be placed on an altar just in front of the *east* entrance to the Land of Eden. This altar of Cain was analogous to that of Moses (and later Solomon and Herod) which he positioned just “outside the camp” of Israel. The prophet Ezekiel said it was in the *east* and also “without the sanctuary.”<sup>326</sup> Jewish sources tell us that this particular altar was located some 2000 cubits *east* of the central part of the Temple.<sup>327</sup> In the time of Jesus, this altar was placed slightly downslope from the southern area of the Mount of Olives (as one looked toward the southern spur called the Mount of Offense). This altar was in full view of the main Temple located in the west and slightly to the south. This was the altar for burning the sacrifice of the Red Heifer. Its technical name was the “Miphkad Altar.”<sup>328</sup> I show in my book *Secrets of Golgotha*, that near this Miphkad Altar on the Mount of Olives is near where the New Testament and history show Jesus was crucified.

## **The Temple and Geography**

First of all, the Temple at Jerusalem was patterned after the Tabernacle that Moses constructed in the wilderness, which in turn was designed after the geographical features of the Garden in Eden and the Land of Eden itself (along with the altar of Cain located east of Eden). Recall that when Solomon built the Temple in Jeru-

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<sup>326</sup> Ezekiel 43:21.

<sup>327</sup> See the first two chapters of my book *Secrets of Golgotha*.

<sup>328</sup> Ezekiel 43:21.

salem, he carved flowers and palm trees in the outer and inner walls of the Holy Place in order that the Holy Place resemble a garden. He also carved cherubim onto the walls because cherubim were at first associated with the Garden in Eden.<sup>329</sup> So, the Temples were built to represent a symbolic type of the Garden of Eden where our first parents were placed after their creation.

That does not end the symbolic agreements. The Temple and its environs were further patterned after God's heavenly palace and its celestial surroundings that existed in the north part of the heavens.<sup>330</sup> These are important factors to recognize. As for the Tabernacle, it was simply a portable Temple. It represented to the wandering Israelites on earth, the abode of God as it was in the heavens. Indeed, there was even an astronomical arrangement recognized surrounding the Temple that showed the three regions in the Bible that were acknowledged as being "heavens." The Bible shows these "three heavens." Numerous texts show that the "first heaven" is the atmosphere where the birds fly and where all weather phenomena take place. The "second heaven," however, was beyond the earth's atmosphere and embraced all the visible planets and stars, including the sun and the moon. The "third heaven," that the apostle Paul referred to in II Corinthians 12:1-4 that he called Paradise, was that of God's official residence in his heavenly region which was separate from the other two heavens.

These "three heavens" were symbolically pictured in the Temple at Jerusalem. In fact, the three main sections of the Temple were designed to show these three heavens. When an Israelite entered the main Temple from the east, he or she would first be within the Court of the Israelites. This first section of the Temple (which continued westward up to the eastern portion of the priests' court in which was the Altar of Burnt Offering) was not covered with a roof. The first section was open to the sky and to all weather phenomena. Birds could also fly within it. This area of the Temple answered in a typical manner with the "first heaven," which was

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<sup>329</sup> I Kings 6:31-35.

<sup>330</sup> Hebrews 8:5; 9:23. That God supposedly resided in the north part of the heavens, note Psalm 75:6.

like our atmosphere surrounding the earth.

The “second heaven” in the Temple in a symbolic sense began at the eastern curtain in front of the Holy Place. Josephus tells we this curtain, had the principal stars of the heavens displayed on it in tapestry form.<sup>331</sup> It represented the entrance into the starry heavens beyond our atmosphere. Josephus tells us that west of this curtain, one could witness the center of the zodiacal circle with the seven planets displayed on the south side in the form of the Menorah (the seven lamps) with the twelve signs of the Zodiac denoting the twelve months displayed on the north side by the twelve loaves of the Table of Shewbread. This second court of the priests represented all the starry heavens above the earth’s atmosphere. But beyond this “second heaven,” there was yet a “third heaven.” This “third heaven” was the Heaven of Heavens, or in Temple terminology, the Holy of Holies, which equaled God’s celestial abode where his palace and divine precincts were located which the apostle Paul called Paradise.

### **The Temple and Jerusalem Were Astronomical**

With all of the astronomical features of the Temple, it is not difficult to understand why the shape of the “Camp of Israel” for calendar and prophetic purposes was reckoned to be circular, as astronomical designs are typically shown to be. In a word, the city of Jerusalem and the Camp area that surrounded it were symbolically accounted as being the physical and earthly counterpart (or pattern) of God’s heavenly headquarters from which he governed the entirety of the universe.<sup>332</sup> Though the physical sanctuaries

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<sup>331</sup> *War*, V.5,5 ¶213.

<sup>332</sup> Hebrews 8:5; 9:23. This astronomical “camp” which was circular in shape should not be confused with the “camp” denoting the Sabbath limits of the city of Jerusalem. The shape of the Sabbath “camp” was square to accord (in the time of Herod) with the square shape of the Temple itself (600 feet on each side) and the limits of the Temple Mount (750 feet on each side). The corners of the square also afforded the Israelites a little more maneuverability on the Sabbath days by extending the length of the Sabbath Day’s journey (see Acts 1:12). In matters dealing with the calendar and prophetic teaching, the “camp” areas were reckoned in a circular manner, but in regard to social, governmental and religious matters, the “camps” were “square” in shape.

were located on earth, there was always a heavenly theme associated with the symbolism of the Tabernacle and the later Temples. This is because the actual abode of God was in heaven. The Garden of Eden on earth also represented that heavenly home of God.

Thus, the Tabernacle in the time of Moses was designed to symbolically indicate a “portable” Garden of Eden (where God has his abode on earth) or a “permanent” Garden of Eden when Solomon finally built the Temple in Jerusalem (which also was typical of God’s residence on earth). It was essential in Temple symbolism (as I will soon demonstrate) that a natural spring had to be located within the Temple grounds. Solomon, and all subsequent rulers in Israel, realized that *spring waters* had to be within the Temple precincts. That is why the Temples (all of them) had to be located over the Gihon Spring in Jerusalem. The reason the name “Gihon” was given to this natural spring is because one of the rivers that fed water to the original Garden of Eden was also called the Gihon.<sup>333</sup> It has been recognized that the use of Gihon in Jerusalem was to make a symbolic connection to the Gihon River in Eden.<sup>334</sup>

This theme of the Garden of Eden was very much in Solomon’s mind when he constructed the Temple at Jerusalem. Note that Solomon made the most holy area of the Temple to be a square of 20 cubits (30 feet by 30 feet). This was to indicate that the Garden in Eden (where God resided on earth in the time of our first parents) was also square in its dimensions. This fit the square dimensions of the ideal Temple described in Ezekiel 45. Even the design of the Temple found among the Dead Sea people (called “the Temple Scroll”) was a perfect square in shape. Indeed, Herod’s Temple was also a precise a square with a distance of *one stade* (600 feet) along all four sides of its walls. This square-shape also answers to the holy city of Jerusalem that is destined to descend from heaven as described in the Book of Revelation.

“And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand

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<sup>333</sup> See Genesis 2:13.

<sup>334</sup> *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol.II., pp.282–3.

furlongs [*stadēs*]. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.”<sup>335</sup>

### **The Prophesied Holy City of Jerusalem**

When one looks at the dimensions of the Holy City of Jerusalem that the Book of Revelation states will come down from heaven at the End of the Age, it must be noted that it is described as not only a square-form city, but it is also a cube-form with the same dimensions as its breadth and length. What we find is the fact that this symbolic city is shown descending out of heaven onto the earth and that on top of this cubical form is located the New Jerusalem itself with a wall on the top that surrounds the four-sided city. That wall on top of the cube will be 144 cubits high (216 feet). This wall is certainly for decoration and is not intended for any defensive reasons.

What we view from this allegorical display is a cubed-form city with a wall on its top that surrounds the square platform on which the New Jerusalem will be placed. When viewed from a distance, this New Jerusalem looks like a large tower that ascends upwards into the heavens with a city built on its topmost platform (and a wall surrounding the four precipices on its four sides).

It is interesting that this is how Herod’s Temple eventually appeared, if one could imagine the symbolic significance. Herod’s Temple was a type of foursquare tower that rose majestically over the floors of the Kedron Valley. Josephus said its eastern wall rose 300 cubits (450 feet), but that it had foundational stones that went below the surface another 100 cubits (150 feet).<sup>336</sup> So, if measured from the lowest foundation stones of the southeastern corner of the Temple, there were exactly 400 cubits (600 feet) from the bottom to the top of the platform on which the Temple buildings were placed. We should recall that the Temple platform had dimensions

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<sup>335</sup> Revelation 21:16.

<sup>336</sup> Josephus may possibly have another explanation in mind. The 100 cubits (150 feet) might be reckoned as being on top of the Temple wall at its southeast corner. This would mean that the “pinnacle” (if it were actually a tower) could be 100 cubits higher than the wall surrounding the Temple. Further study will have to be made to know what Josephus actually means by this 100 cubits.

of 400 cubits (600 feet) on each side, making the Temple platform a perfect square. But if one went even farther and imagined the depth of the wall to its foundation stones to also be 400 cubits (600 feet), it could symbolically draw a conclusion that Herod's Temple was cube-form (like the New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation). Looking solely at the southeast corner of the Temple one could imagine that there was precisely 400 cubits (600 feet) for its height, as well as 400 cubits (600 feet) for its breadth and length. Herod no doubt intended this symbolic significance when he and the priests had his Temple built and dedicated in this shape.

### **The Tower of Babel and the Temple at Jerusalem**

It will be recalled that after the Flood of Noah the people went to the plain of Shinar (a part of the region where the former Garden and the Land of Eden were situated) and they began to build a tower with the depiction of "heaven" on its top.<sup>337</sup> The text does not mean that they intended to build the tower until it reached the "heaven" of God. This Tower (or Temple) was simply to depict "heaven" (the residence of God, like God's abode in the Garden of Eden or in his actual divine celestial quarters). In a word, the people took it upon themselves, without God's approval, as the text strongly suggests, to build a Temple (in the form of a Tower) that would have a replica of God's residence on its top. The problem in building such a structure in honor of God was the fact that it was a premature endeavor and (as we later learn) it was built in the wrong place. The actual place where God wanted to build a Tower (a Temple) for a permanent display of his divine residence in heaven was to be Jerusalem.

The area of Jerusalem came to have significance beginning with the time of Abraham. Tradition had it that the city called "Salem" in the period of Abraham where Melchizedek was the priest of God was actually Jerusalem. When Abraham was told to sacrifice his son Isaac, he journeyed north from Hebron to the mountain area of "Moriah" (which indicated a place where God viewed things in a special way). This was also in the area that became

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<sup>337</sup> Genesis 11:1-4.

Jerusalem in the time of David. Besides that, the region of Jerusalem was also called in the time of Jacob by the name “Migdol Edar” (which in Hebrew means “Tower of the Flock”).<sup>338</sup>

Interestingly, when the prophet Micah prophesied (at the time Isaiah was also teaching in Judah), the name “Migdol Edar” referred to the Stronghold of David which was also called by the name Zion.<sup>339</sup> So, this religious and governmental center where Solomon finally built the Temple was called a “Tower” — the Tower of the Flock (Migdol Edar). This was intended to mean that God’s people (reckoned to be the “flock”) had their “Tower” to which they could turn to in worship. Solomon ordered that all Israelites direct their prayers and requests to God toward the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>340</sup> It was long recognized by the Jewish authorities that the Temple in Jerusalem was to be the geographical area to which all Israelites would direct their prayers to God. Those who stood and prayed in Jerusalem were required to turn their faces toward the Temple Mount, because Solomon said “toward the house that I have built for thy name.”

One dictum that was always recognized in Israel was the fact that all those who prayed on the Temple Mount should turn their faces toward the Holy of Holies. In simple terms, it was determined by the early Jewish authorities that those who were north of the Temple should pray toward the south (that is, toward the Temple), those who were south of Temple should pray toward the north, those who were east of the Temple should pray toward the west, and those who were west of the Temple should pray toward the east.<sup>341</sup> This means that the Temple was to take the place of the Tower of Babel in being the center of all religious activities on earth. The Temple at Jerusalem was designed by Solomon to be the center focal point for all Israelites no matter where they were

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<sup>338</sup> Genesis 35:21.

<sup>339</sup> Micah 4:8.

<sup>340</sup> II Chronicles 6:20–42.

<sup>341</sup> To read elaborate references to these matters, one should refer to the excellent book *The Sages* by Ephraim E. Urbach, p.58 (Harvard University Press, Fourth Printing, 1995). This book is a suburb reference source on all matters of Judaism within the period of the Talmuds.

located in the world. It was a proper “Tower” whereas the “Tower of Babel” was not. This means that a new type of “Eden” was established in the area of Jerusalem. And, it had God’s blessing. At a later time, Mohammed also adopted this well-known religious motif in focusing his followers to pray toward a special site that God had dedicated to be the center of all religious affairs on earth. At first, Mohammed directed those in Islam to pray toward Jerusalem, but this was soon substituted for Mecca in order not to confuse the teachings of Islam with Judaism.

### **The Temple at Jerusalem Was Reckoned to be a Tower**

The Temple at Jerusalem was called a Tower like that of the Tower of Babel. It was a Tower with “heaven” (God’s official residence) built on its top platform. But the Tower of Babel was a premature structure in the eyes of God and we later find out that it was located in the wrong place. It was not in the “center of the world,” as Jerusalem was later reckoned to be. True enough, the people just after the Flood of Noah intended the Tower of Babel to provide the same center focal point for their religious and social existence as Solomon did with the Temple that he constructed. But God had another region of the earth in mind to be the “navel of the earth.” As Josephus stated: “The city Jerusalem is situated in the very middle [of the country]; on which account some have, with sagacity enough, called that city *the Navel of the Country*.”<sup>342</sup> This new region of centrality from a religious point of view was not to be in the region of Babylon, it was to be located at Jerusalem. And, the new emphasis was not simply to be central area called “the Navel of the Country,” but Jerusalem was finally expanded in the eyes of Jews and Christians to be the “Navel of the World.”<sup>343</sup>

### **Similarities Between the Tower of Babel and Temple**

The Tower of Babel was originally designed by its builders to be the central religious shrine for all people on earth. It was reck-

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<sup>342</sup> *War* III.3,5.

<sup>343</sup> To cite the references to this fact would occupy at least two pages of notes. Simply put, no one disputes the fact that this was the opinion of early Jewish and Christian authorities.

oned to be an edifice that would keep people in touch with one another and observing the same type of religious beliefs. The Holy Scriptures, however, show that God had another area in mind that would become the "navel of the earth." That site was Jerusalem. So, the Tower of Babel was finally destroyed and the people's languages were changed so that they "babbled" to one another and could not be understood. People throughout history and in various parts of the world to which they were scattered have had feelings that the site of Babylon was religiously and socially important as a focal point of reference. Even in the Book of Revelation, we find that the term "Babylon" was still being used to denote the center of rebellion and the area counter to God in social and religious matters. The true site that God wanted to select for the role of presenting righteousness and the real Kingdom of God to the world was Jerusalem. That is why the Scriptures tell us that God selected Jerusalem to fulfill his purpose. So, Jerusalem became the "navel of the earth," not Babylon.

In actual fact, Solomon, as well as Zerubbabel and also Herod understood these matters. They knew that the Tower (or Temple) of Babel was not designed by God to be the center of world affairs. These men of the Bible came to realize that the Temple at Jerusalem was where the centrality of religious attention was to be located. That is why Solomon, Zerubbabel and even Herod felt they had God's blessing for the construction of the "Tower of the Flock" (the Temple), while those after the Flood of Noah did not have permission to build such a Temple (or Tower). And, from a New Testament point of view, whereas God did destroy the Tower of Babel and confused the languages of the people, God reversed the matter and on the Day of Pentecost God brought Jews together from all parts of the immediate world to the Temple at Jerusalem. While in the Temple on that Pentecost day, they heard the teaching of the Gospel in their own language.<sup>344</sup> This was viewed by the early Christians as a reversal (or a rectification) of what happened at the Tower of Babel. It was a vindication that the real Temple

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<sup>344</sup> Acts 2.

was located at Jerusalem and not in any other area of the world.<sup>345</sup>

Still, however, the original area of the Garden of Eden (God's first residence on earth) was remembered by Solomon and even by Herod. Though the Tower (the Temple) of Babel was disallowed, and though it was located in the area of the Land of Eden, Solomon still built the Temple to resemble a Tower that had "heaven" on its top. It was also built over the Gihon Spring, which was named after one of the rivers that watered the Garden in Eden. And even more important than that, if one will look at the orientation of the Haram esh-Sharif (which was located directly north of the Temple of Herod exactly *one stade* — 600 feet north), the Temple was oriented in relation to the cardinal directions of the compass about ten degrees north of east. (The Church of the Holy Sepulchre of later times was also oriented the same ten degrees north of east for the specific reason of resembling the Temple at Jerusalem.)

### **The Orientation of the Temple of Herod**

That orientation of the Temple about ten degrees north of east leads directly to the place where the Tower was raised up after the Flood of Noah (in the area of Babylon) that answered to the region in which the original Garden of Eden was located. This orientation was no accident. It was designed to link the Temples at Jerusalem with the original Garden of Eden in the east and even the place where the Tower of Babel was at first erected. This was to show a connection between those geographical areas of God's first influence on earth with the final area of Jerusalem where God actually wanted his final headquarters on earth to be positioned.

This is one of the reasons that Herod's Temple actually resembled a Tower that rose up appearing cubical in form (at least at its southeastern angle). This was to show how God's divine residence was positioned in the heavens. The Temple of Herod (with a Sanc-

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<sup>345</sup> The Samaritan women at the well asked Jesus where the proper place of worship was to be. Was it at the Temple on Mount Gerizim that the Samaritans accepted, or was it Jerusalem that the Jews had acknowledged since the time of Solomon? Jesus answered by saying that salvation was of the Jews and he indicated that Jerusalem had the priority until the Kingdom of God would arrive on earth (John 4:6–23).

tuary on top of a Tower) was like a cube in appearance as seen from its southeastern angle. It was a type of microcosm of the description of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven as shown in the Book of Revelation.<sup>346</sup> Indeed, we read in Josephus that Fort Antonia hid the Temple from anyone approaching Jerusalem directly from the north, but if the approach were slightly to the east at a place called “Scopus” (that is, “Viewpoint”) on the northern spur of the Mount of Olives, Josephus said that the Sanctuary could first be seen as “*the grand pile of the Temple gleaming afar*” penetrating upward above the southwestern horizon.<sup>347</sup> The Sanctuary did indeed appear as a “*grand pile*” of large stones — a Tower with the Temple buildings themselves perched on the top platform.

As a further historical indication that the Herod’s Temple looked like a Tower, we have the writer Barnabas (he was one who saw with his own eyes Herod’s Temple). He called it: “**THEIR TOWER** [the Temple] shall he give up to destruction; and it happened according to that which the Lord had spoken.”

That wonderful Temple, whose walls were shaped like a colossal pile of stone (a Tower), was so destroyed by the Romans that not one stone was left on another. This is exactly what Jesus prophesied would occur, and it has happened precisely as he stated.

In the next section of this research, we will look at the biblical and historical documentation that clearly shows that the original Temple of Solomon, as well as those of Zerubbabel and Herod, was built over the Gihon Spring on the southeastern ridge in Jerusalem. It is an interesting story indeed.

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<sup>346</sup> Revelation 21:9–27.

<sup>347</sup> War V.2,3 ¶67.