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# The Expansion and Portability of Zion

By Ernest L. Martin, PH. D., August 2000

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Read the "[January 2025 Newsletter](#)"



The city limits of Jerusalem can be extended to include the city of Damascus, Syria. This statement may at first seem absurd and even illogical, but biblical teaching (as understood by early Jewish Rabbis and even by modern biblical interpreters) not only states that this evaluation is true, the Bible even demands that people acknowledge something akin to this in Zechariah 9:1. This may appear to be a strange conclusion because Damascus is some 130 air miles north and east of present day Jerusalem.

Nonetheless, I will show in this research study that Jerusalem can legally (from God's point of view) become a much larger city than the "Jerusalem" we observe at the present over which Israel and the Palestinians are now contending.

The interpretation, however, goes further than that. Since the Bible teaches that God dwells figuratively on earth in His divine House called the Temple (first built by Solomon, rebuilt by Zerubbabel, and then enlarged extensively by King Herod), the statement in Zechariah 9:1 also means that the physical and spiritual parameters associated with the holiness of the Temple of God could be extended to the geographical environment of Damascus. It all depends on whether God decrees the expansion. And God does!

The Bible states that God will dwell (find a resting place) in the northern city of Damascus and His abode will occur before the Second Advent of Christ back to this earth. We have the express statement in the prophetic teaching of Zechariah 9:1 (which is clear in the Hebrew) that the City of Damascus is destined to become a city in which the God of heaven and earth will one day reside.

We have Jewish documents composed around the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD that reveal the Jewish authorities beginning particularly at that time to mention Zechariah 9:1 as a section of divine Scripture which denotes that the city limits of Jerusalem could be extended to include the City of Damascus. In the *Midrash Rabbah Song of Songs*, we read:

**"Rabbi Johanan said: 'Jerusalem will in the time to come extend as far as the gates of Damascus, as it says, The burden of the word of the Lord. In the Land of Hadrach, [and in Damascus shall be His resting-place].'"**

• *Midrash of Zechariah 9:1, Soncino edition, page 286.*

The *Midrash* gives more information. In a discussion among Rabbis in an early medieval period, they relate:

**“Is Damascus His resting-place? Is His resting-place any other than the Temple? as it says, ‘This [Jerusalem] is My resting-place for ever’ (Psalm 132:14).**

**He [Rabbi Johanan] replied: ‘Jerusalem will one day expand on all sides until it reaches the gates of Damascus, and the Exiles will come and rest under it, to fulfill what is written, Damascus shall be His resting-place; as if to say, As far as Damascus IS His resting-place.’”**

**•Midrash of Zechariah, Soncino edition,, page 287**

It was especially in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, just before the Crusades, that the Jewish authorities began to discuss this “Damascus Residence” of God in a serious and urgent manner. This was because of great difficulties that were then occurring to Jewish people in Jerusalem, which made the Holy City a very precarious place to live and to function as Jews. There had been such a deterioration in political matters, as well as the waters of the Gihon Spring (over which the former Temples were built), had turned bitter and even septic.

The Jews began to wonder if it were time for God to abandon His former desire to reside only in the central part of Jerusalem (that is, on the original Temple Mount) and that He would move to another area. The prophecy of Zechariah 9:1 was thought to be the plain teaching that God would one day, before the establishment of the Messianic Age, have His dwelling place in Damascus. This was scriptural authority to believe this.

It is interesting that the Jerusalem Academy, which was the headquarters in Palestine for the Jewish people, in 1077 AD definitely decided to move the Academy, NOT back to Tiberias, but *to Damascus*. As a result, the Jewish religious authorities decided to abandon the City of Jerusalem altogether, just before the advent of the Crusaders. They had enough intelligence to know that Jerusalem was going to be the center of conflict and political upheaval. So, when the Crusaders took control of the city in 1099 AD, the European nationals did not permit a single Jewish person for the next 50 years (according to the records) to enter the gates of Jerusalem.

When the Jews were finally able to return in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, we find recorded in the account of Benjamin of Tudela (the Jewish traveler who was one of the first Jews to re-enter the Holy City) a quite different attitude had arisen regarding the site of the Temple in Jerusalem. By this time, even some of the Jewish authorities began to jettison the proper area of the former Temples (over and near the Gihon Spring on the southeast ridge) and they deemed it permissible to focus on the Dome of the Rock as the holy site in Jerusalem. Jews had never done this before. They did this because of a change in attitude in Jewish minds of their interpretations regarding Jerusalem, the Temple, and matters concerning the whereabouts of Zion in various biblical contexts.

The Jews were willing (erroneously) to adopt the opinion of Gentile Christians and Muslims and to look toward the Dome of the Rock as the site of the Holy of Holies. Actually, they began to regard the whole of the City of Jerusalem as being spiritual “Zion,” and that the Temple could be placed anywhere within the area and be reckoned a proper Temple site. They acknowledged that if the Messiah (when He would arrive) would desire the Temple back in its former site, that He would have the power and the will to accomplish the task. So, as early as the year 1077 AD, the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem simply left the Holy City to the Gentiles and went to Damascus to await the start of the prophecy of Zechariah chapters 9 through 14 which tell of spectacular events leading to the End of the Age and the coming of the Messiah.

Let us understand one thing clearly: these six chapters of Zechariah 9–14, were written by the prophet Jeremiah, though they are found in Zechariah. (Read Matthew 27:9 for the identity of the writer of these chapters.) This prophecy begins with the remarkable statement that God would find a “resting place” in Damascus. The language in Zechariah suggests that God would manifest Himself in Damascus as He did at the Tabernacle or in the Temple at Jerusalem. This required a demonstration of the legitimacy of His presence. He would somehow have to reveal to mankind His Shekinah (His “Glory”) in Damascus to signal His presence in that area.

Indeed, the prophecy states that **“the eye of humanity,”** meaning all people in the world, would recognize His concentration to the City of Damascus. Why would God move His presence to Damascus? His desire to exalt Damascus seems almost inexplicable. A part of the problem in understanding it, for us interpreters in

modern western societies, is because the King James Version gives an awkward rendition of the Hebrew in the first verse. Look at two translations from the Hebrew:

King James Version	Zechariah 9:1–2 Comments	Concordant Literal Version
<p><b>“The burden of the word of YHWH in the land of Hadrach, and DAMASCUS shall be the rest thereof: when <u>the eyes of man,</u></b></p> <p><b><u>as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward YHWH. And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.”</u></b></p>	<p>That is, all humans on earth will turn their eyes toward YHWH’s actions in DAMASCUS</p> <p>Others also shall turn their eyes toward YHWH in DAMASCUS and other places</p>	<p><b>“The load of the word of Yahweh: In the land of Hadrach and DAMASCUS is its resting place, for <u>toward Yahweh is the eye of humanity and</u></b></p> <p><b><u>of all the tribes of Israel and Hamath also which is bounded along it,` Tyre and Sidon, though they are exceedingly wise.”</u></b></p>

Most people who love the Scriptures and its teachings are amazed and even shocked to learn that God would have a presence in Damascus, and will do so before the Messianic Age begins. This brings us to our present time.

Why would God want to have His **“presence”** in Damascus? It is easy to read where Jerusalem was once selected to contain God’s **“House”** (called the “Temple”) where His Shekinah would reside. But why would God desire to express His presence in the same fashion in Damascus?

There are scriptures that show God’s favoritism for Damascus. For one thing, God reveals that He has a special love for that city. God always held Damascus to be for Him a **“city of joy.”** Look at Jeremiah 49:24–25 (KJV). These verses speak of a judgment on Damascus like the judgments on Jerusalem and other cities of Israel and Judah; but God also admitted that He considered Damascus to be **“the City of Praise”** [or renown] and **“the City of My Joy.”** To discover the reason for this **“praise”** and **“joy”** that God has for Damascus, we should look at the prophecy that Jeremiah wrote in Zechariah chapters 9 through 14.

### ***What Is the Promised Land that God Gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?***

Almost a year ago [in 1999], I wrote a Prophetic Report in my Temple Update series titled: **“The Damascus Phase of End-Time Prophecy.”** I explain the prophetic message for us who live at this End of the Age. The six chapters of Zechariah 9–14 also can be called the **“DAMASCUS Prophecy.”** The essential thing to recognize is that this divine oracle was directed to what is called **“The Land of Hadrach.”** This land answers to lands of the Middle East that were promised to Abraham and his progeny. If one applies the name as a geographical location, it means the area of the **“Fertile Crescent.”** In analyzing the context of Zechariah, the **“Land of Hadrach”** extends from:

- (1) Egypt in the southwest to
- (2) the head of the Persian Gulf in the southeast.
- (3) It also includes the whole of the Arabian Peninsula.

This land is described in Zechariah 9:10 as being **“from sea unto sea”** [in a west to east direction from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean], **And from the Stream unto the limits of the earth”** [that is, in a north to south direction from the Euphrates River to the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula]. This is the exact landmass that Solomon in his day understood to mean the **“Land of Promise.”**

This **“Land of Promise”** (Hebrews 11:8–9 in the New Testament) was the territory God intended to be inherited by Abraham and his children. The reason the City of Damascus was selected to head the prophecy in Zechariah chapter 9 in a geographical sense is because Abraham stated in Genesis 15:2 that if Isaac had not been born to be his heir, a righteous Gentile named **“Eleazar of Damascus”** would have been the one to inherit

all Abraham's property and all the lands promised to Abraham.

"**Eleazar**" in Hebrew is "**Lazarus**" in Greek. Yes, this person is "**Lazarus**" from Christ's parable of Luke 16:19–31. I explain this parable in my article "[The Real Meaning of Lazarus and the Rich Man](#)" for the intriguing story and explanation about this man "Lazarus." Had Abraham's legitimate and actual son Isaac not been born nor lived to manhood, it would have been this "**Eleazar**" (Lazarus) and his descendants who would have inherited this vast territory known as the "**Land of Promise**" (or, in biblical terms, *The Land of Hadrach* with their capital at Damascus).

Most people in the Middle East recognize this extent of land that the Bible promised to Abraham and his seed. The indigenous populations in the area feel that the modern people of Israel wish to control and to benefit from the whole of this land area. It is interesting that the Israeli national flag in symbolic form denotes this area called *Hadrach* (the Land of Promise).

Note that the Israeli flag has two horizontal **BLUE** lines across the top and bottom of the flag with the Star of David in the middle (the six pointed or double triangle star) that in modern time has come to designate Judah (or, the Jews). The first blue line of the Israeli flag, as understood by many heraldic interpreters in the Middle East, represents the Euphrates River and the lower or bottom blue line answers to the eastern arm of the former Nile River that once separated the Land of Promise from Egypt. In a word, all Palestine, Israel, the Levant, and the Arabian and Sinai peninsulas are included in this *Land of Hadrach* otherwise known as "**the Land of Promise.**"



This is the proper interpretation of the biblical name *Hadrach* (although the etymological meaning remains obscure, and it is unrecognized in a geographical sense by most modern commentators). The name *Hadrach* has given prophetic interpreters difficulties in application because there is no town or district anywhere near Damascus, of which we have a provable and unvarnished record to identify it.

However, in Zechariah chapters 9–14 the context establishes the identity of the name *Hadrach*. The "**Land of Promise** (*Hadrach*) is the area of the earth in which God desires most to live (symbolically) than in any other. That is the land where God chooses to reside when He is on earth (again, symbolically, or otherwise). And though Jerusalem is God's chief site for sanctification, there are other areas within the "**Land of Promise**" that God has His divine eyes upon for joy and praise — and Damascus is one of them.

Indeed, if Isaac had not been born, it could just have well been Damascus (which is designated as the capital of the region) that would have been God's chief city, and not Jerusalem. And without controversy, Damascus, Syria will become (or has been in the past) a "resting place" for God.

I will show below that Damascus also figures in an important manner with a prime New Testament event that had profound influence on the development of Christianity. But first let us look at Damascus in its Old Testament setting. In **the not-too-distant future**, Damascus will emerge to prominence once again. This is because Zechariah chapters 9 through 14 show the exaltation of Damascus BEFORE THE MESSIANIC AGE and before the Kingdom of God appears on earth.

It could be said that as Jerusalem is the capital for Israelites who live in the Land of Promise, then Damascus should be the capital for Gentile peoples who live in the same area. Let us examine this possibility.

### ***The Emergence of Modern Damascus in Prophecy***

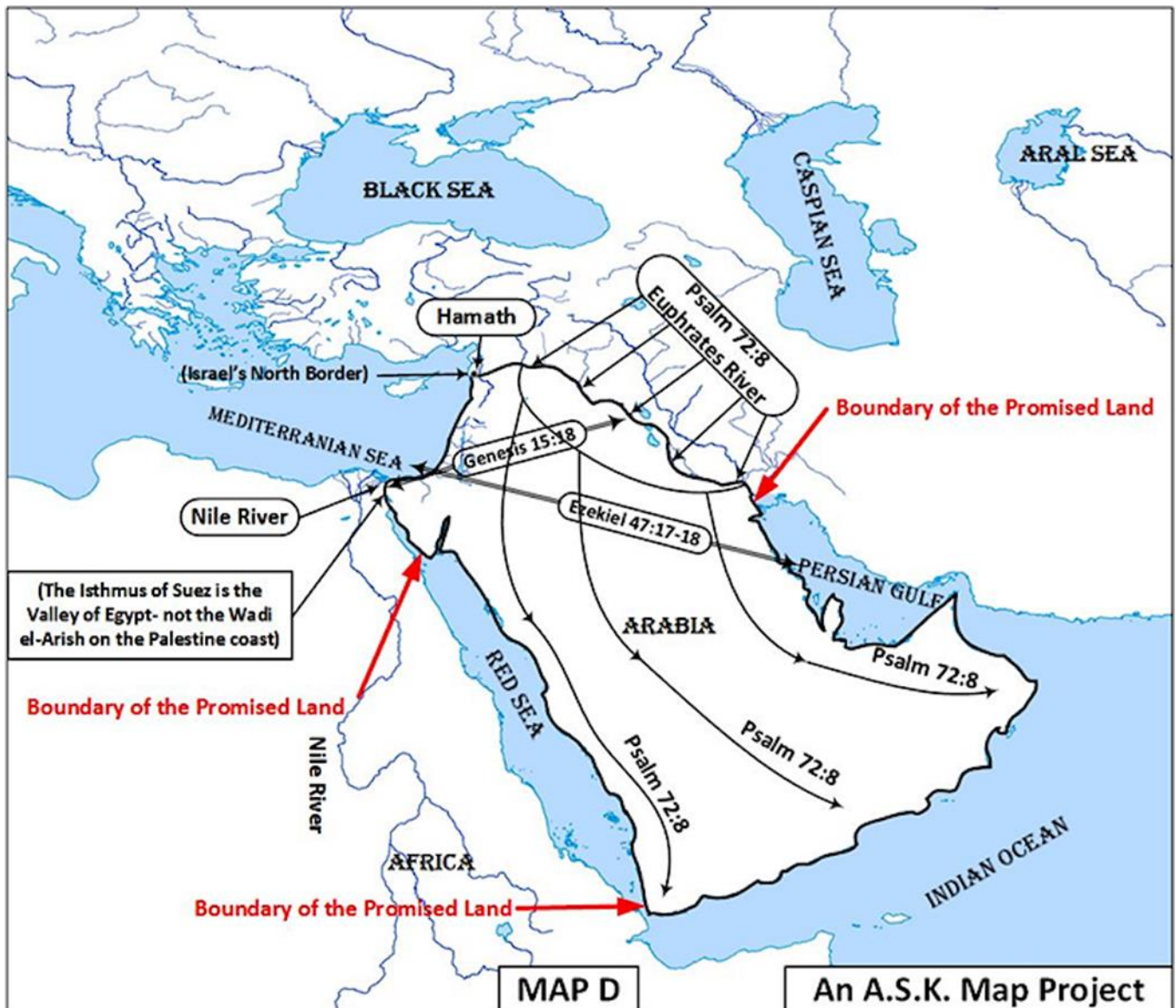
<sup>1</sup>We should keep our eyes on the present political scene in Damascus, Syria. We should all be aware from recent newscasts that a new and significant beginning has just occurred in Damascus that could well fit into the fulfillment of prophetic events mentioned in the Holy Scriptures that are immediately on the horizon. Some of the prophecies about Damascus in the Old Testament (with the city singled out for attention) have

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Martin's 1994 article "[How Israel Will Conquer the Middle East](#)" explains how helping the nations of the world will cause Israel to "conquer" them as King Solomon did: through trade, cooperation, and mutual benefit. Solomon's method of was more effective than physically conquering other kingdoms through blood and destruction like Assyria and King Nebuchadnezzar. DWS

only been vaguely understood or shunted aside by modern prophetic interpreters. But in my judgment the time for the prophecies to be fulfilled in all their majestic wonder is not far away.

**THE PROMISED LAND** (from Dr. Martin's article: "[Prophetic Geography and the Time of the End](#)")



As a matter of contemporary interest, the new ruler in Damascus, Bashar Assad,<sup>2</sup> is quite a *young man* to have the responsibility of rule on his shoulders. At the same time (and in similar circumstances) a brand new and *young ruler* (King Abdullah) has come to the throne in the Kingdom of Jordan, a country adjoining Syria in the south. This combination of *young rulers*, in my view, is no accident as far as prophetic events are concerned. The fact is a great change in political and social attitude is prophesied to take place in the Middle East (Zechariah 12:10ff).

People in the world (not just in Judah) will begin to expect the Messianic Age to be on the horizon. One ingredient of that change in social and religious affairs will involve the attitude of present *young generations* to the opinions of *older generations* that are still with us. The prophecies show that a conflict in interests will

<sup>2</sup> [January 2024 Update] Bashar al-Assad began to rule Syria in the year 2000 at age 35. He fled Damascus to Moscow on December 8, 2024. It is unlikely he will have any influence in Syria. But ... God is in charge; so anything might happen! DWS

develop between the *young* and our *older* generations. The prophet Malachi (a latter prophet) wrote about this social change to come just before the time of the End. Malachi presented God’s words to the people of Judah:

**“Behold, I [YHWH] will send to you Elijah, the prophet, BEFORE the coming of the great and advent day of Yahweh. And he [the future “Elijah”] will restore the heart of the fathers to the sons and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth to its doom.**

• *Malachi 4:5–6, CLV* [Concordant Literal Version]

This prophesied “Elijah” will introduce and be a forerunner of the teaching about the Messianic Age predicted in both the Old and New Testaments. Christ Jesus made this clear in Matthew 17:11: **“And Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘Elijah truly shall first come, and restore ALL THINGS.’”** Those “all things” to be reinstated on earth from the past are mentioned by the apostle Peter in Acts 3:20–21 (CLV):

**“... and He should dispatch the One fixed upon before for you, Christ Jesus, Whom heaven must indeed receive UNTIL the times of RESTORATION of ALL [the restoring of ALL that this “Elijah” will do before Christ’s Second Advent, *ELM*] which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets who are from the eon.”**

This “RESTORATION,” the “turning” or “reinstating” of things, means a change in social and religious themes that involve admitting the opinions of the young over the beliefs and traditions of the *elder generations* on earth. The young are destined to assume rulership over a lot of the governments and educational institutions and faculties of the world. They will be successful, and will govern our world better than our oldsters.

They will look for every opportunity to bring peace and prosperity to this world, rather than perpetuating the traditional social, political, and religious customs — beliefs that perpetuate hatreds, which divided the world in the past. They will succeed in the efforts that their elders found impossible to resolve. Read Zechariah 12:10–13:6 where a type of this principle is shown. The main thrust of Malachi’s prophecy is that the “Elijah” is destined to come before the Day of the Lord. He will **“restore all things”** and this will occur when the *fathers’* hearts TURN toward their *children*, and the *children’s* hearts will TURN toward their *fathers*.

This prophecy means that the present fathers will look to their children for proper answers. They will get those answers from their children who will be more educated and wiser than their elders. Also, the *children will look to their fathers* — in this case, their ancient “fathers” of the Holy Scriptures such as Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Malachi, John the Baptist, the apostles — and to the real teachings of Christ Jesus.

The *children* (young adults) will begin to teach their modern fathers what the ancient fathers of mankind taught in the Holy Scriptures. There will be a great revolution in understanding the real teachings of the Bible (Daniel 12:4, 9). God will bless this effort of teaching knowledge and understanding to the world. He will work with the “*young*” who will do the work in teaching the “*old*” what the truths of God really are.

### ***Christ’s Example to His Apostles***

Amazingly, this is precisely what Christ Jesus did when He selected His apostles to do the work of changing the attitude of the world to accept the divine truths of the Gospel. He, himself, was just over 30 years of age when He began His official ministry. The twelve apostles were just a bit younger than He (according to all traditional evidence). And remember that John the Baptist who was chosen to lead the way in first teaching about the coming Kingdom of God, was only six months older than Jesus.

The apostle Paul was just about 30 when he was called to lead Christian teaching. Paul selected Timothy when he was 17 years of age to administer the *ekklesia* in Ephesus. Other New Testament personalities such as Titus, Barnabas, Silas, and Luke were all of a similar young age to Paul when they began their ministries.

### ***The Youth of Some Old Testament Prophets***

Even in Old Testament times we have the witness of Jeremiah the prophet who was selected by God to change the whole attitude of the world when he was 17 years of age. Ezekiel the prophet was slightly younger

than Jeremiah and they prophesied at the same time.

Even Isaiah began prophesying about 760 BC and was martyred about 698 BC. Isaiah must have been about 15 to 20 years of age when he began his prophetic career. So, when Malachi prophesied that the time was coming when the *young* would teach the *old* just before the arrival of the Messianic age, we have many examples in the Holy Scriptures to show that God applied that procedure in times of world crises in the past. We should look for the same thing today because that is precisely what is prophesied to occur.

So, keep your eyes on King Abdullah (the new *young* ruler of the Kingdom of Jordan) and also Bashar al-Assad (the new *young* ruler of Syria at his capital of Damascus). Remember, Damascus will play a decisive role at the time God intervenes directly in world affairs. This will not be an obscure kind of dwelling for God in Damascus. The whole world is destined to acknowledge it. All people will begin to view God as having a “residence” at or around the City of Damascus. The attention of the world will focus on Damascus.

There is even more reason to keep our eyes on Jerusalem and the Palestinian authorities in this regard. Get ready for the main prophetic events of the Scripture to start their fulfillment. We are on the verge of a religious revolution. It is just on the horizon. All things are soon to be restored and reinstated.

Even the Temple that Solomon once built, then rebuilt by Zerubbabel and later enlarged by Simon the Hasmonean, and yet again enlarged by King Herod, it will also become important. People around the world (not just Jews) will want to rebuild it again in Jerusalem. We may soon witness some exciting times.<sup>3</sup>

### *Where the Temple Fits in the Prophetic Events at the “Time of the End”*

Just before the period of the Crusades, Jewish authorities began to view the Temple, Jerusalem, and Zion with a different perspective than they had been accustomed to in previous ages. In fact, the physical Temple of God became almost irrelevant to the Jews by the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. The **non-importance** of the physical Temple being rebuilt before the time of the Messiah was because a series of historical events occurred that changed the attitude of the Jewish authorities regarding the status of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The authorities decided to abandon Jerusalem and the need for a physical Temple. They began to pay little attention to the sites. They simply decided to put the matter in the hands of the Messiah, who would come with His army to rescue the Jews and bring them from exile into the Land of Canaan which they were prophesied to inherit along with other Abrahamic peoples. So, just before the Crusades, Jews began to focus on a future prophetic period of the Messiah when Jerusalem and the Temple would indeed be rebuilt in all its sanctity with its physical and spiritual security.

But before that could happen, and as a stroke of incentive to abandon Jerusalem, the waters of the Gihon Spring around which the former Temples were built, suddenly **TURNED BITTER AND UNDRINKABLE** just before 1077 AD. This meant to Jewish authorities that there was no longer in Jerusalem a fit symbol able to represent the pure and life-giving waters of salvation needed to emanate from the precincts of God’s House.

This exact thing happened before: in the brief period just prior to Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The prophet Jeremiah wrote that the earlier Jews forsook **“the fountain of living waters”** (the Gihon Spring), which was a symbol for God’s **“waters of salvation”** because they preferred and made cisterns to give themselves water to drink:

**“For My people have committed two evils: [1] Me they have forsaken, the Fountain of living waters, [2] To hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot contain water.”**

• *Jeremiah 2:13 CLV*

Early Jews said in effect: see how bitter and evil the waters of the Gihon Springs are (Jeremiah 2:19). They craved the waters of the Euphrates and Nile rather than the Gihon bitter that used to be pure (Jeremiah 2:18).

This condition happened in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. But almost 1700 years later (in **1077 AD**), when the waters of the Gihon Spring again had turned bitter and undrinkable This was one of the reasons Jewish

<sup>3</sup> See my May 2018 Commentary, “[A Brief Temple Timeline](#).” DWS

authorities<sup>4</sup> simply pulled up stakes and moved the Jewish Academy from Jerusalem to Damascus. They felt at the time that God was abandoning Jerusalem and preparing the historical scene to introduce His Messiah and the Kingdom of God. And, within 22 years, the Europeans in the First Crusade changed the political and religious character of Jerusalem.

The Jews sat on the sideline and watched. They had no part in these political and military maneuverings. The Jewish Academy simply remained in Damascus to await the commencement of an End-Time prophecy they thought they would soon witness. They could read that the prophecy of Zechariah chapters 9–14 would start with God dwelling in Damascus of Syria *before* He would redeem Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple at its former spot in Jerusalem.

### ***Why Damascus Was Selected for the Temporary Headquarters of God***

The prophecy of Zechariah chapters 9–14 begins with God determining to show His presence in Damascus. Jews have long known of this significant prophetic account. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Jewish authorities began to interpret Zechariah 9:1 as showing an extension of the city limits of Jerusalem to Damascus. This opinion was galvanized by a remarkable archaeological discovery that took place in Palestine somewhere around the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The discovery was as exciting to the people of this early medieval period as was the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls in our past generation. It was rescued (apparently from a cave) of an ancient manuscript written by early Jewish people who called themselves “the people of the Damascus Covenant.” It was the same text as that found among some manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls in our own times. The manuscript is called the “Damascus Document.” Several specimens have been found in the last fifty years. But as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century of our era one of those texts was discovered and it began to circulate among some Jewish scholars in Palestine and Egypt.

It was finally deposited in a synagogue room in Egypt in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (called a *Genizah* that was built to house discarded manuscripts). Later Jews did not consider this particular document to contain what they affirmed to be orthodox teaching in some sections of its text (which was written in an older Hebrew than they were used to) so they finally discarded it. They put it aside from public view in the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Professor Schechter of Cambridge University at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century discovered the document. It was the first of what we called today “The Dead Sea Scrolls.” It is a copy of other documents having the same text that were deposited among other literary selections in the caves near the Dead Sea and discovered from 1947 to recent times. Scholars even today call other documents that contain this identical text the “Damascus Documents.” This is because these early writers considered themselves to be Jews of Damascus.

This brings us to an important question. What is significant about the teachings of this manuscript having its origins even before the time of Christ? Its main thrust is to show a very different attitude of certain Jews to the role of the Temple at Jerusalem. It diminishes the need for a literal and physical Temple. They began to believe, like the apostle Paul later taught in the New Testament, that the whole community of Jews who adhered to the principles of their own Jewish sect could be reckoned collectively as “the Temple of God.” They accepted the position echoed by many other Jews that **“The Most High dwells not in Temples made with [human] hands”** (see, for example, Acts 7:48; 17:24).

They came to believe that the Spirit of God was designed to dwell in individual humans, and that collectively the community of righteous people could accurately be called the real “Temple of God.” In this view (which was that of the apostle Paul and New Testament teaching), the people of the “Damascus Document” felt they did not need a physical Temple of God to nurture them. They believed that wherever the People of God were, that was the “Temple,” because the righteous people had the Holy Spirit in them.

To them the residence of the Spirit was not limited to a physical Temple in Jerusalem. If the People of God lived in (or had their headquarters in) the City of Damascus, then it had to be reckoned that God dwelt

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<sup>4</sup> I explain this in my book [\*The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot\*](#). ELM



in Damascus. And why pick the City of Damascus? Because the Scripture stated that God would one day show His divine presence in Damascus as recorded in Zechariah 9:1. It is because of this verse that many of the people who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls called themselves the people of the “Damascus Covenant.”

### *The Importance of Damascus in Prophecy*

This prophecy of Zechariah 9 through 14 begins with the remarkable statement that at the End of the Age God would show His presence in Damascus. In former times after the period of Solomon, the place where God had His House of residence on earth was in Jerusalem. For all official purposes God had only a single “House” on earth. That “House” is (or *was*) the Temple at Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:1–8). That became the only place on earth that God acknowledged for His covenant people, the Israelites. In fact, Jerusalem is still God’s favorite place (symbolically) to reside on earth.

Look at God’s appraisal of Jerusalem (which He calls “Zion”):

**“Great is Yahweh, and praised exceedingly In the city of our Elohim, His holy mountain; Lovely of undulation, The elation [joy] OF THE ENTIRE EARTH is Mount Zion [Jerusalem is the chief joy for all the earth and for God Himself],**

**The flanks of the north, the town of the great King [God Himself or His elected human representative]. Elohim, in her citadels He is known as an Impregnable Retreat.**

**For behold, the kings [of the whole earth], they congregated [before Mount Zion]; They crossed over together [in political union and harmony in obeisance to God]. They themselves saw, so they were amazed; They were filled with panic; they hurried away.”**

• *Psalm 48:1–5, CLV*

Psalm 132:13 says: **“For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it [above all other areas] for His habitation.”** God not only desires living in Jerusalem (when the people are in harmony with Him), but He loves all of Jerusalem and He considers every one of those seven hills of Jerusalem as being seven “Zions” and He calls all of them **“the Mountains [plural] of Zion”** (Psalm 133:3).

But in Zechariah 9:1 there is recorded the precise statement from God Himself that He would also be showing His divine presence (His Shekinah “Glory”) in the City of Damascus in a period before the redemption of Jerusalem (as shown in the rest of Zechariah chapters 9–14). It was official biblical teaching since the time of King David that the only place on earth God would reckon to be His “House” where He would dwell would be on Mount Zion. And since Mount Zion was located in Jerusalem, it could only mean (according to some Rabbinic interpretations) that Jerusalem (or, “Zion”) had to have its city limits expanded to include Damascus.

The authority to make such an expansion of the City of Jerusalem and its precincts was well understood by the Jewish authorities even in the time of Herod and Jesus. This could be accomplished by convening a special meeting of the Sanhedrin at their second area of residence on the Mount of Olives at a village called Bethphage (the same village where Jesus told the disciples to fetch a donkey for Him to ride into Jerusalem just before His trial and crucifixion, Matthew 21:1–3). This special court of the Sanhedrin located on the Mount of Olives is mentioned in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 14a, b; and *Sotah* 44b; 45a).

### *The Significance of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives*

The village of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives was a most important religious center for the Jewish authorities in the period of Jesus and the apostles. It was a walled village that was the only area outside the walls and camp of Jerusalem that was considered by the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court of the nation) to be an official part of the City of Jerusalem. It was strategically placed near the summit of the Mount of Olives. In this village was one of the two seats of the great Sanhedrin of seventy-one members. The other and primary seat of the Sanhedrin was in the Temple at the Chamber of Hewn Stones located just to the south and east of the Altar of Burnt Offering.

Yet the walled village of Bethphage was located just east of the western summit of the Mount of Olives, over the ridge line, somewhat to the east of the Miphkad Altar where the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes and where the Day of Atonement sacrifices were burnt. This was where the other seat of Sanhedrin was located.

There were specific decisions of the Sanhedrin that were reserved for determination only at this official seat of the court in Bethphage.

- (1) Those were official judgments affecting the limits of the camp of Israel around the city of Jerusalem. This included where the Red Heifer could be burnt.
- (2) This authority embraced what districts surrounding Jerusalem were to be reckoned as being inside the city.
- (3) This also included what were to be the dimensions of the Temple (whether enlarged or restricted).
- (4) And this is where death sentences for rebellious leaders of the nation as shown in Deuteronomy 17:8-13 were validated (*Sanhedrin* 14a,b; *Sotah* 44b; 45a).

The reason these types of decisions were made **“outside the camp”** at this special village on the east side of Jerusalem was because it was necessary that these judicial sentences be made **“at the entrance”** to Jerusalem. When local decisions were made by lesser Sanhedrins associated with the various towns throughout Judaea, they too were held in the gates or entrances to the towns.

There were biblical reasons for this. This is where the well-known judgment areas declared to be **“within your gates”** come into play. Note Proverbs 31:23 (CLV) which says, **“Her spouse is acknowledged in the gateways, When he sits with the elders of the land.”** Also: **“Truth and the judgment of peace, judge in your gateways”** (Zechariah 8:16, CLV).

In the case of Jerusalem, the capital city of the nation, the principal gate to the city was on the eastern side just beyond **“the camp”** of the Israelites — that is, just **“outside the camp.”** The Sanhedrin had the village of Bethphage specifically built east of the city limits of Jerusalem as they existed in the time of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

The Jewish authorities understood that the Sanhedrin had the power to determine the boundaries of the Temple, change the dimensions of its inner compartments, and also to set the city limits of the City of Jerusalem or Zion. These judicial decisions were made at Bethphage on the summit of the Mount of Olives.

Even after the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD, when Jews later returned to the Mount of Olives for important judicial matters, from 638 to 1077 AD, these later Jews continued this official role of the Sanhedrin being situated and meeting on the Mount of Olives. And in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Jewish authorities began interpreting Zechariah 9:1 as indicating an extension of the city limits of Jerusalem to Damascus.

### ***All the Land of Canaan (the Holy Land) Was Sanctified Like Jerusalem or Zion***

By having the biblical revelation state that the holiness of Jerusalem could find a residence in Damascus (Zechariah 9:1) and the discovery of the Damascus Document which testified to the same interpretation in earlier times by former Jewish authorities, a new focus regarding the status of sanctification came into prominence among several intellectuals among the Jews.

Whereas in the time of Saadiah Gaon (leader of the Jews who lived from 882 to 942 AD), there was little or no emphasis placed by Rabbinic Jews to recognize a supreme holiness to all the Land of Canaan (the Promised Land of the Israelites) and to compare it to the holiness of Jerusalem. However, that all began to change by the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

First, the Karaite Jewish sect (who did not observe the laws of the Talmud) originally suggested that all Jews should move to Palestine and settle in “the Holy Land.” This teaching even became sacrosanct with another important Rabbi. One of the greatest of the poetic Rabbis of the 12<sup>th</sup> century was Judah Halevi, who

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<sup>5</sup> For more about the importance of Bethphage in New Testament times, see Chapter 12: [“The Sanhedrin and the Mount of Olives”](#) in my book [Secrets of Golgotha](#). ELM

died in 1141 AD. He began a systematic teaching and taught a comprehensive philosophy that gave a unique status of sanctification to the whole Land of Israel, and not just to Jerusalem and to the Temple (see *The “Judah Halevi” Encyclopedia of Judaism*, Jacob Neusner, Avery-Pick, Green, eds, vol. I, pp. 473–480).<sup>6</sup>

This is the first time that the term “Zionism” in an official sense came to mean that Jews should move to *any part* of the Land of Israel, and not simply to Jerusalem alone. Indeed, Judah Halevi in his poems (which were his philosophical means of promoting prime doctrines about the holiness of the Land of Israel) expanded the sanctity of Jerusalem and the Temple to include the whole of the Land of Israel. This was also the later interpretation that was used even by secular Jews in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to get Jews to migrate to Palestine. It was canonized by Jewish intellectuals as “Zionism.” What this approach did was to lessen the importance of Jerusalem itself (and certainly it diminished the need for a Temple).

This is when Jerusalem and the Temple began to be put into the background of importance in Jewish theological belief. In the following generation, Maimonides perpetuated this lack of interest in the earthly Jerusalem and the Temple. In fact, to Maimonides the thought of any Jew living in pre-Messianic Judaism wanting to rebuild the Temple was utter silliness. The very thought of advocating a new Temple was an anathema to him. This quest to reconstruct the Temple, to Maimonides, smacked of teaching anthropomorphic concepts of God (that is, that God has a literal body and that He has a “House” to live in). Maimonides ridiculed and denounced such teaching (even though that teaching was a cardinal doctrine of the Holy Scriptures and sanctioned by the former Rabbinic authorities).

Maimonides went so far as to state (in his third of thirteen doctrines that he believed defined the central principles of beliefs in Judaism) that God had NO BODY SHAPE at all. The Temple symbolisms, however, clearly taught the bodily existence of God. In normal Rabbinic circles in the past, God was thought to have a body made of spiritual substance with shape and form, but not made of material earth that we have in abundance on our globe. Indeed, the whole of the Old Testament (and the New) taught that God certainly had (and has) shape and form and that He possesses a body (made out of “spirit substance”).

Even the architectural design and rituals associated with the physical Temple strongly suggested that God had a body like those of us humans (Genesis 1:26). But Maimonides would have none of this teaching! He abhorred it! Indeed, in his own new type of Temple that he devised (as shown in section 3 and chapter 51 of his book *The Guide of the Perplexed* — which only vaguely resembled the dimensions of God’s Temple), Maimonides taught that **“the ignoramuses who observe the commandments”** (he means those who try to observe the Law of God without being philosophers like Aristotle) will only find themselves barely worthy of getting into the border areas of the “Sanctuary” that Maimonides had devised and certainly not within his Holy of Holies along with Aristotle and the other philosophers who rank much higher than the simple Rabbinic observers of the Law.

Even Moses, to Maimonides, obtained entrance to his ideal “Temple” because Moses, according to Maimonides, actually believed in the philosophical principles that were akin to later Aristotelian beliefs. He felt that Moses wrote the Law (with its clear and consistent teachings of the anthropomorphic characteristics of God — that is, that God had a body of spiritual substance that delineated shape and form) in an allegorical sense in order to satisfy the “ignoramuses” (the common people) of Israel and their material concepts of God. Of course, many Rabbis disagreed with Maimonides at the time, but he won out in the end. Today, almost the whole of Judaism accepts this *nonsensical* and anti-biblical teaching that God has no body like that of mankind. That belief blatantly violates the teaching of Genesis 1:26.

Indeed, I show in a future article<sup>7</sup> that the anti-anthropomorphic concept of God as conceived by Maimonides led him to promote everything in his power to wean intellectual Jews from any reliance on constructing a renewed physical Jerusalem or a physical Temple. Any advocacy of such human concepts advancing the anthropomorphic nature and shape for God, Maimonides held in utter and thorough contempt, and this included all the symbolic teaching of the physical Tabernacle or Temple.

<sup>6</sup> See the online article about “[Judah Ha-Levi](#)” in the [Jewish Encyclopedia.com](#), 1906. DWS

<sup>7</sup> See Dr. Martin’s March 2001 article, “[Maimonides - Saint and Heretic](#).”

This is one reason Maimonides showed no interest in telling Jews to return to Jerusalem or Palestine to renew the Jewish State or to rebuild the Temple. Though some Jewish intellectuals at the time rejected this new revolutionary teaching of Maimonides, it took about two or three generations for most Jewish theologians to go along with Maimonides in one way or another. In fact, all mainline Jewish authorities today follow Maimonides and ridicule the biblical teaching that God has a body with shape and form.<sup>8</sup> This teaching, however, only came into mainline Judaism in the time of Maimonides.

The adoption of this erroneous and non-biblical doctrine led Jewish authorities from perpetuating the need to rebuild a Temple in Jerusalem or anywhere on earth. Within a hundred years, the Jews lost all knowledge of where the true site of the Temples was in Jerusalem. One main factor in losing the whereabouts of the Temple was the desire in later Judaism (since the 12<sup>th</sup> century) of getting rid of the notion that God has a real body. It made the teachings about the Temple to be irrelevant because the Temple is based on anthropomorphic ideas.

In spite of the fact that Maimonides did not account the Holy Land or the physical Temple to have any importance to Jews who live in this pre-Messianic Age, Maimonides himself did not want to be buried in Egypt. He selected Tiberias in the Holy Land (the former site of the early Jewish Academy) for his burial place. This was, of course, within the central part of the Land of Israel, but nowhere near Jerusalem or the Temple site. Indeed, in the period of both Judah Halevi and Maimonides, the City of Jerusalem and the site of the Temple were in the control of European Crusaders or returned Muslims.

The Temple and its site began to be non-essential to them. Jewish people in many cases simply stripped Jerusalem and the Temple site of their former holiness in their theological concepts. And they gave more attention to the whole Land of Israel rather than specifically on physical Jerusalem and on the former physical Temple. Their cry was: “Let the Messiah concentrate on Jerusalem and the Temple, but it is not of our concern.” This approach continues to be a prime belief of many Jewish people up to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Since that time, there has been a movement to restore Jewish Jerusalem and also the Temple.

But back in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the thrust of attention by many Jews — in a most decided manner — was the sanctification of the whole of the Land of Israel, and to forget Jerusalem and the Temple. This was certainly the principle teaching of the Rabbi Judah Halevi. This is when it became popular to look on Damascus as being on the border of that Land. Yes, even Damascus began to be considered because of the teaching of Zechariah 9:1 as a cardinal part of the Land of Israel by the 11<sup>th</sup> century. So, the City Limits of Jerusalem by prophetic interpretation were quite literally moved north and eastward to include the City of Damascus.

When the Academy departed Jerusalem in 1077 AD, they moved the Academy to Damascus to await End-Time events of Zechariah chapters 9–14 that they thought were beginning to occur at the time. One principal reason for this interpretation was because Jews in that period could see in the writings of the Holy Scriptures that “Zion” could be reckoned to be elsewhere other than in Jerusalem. Let us look at some biblical teachings that show this prime truth.

### ***The Portability of Zion***

Though the Scripture states that all the mountains in the City of Jerusalem can be individually or collectively designated as “Zion” (Psalm 133:3), it is legally permissible to extend the city limits of Jerusalem to include other mountains that would bear the name “Zion.” Zion can be moved or extended. The name “Zion” can even be transported to other areas that would equally denote regions of holiness to God Himself. It should be remembered that the Tabernacle authorized in the time of Moses could move from place to place in its journeys throughout the Wilderness area.

The holiness of the Tabernacle (the earlier portable Temple) was centered in the fact that the Shekinah (the Glory of God — the shining Light at night like that of the sun and the cloud by day) was within and over the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. That “Glory” represented the Spirit of God in all its resplendence and

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<sup>8</sup> Adam and all human beings are created in God’s “image” and “likeness” (Genesis 1:26) which means we are formed as He is, just as Christ is in God’s image and likeness. DWS.

majestic grandeur. That “Glory” was manifest on and around the Sapphire Stone that was situated above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle and in Solomon’s Temple (Ezekiel 1:26–28).

Wherever that “Glory” was located on earth is where it was reckoned that “God dwelt.” Not at all times did the “Glory” emanate from the interior of the Tabernacle or Temple. Moses saw God in His “Glory” in an intimate way on one splendid occasion even within the cleft of a rock located outside the camp of Israel and about a half mile east of the Holy of Holies of the official Tabernacle for Israel (Exodus 33:18–23). Even when the “Glory” was in the Temple, it did not shine in resplendence on all occasions (Ezekiel chapters 8–11). Yet, as long as the Shekinah (the “Glory”) was reckoned to be resident within the Temple, the Temple itself was holy and sacrosanct as the official House of God on earth.

The Temple was NOT made holy because of the stones, the precious things and the other furniture that were deposited in the Temple, nor was it made holy by the priests who ministered there. The Temple was made holy because it was sanctified by the attendance of the Shekinah which represented the Spirit of God residing in the Temple. It is important to understand this point. Let us see it demonstrated.

### *The Shekinah (the “Glory”) Sanctified the Temple or Any Other Area*

Just before God had the Babylonians destroy the Temple in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, we have the prophet Ezekiel stating that he saw the **“Glory of God”** (called the Shekinah in later literature) remove itself from the Holy of Holies and progressively journey eastward within the Temple precincts until it reached the eastern gate. After pausing for a limited time, it continued its journey until it reached the summit of the Mount of Olives. (Read all of Ezekiel chapters 8–11 where this account is recorded.) In this prophecy in Ezekiel, when the Shekinah reached the summit of Olivet, it remained there until directed to go elsewhere.

As a part of the prophecy, there was a promise made by God that:

**“Therefore say, ‘Thus says my Lord Yahweh: Though I have removed them far among the nations, and though I have scattered them among the lands [within the countries of Israel’s exile], yet I shall become a SANCTUARY [or by interpretation, a “Zion”] to them a little while in the lands where they have come.’**

**Therefore say, ‘Thus says my Lord Yahweh: I will convene you from the peoples and gather you from the lands in which you have been scattered, and give you the ground of Israel.’”**

• **Ezekiel 11:16–17, CLV**

God said the Shekinah during the Exile would reside as a “Zion” among the exiled Israelites. This showed that the holiness of Zion would move from Jerusalem into areas of Exile. The Jewish authorities came to interpret the **“sanctuary”** as being a congregation of Jewish men with the minimum number of ten.

Recall that Jesus told His apostles: **“For where two or three are, gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them”** (Matthew 18:20, CLV). Of course, Jesus was referring to His apostles making decisions for the community of believers (the *ekklesia* — translated “church” in most versions).

The apostle Paul went even further. He called each individual Christian a singular “Temple,” because each had the Spirit of God in him or her — see Second Corinthians 6:16. Paul elaborated on this theme even more by showing that ALL individuals who have (when living) the Holy Spirit are reckoned collectively as the Temple of God with Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone (Ephesians 2:18–22). So, it is reckoned in New Testament parlance that if a Christian enters into a church building, it is a “Temple” of God (a “little Temple”) entering into that physical structure.

When the Christian leaves that material or physical edifice, the “Temple” of God consequently leaves with the Christian who is a “Temple of God.” The “church building” of itself is a non-sanctified spot made simply of boards, rocks, and plaster. It is not the “House of God” unless there are spirit-filled Christians standing or sitting inside its walls. If Christians are inside, then (and only then) is the church building sanctified and holy. Actually, in God’s way of evaluation, the “Temple” goes in and out of the church building when Christians go in and out.

Jews who wrote the “Damascus Document” in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC also believed the “Community of Believers” represented the true “Temple” of God, NOT the physical Temple in Jerusalem.

### *Zion Can Move from Place to Place*

The prophet Ezekiel said that he saw the Shekinah “Glory” leave the Holy of Holies and position itself over the Mount of Olives. These circumstances involving the Shekinah and its *removal* from Jerusalem were tantamount to “Zion” progressively leaving the Holy of Holies in the Temple and making its way to the top of Olivet, and then migrating into the countries of Israel’s exile to be a “little Temple” to them in those areas.

This exact scene is also reflected in another prophecy which is recorded in Micah 4:10–11, though Micah uses different words to describe it. Micah reckoned that “Zion” should be likened to a pregnant woman about ready to be delivered. In giving birth, she must go through some severe birth pangs. Micah said:

**“Travail, and rush forth, daughter of ZION, as if bearing. For now you shall go forth** [she, Zion, would start a journey even while pregnant and near birthing] **from the town** [she leaves Jerusalem], **And you will tabernacle in the field** [outside the walls of Jerusalem where cattle, sheep and goats would dwell]; **Then you** [at that time] **will come unto Babylon. There** [in Babylon] **you shall be rescued; There Yahweh shall redeem you from the clutch of your enemies.**

**And now many nations are gathered against you, saying: ‘She shall be polluted, and our eyes shall perceive it in Zion.’”**

• *Micah 4:10–11, CLV*

The term “Zion” and the place of the “Shekinah” are identical in these prophetic indications written in Ezekiel and Micah. God said through Ezekiel that He would then dwell among the Israelite exiles as a “little Temple.” This could mean within a small group (the Jews felt at least 10 men) or even within individual persons (Ezekiel 11:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16). However, “Zion” would not remain in Babylon forever. Indeed, Jeremiah said the time of stay in Babylon was to be seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:21; Daniel 9:2; Zechariah 7:5). After that period of seventy years, “Zion” would move back to the Land of Israel.

### *The Prophecy of Zion — Moving from Babylon to Bethlehem*

That section of the prophecy of Micah shows that “Zion” would be moved “out of Jerusalem” and journey even into the area of Babylon but finally return to Israel. Note that she [Zion] would leave Jerusalem, the Land of Israel would be empty of God’s “Glory” and of God’s presence (His Shekinah).

- (1) The first place “Zion” was to retreat to, was a field just outside and east of Jerusalem.
- (2) Then she (Zion) was to be transported further northeast into Babylon where she would finally give birth to a child (the later priest named Zerubbabel). He represented the nation of Israel when they left Babylon decades later to return to Judah and Jerusalem, after the Babylonian Captivity. He was symbolically named Zerubbabel, which means **“Born in Babylon.”**
- (3) But “Zion” was not to remain in Babylon. She was prophesied to come out of that northeastern area when Zerubbabel returned with the Jews to Jerusalem and the Land of Israel (Ezra chapter 2).
- (4) There was a further prophecy to the movement of “Zion” back to Judah. Note Zechariah 2:7 (CLV): **“Woe, Zion! Escape, you dwellers with the daughter of Babylon.”** Zion was told to deliver herself and to leave her places of residence in Babylon. Remarkably the prophecy then relates that she would again experience birth pangs and wanting to be delivered of a Man-Child.

The context of Micah 4:10–11 (above) continues the prophecy on the history of “Zion’s” journey by stating that this “Zion” would, on its return to the Land of Israel, establish herself in the village of Bethlehem Ephraim to be delivered of her Man-Child (Micah 5:2). Micah wrote that “Zion” would at this future time reside in Bethlehem and remain in that village:

**“Yet you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, inferior to be among the mentors of Judah, From you shall One come forth for Me to become the Ruler in Israel; Yet His goings forth are from aforetime, from days eonian.**

**Therefore He shall give them up until the time that she [Zion] which travails [in birth] has brought forth [a Man-Child — as the context shows]: then the remnant of His brethren [of the newborn child’s brethren then in Exile] shall return unto the children of Israel [now back in the Land of Israel].”**

• *Micah 5:2–3, CLV*

But this does not end the story in Micah’s prophecy. After this Man-Child would be born in Bethlehem, Micah then prophesied that He would:

**“And He will stand and shepherd them in the strength of Yahweh, In the augustness of the Name of Yahweh, His Elohim. And they will dwell securely [the Lord and the Man-Child shall abide together], For now shall He [the grown-up Man-Child born in Bethlehem shall extend His rule] be great unto the limits of the land.”**

• *Micah 5:4, CLV*

This newborn Man-Child (once He grew up) would abide with God Himself and then be recognized by the entire world.

Those verses in the long prophecy in Micah lead us directly to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Isn’t it interesting that after Jesus was prophesied to be born from “Zion” — after “Zion” had returned to Bethlehem — in the New Testament record the Magi come from the East (from Babylon where “Zion” had been) and they came with presents to do homage to the newborn child whose star they followed from Babylon?

What happens to this “Zion” who gives birth to the Man-Child? The prophet Isaiah fills in the rest of the story of “Zion’s” migrations.

**“On a lofty mountain get you up, tidings-bearer, **TO ZION!** [“Zion” moves to a high mountain.] **Raise high your voice with vigor, tidings-bearer [on the high mountain], to Jerusalem! Raise it high! Do not fear! Say to the cities of Judah: ‘Behold your Elohim! Behold, my Lord Yahweh ...’**”**

• *Isaiah 40:9–10 CLV*

This **“high mountain”** is the highest mountain in the area of Jerusalem. It is the Mount of Olives, where the Shekinah or “Zion” went in Ezekiel’s time — and where we are told that it again retreated in 66 AD. just before the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. (See my book [Secrets of Golgotha](#) for references.)

From the Mount of Olives all the cities of Judah shall hear the majestic refrain of salvation and redemption from the messianic personage who was born at Bethlehem. All will say: **“Behold, your God.”** That newborn Man-Child would be named **“Immanuel”** that is, **“God With Us.”**

- This is a manifestation of God entering into the world environment of mankind. See Isaiah 7:14; 8:8–10; 9:6–7.
- This is when **“Zion”** finally returns to the Mount of Olives where the Messianic Kingdom will be proclaimed.
- This is also what Zechariah chapter 14 says at the end of the “Damascus Prophecy” written by Jeremiah, found in Zechariah chapters 9–14.

Christ Jesus is designated as having the rank of YHWH Himself (because His name is **“Immanuel”** — **“God With Us”**). He will return to the earth at the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3–4; Acts 1:9–11).

### ***First Damascus, Then Jesus Returns to the Mount of Olives***

Before He returns to Olivet, note carefully that Zechariah begins the prophecy with God first showing His

presence (or His “Glory”) in the area of Damascus. Then, a series of events lead up to Zechariah chapter 14; God returns to the Mount of Olives and to Jerusalem — to His dwelling place on earth for 1,000 years.

### *Other Zions of God*

Not only can “Zion” move from place to place on earth as God determines, you may be surprised to learn that “Zion” can also be expanded or even multiplied. Note that there were other “Zions” on earth that God honors and that He loves dearly. These are the special places on earth in which God (at one time or another) deemed it necessary to display His divine “Glory” (His “Shekinah”).

- One of those is Mount Sinai in the Sinai peninsula. God said that anyone who climbed to the top of Mount Sinai found himself **“in the holy place”** (Psalm 68:17). [The word “*place*” is not in the Hebrew, but it is supplied in most English translations. DWS]
- God’s “Glory” was at Mount Carmel where Elijah built an altar. This was at the area of **“... The honor of Carmel and Sharon; My people, they shall see THE GLORY OF YAHWEH, The honor of our Elohim”** (Isaiah 35:2 CLV).
- Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon are graced by God’s name (Psalm 89:12).
- There was a “holy place” of God even on the Egyptian border that helped to identify where one of the boundaries of the Promised Land was delineated. The prophet Isaiah said that in that central area (north to south) of Egypt and at the beginning border with the **“Land of Promise,”** there will be an altar (a holy place) and a pillar that illustrates “God’s presence” in that area to the east from Egypt (see Isaiah 19:19–20).
- But again, and finally, there is also a “Zion” associated with Damascus. Just when and at what event was the “Glory” of God shown in Damascus that would fulfill the statement in Zechariah 9:1 that God would one day find His divine presence in Damascus?

### *Damascus as Zion*

Let us now look at Damascus in Syria. Damascus also had its own legitimate “holy mount.” It was the highest of the mountains from the Euphrates in the north all the way to Egypt in the south and down to and including the center part of the Sinai Peninsula. That mountain under discussion was Mount Hermon. It was the greatest of the sacred mountains of the Middle East.

And you may be shocked to discover this, but even God Himself states dogmatically that Mount Hermon was the world’s first “Mount Zion,” long before Jerusalem was called by King David and Solomon to be the “Mount Zion” of God for Israel and Judah.

In plain language, God reckoned Mount Hermon to be the original Mount Zion. Note this: **“From Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon, even unto MOUNT SION, which is HERMON”** (Deuteronomy 4:48, KJV which is close to the Hebrew).<sup>9</sup> This reference shows that Moses under divine inspiration called Hermon God’s holy “Mount Zion.” That is right. Even Moses was well aware that the history of the world before His time caused people of the earth to reckon Mount Hermon to be the original “Mount Zion.”

The text is certain on this matter, but modern scholars who know little of the early history of the world have tried numerous ways to change the text to something that makes sense to them because (as they look at it) there was *only ONE* “Mount Zion” and it is in Jerusalem. But the scholars are wrong. There were always more than one mountain called “Mount Zion.”

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<sup>9</sup> Mt. Hermon is visible from Damascus, just 30 miles southwest of the city. “Zion” is most often spelled with a “Z” in most English translations. In the King James Version. It is spelled “Sion” nine times: Deuteronomy 4:48, Psalm 65:1, Matthew 21:5, John 12:15, Romans 9:33, 11:26, Hebrews 12:22, 1 Peter 2:6, Revelation 14:1. Do not ask me why; I don’t know. DWS



## *Zions Around the City of Jerusalem*

Indeed, every one of the seven different mountains that became the Jerusalem of Christ's time was called a "Zion." There were officially (in God's eyes) **seven** different mountains surrounding Jerusalem and each of them could be legitimately called a "Mount Zion," and this included the highest of those mountains called the "Mount of Olives." The Jewish understanding that Jerusalem was built on "seven mountains," just as Rome was built on "seven mountains." [See Dr. Martin's short February 2000 article, "[The Seven Hills of Jerusalem](#)."] In fact, the Mount of Olives was (and is) the loftiest of the seven "mountains of Zion." The Psalmist compares Jerusalem to Mt. Hermon with both together being **"the mountains [plural] of Zion:"**<sup>10</sup>

**"It is like the night mist of Hermon [in the north, in Syria], Which is DESCENDING upon the mountain ranges of Zion, For there Yahweh has determined the blessing to be, Life for the eon."**

• *Psalm 133:3, CLV*

In the meantime, let us realize that the Holy Scriptures show in the clearest of ways that there are more than one "Zion." There are "Mount Zions" in addition to the "seven Zions" of Jerusalem. We are told in Deuteronomy 4:48 that Mount Hermon was called **"Mount Zion."** And Mount Hermon had the chronological priority as the first to be designated as God's "Mount Zion."

This gave "Hermon" a distinct superiority over Jerusalem because the Canaanite City of Jebus (the early Gentile name for Jerusalem) was NOT called "Mount Zion" until the time of David (which was at least a thousand years *after* the mountain of Damascus called "Mount Hermon" was graced with the title of "Mount Zion" by God Himself). To further signify the priority of Mount Hermon, God inspired the Psalmist in Psalm 133:3 to state that the sanctity of **"the mountains of Zion"** in the area of Jerusalem were holy and righteous.

## *Zion at Mount Hermon Is Superior to the Zions in Jerusalem*

Now hold on to your seats because most people will be shocked at what some have missed in reading the Bible that is: the superiority of Mount Hermon to the seven mountains of Jerusalem. God said that **"THE DEW OF HERMON"** that descended upon **"the mountains of Zion"** in Jerusalem gave the mountains of Jerusalem their divine sanctification! Psalm 133 has only 3 verses:

**"Behold, how good and how pleasant For brothers to dwell as one. It is like the good oil upon the head, Descending upon the beard, Aaron's beard, which is descending over the slit of his coats.**

**It is like the night mist [the dew] of Hermon [north, in Syria], which is descending upon the mountain ranges of Zion, For there Yahweh has determined the blessing to be, LIFE FOR THE EON."**

• *Psalm 133:1-3 CLV*

This psalm reveals that the **"dew of Hermon"** makes the "Zions" of Jerusalem to be holy. The teaching of Psalm 133 is not simply to remind Israelites that the dew of Mount Hermon is "clean and fresh dew" (like you might find advertised on a bottle of spring water having its source from Mount Hermon). True, Mount Hermon is the highest mountain in the Middle East, and it has "dew" of a high quality, but it was NOT the physical quality of the "dew" that God had in mind in Psalm 133:3.

The teaching was a spiritual allegory showing the transference of sanctification (or the equation of holiness) from one mountain to another. God was allegorically referring to the cleansing power of God's

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<sup>10</sup> *ELM*: I will also indicate in an article I am writing ... [Dr. Martin did not write this article before his death in January 2002, DWS], that Jerusalem was recognized by the Jewish authorities in a linguistic sense to be a DUAL city (one part of the city for the Israelites and another part for the Gentiles). This is because the word "Jerusalem" in Hebrew is DUAL in number. It is NOT singular or plural. There is a Jewish "Zion," and there is a Gentile "Zion." This DUALITY principle is a most important point to understand in regard to the negotiations that are proceeding among Israelis and Palestinians over the future status of Jerusalem, and I will show this significant fact in a new prophetic research article that I will publish in two more months.

divine “dew,” and the vital nourishment of spiritual grace from that “dew,” that came from the first “Mount Zion” in the history of the world.

That “dew of Hermon” could also sanctify and make righteous the “**mountains of Zion**” at Jerusalem! Or, in even a more expanded sense, *that* “dew” from Mount Hermon could also sanctify and make righteous any mountain or place that God would select. And indeed, an important event in the history of the world occurred on top of *that* Mount Hermon. Remember, in Matthew chapter 17 there is recorded a primary event in New Testament history concerning Mount Hermon. That is the very place where God the Father with Moses and Elijah (in vision) assembled with Christ Jesus and His three top apostles (seven persons in all) for the glorious scene of the Transfiguration.

This magnificent display was a remarkable epiphany of the divine Shekinah in all its glory and majesty. This was, in a sense, the New Testament “Mount Sinai.” It was then the place for “God’s Temple” on earth. This is where the message of Christian salvation for all in the world had its beginning.

And note: **this all occurred on the first “Mount Zion” — Mount Hermon.** Thus, the “dew of Mount Hermon” can make any other place in the world as a sanctified spot because of the outstanding spiritual manifestations that took place on the summit of that mountain.

### ***Why the Importance of Mount Hermon, and Why the Importance of Damascus?***

Let us now look at a most important point. The teaching of the New Testament unequivocally reveals why there were two areas in and around Damascus that should be rendered to be of utmost importance to all people in the world.

**The first place** is Mount Hermon. Remember, Mount Hermon is the mountain where the “Transfiguration of Christ” took place a year before His crucifixion (Matthew 17:1–13). That is the mountain (NOT Jerusalem) where **EVEN GOD THE FATHER entered the environment of the world** to commission His Son Jesus Christ to perform His final actions in redeeming the world to the Father. But that does not end the story.

**The second place** is Damascus. The city of Damascus itself was also destined to become the “dwelling-place” of God (like God dwelt and showed His presence in the Temple at Jerusalem or when He appeared at the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Hermon). Remember, wherever the Shekinah (the “Glory”) of God is displayed to people on earth, *that very place* becomes the holiest place on earth at the time.

### ***Another Important Event in Christianity***

Let us now look at a very important event in the history of the development of Christianity. It was something that happened to the apostle Paul. The area of Damascus is very significant to Christian teaching. The New Testament documents an important event that occurred near the gates of Damascus and concluded inside its walls. This event was of extreme importance in the teaching of the full and mature Gospel to the world. It is in two major chapters in the book of Acts. Those chapters reveal a most significant event that had powerful consequences in the future history of Christianity.

This was the time when Saul of Tarsus approached the City of Damascus with decrees from the High Priest in Jerusalem to apprehend, judge, and kill Christian believers. On the very outskirts of Damascus, a most unusual and awesome event happened. Near noon day, Christ Jesus Himself (in resplendent glory and majesty) appeared to Saul and those with him as a great Light.

Christ told Saul he was being commissioned to do a work for the God of Israel and for the Firstborn Son of God (Acts 9:1–22; 26:13–20). Saul was blinded and led into the City of Damascus. After three days inside Damascus, Ananias met Saul and reconfirmed what Saul himself had seen of the appearance of the Shekinah “Glory.” Saul then had scales fall off his eyes, and *he first saw the LIGHT of the truth of Christianity AT DAMASCUS!* What did Saul (later called Paul) NOT do? He DID NOT go immediately to the Holy City of God (Jerusalem), but he went to Arabia to Mount Sinai (Galatians 1:17 with 4:25) — a former “holy place” where God displayed His glory and majesty to the people of Israel.

Paul then went back to Damascus and stayed there for three years. Only then did he go to Jerusalem. To Paul, Damascus and his “Damascus experience” were more important than anything that occurred in Jerusalem since the crucifixion of Christ (Galatians 1:18). Indeed, the apostle Paul himself stated categorically that his own special commission (unlike the commission to the Jewish apostles at Jerusalem) had its origin with the “Damascus Dwelling” (or “Damascus Presence”) of God, and NOT to any manifestation of God that had its origination in Jerusalem. Note what Paul told King Agrippa in Acts:

**“Whence, king Agrippa, I did not become stubborn as to the heavenly apparition, but FIRST TO THOSE IN DAMASCUS, besides [then] in Jerusalem also [note that Jerusalem is mentioned later in this chronological account and also with an intended political emphasis], besides to the entire province of Judea, and to the nations, I reported that they are to be repenting and turning back to God, engaging in acts worthy of repentance.”**

• Acts 26:19–20, CLV

In this important event involving the appearance of the Shekinah (“Glory”) of God, Damascus was spiritually superior to Jerusalem! And what did Zechariah 9:1 state? It prophesied that at one day God would show His special presence at Damascus. And, at the time of the Transfiguration of Christ (when even God the Father entered the earth’s environment), it was on the summit of Mount Hermon (the first “Zion”) the Mountain of Damascus, and also where Saul (later named Paul) was given his divine commission to teach the Gentiles.

These two momentous events DID NOT take place in Jerusalem. They occurred in and near Damascus! So, Zechariah 9:1 has already been fulfilled in this one important manner. But is Damascus soon to experience that “Glory” ONCE MORE before the Messianic Age? When one surveys Zechariah 9:1 along with the teaching in the next 6 chapters of Zechariah, it shows a definite End-Time environment.

### **Examining Paul and Damascus**

Note this carefully. It is emphasized in the New Testament that Paul’s special commission had nothing to do with Jerusalem or the Jerusalem apostles. It was a singular assignment by Christ Jesus for Paul to go to the tribes of Israel and to the Gentiles FROM DAMASCUS! Paul had his headquarters, and did his primary work of teaching the Gospel in a progressive sense, from DAMASCUS for the first three years of his commission.

The fulfillment of Zechariah 9:1 through 14:21 will begin when YHWH comes to dwell in DAMASCUS (or when His Shekinah arrives there). This event has a relevance that will reach all areas of the globe. Note that Zechariah 9:1 is addressed to all areas of the earth. Read it carefully.

**“The load [or “burden,” KJV] of the word of Yahweh: In the land of Hadrach [Israel’s expanded “land of Promise”] AND Damascus is its resting place, for toward Yahweh is the eye of [1] HUMANITY [all of adam, Hebrew], and of [2] ALL THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL and Hamath ...”**

• Zechariah 9:1, CLV

This tells about a moment in the future when all people will look NOT only to Jerusalem as the Holy Place to learn about God, but they will also look to Damascus before many end-time events begin to occur. Many will learn the teaching of the final truths of God!

The world will concentrate on what happens in DAMASCUS from the time that Christ Jesus appeared in His Glorious divine Light of the Shekinah on the road to Damascus that began Paul’s ministry. The apostle Paul knew the importance of this “Damascus Phase” of prophecy beginning in Zechariah 9:1. That is the reason that Paul stayed full three years in Damascus before he ever went up to the City of Jerusalem to meet the other apostles.

### **Damascus and the Mystery**

To those of us who depend on the mature teachings of Christ Jesus called “the Mystery,” our headquarters IS NOT Jerusalem. It all began in the Gentile City of DAMASCUS — in the City of “Eliezer,” or as the New

Testament renders his name: “Lazarus.” Paul knew this key point. That is why he said in Acts 26:20 that the Gospel or the Evangel that Paul taught had its primitive beginning in Damascus, Syria.

Paul’s education and teaching finally resulted in God giving Paul the revelation of “the Mystery” recorded and presented in the epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. The Mystery revelation was given to Paul some years after he said: **“Whence, king Agrippa, I did not become stubborn as to the heavenly apparition [vision], but [went] first to those in Damascus”** (Acts 26:19–20). The people of Jerusalem, the earlier headquarters of God’s work on earth, learned about Paul’s message of salvation that Christ Jesus gave specially to him **three years after** the people of Damascus encountered Paul.

This surely must have been when Zechariah 9:1 was fulfilled in the eyes of Paul. It was when Saul (later, Paul) was converted by Christ Jesus and when Paul was given his commission to Israel and to the rest of the world that God Himself was **“dwelling in Damascus.”**

But this does NOT end the prophecy. Soon, in our future, the entire world will acknowledge this “Damascus Phase” of God’s presence on earth. It will be from Damascus (NOT Jerusalem) that all of us who understand “the Mystery” of God have the origination of our special and sublime inheritance.

## Conclusion

In closing, let me give a final observation and advice to all who love dearly and rely solely upon the Holy Scriptures as being the very Word of God. The prophecies will be fulfilled in all their majestic and awesome ways. Get ready for exciting times that are just on the horizon. We should be aware of the long prophecy that I have been emphasizing for the past twenty-five years — the prophecy of Zechariah chapters 9–14. That divine proclamation will soon have its literal fulfillment in the **“Land of Hadrach”** (the Fertile Crescent).

- (1) The prophecy begins with a major public event regarding the spiritual appearance of God dwelling in the City of Damascus. This will be some kind of new Shekinah appearance.
- (2) This will be followed by a series of events (the first of which is a tsunami or a gigantic tidal wave that will destroy all the eastern coastal area of the Mediterranean from Syria in the north to Gaza in the south. It even will have an effect on Egypt).
- (3) Then other events will occur, leading to the establishment in Jerusalem of a new Temple. This will be the partially built Temple referred to in Revelation chapter 11.
- (4) After this period (which lasts about 3½ years), the world will witness the appearance of God on the Mount of Olives — in the person of Christ Jesus. This event will occur at the inauguration of the Kingdom of God on earth, under the rule of Christ.

The building of physical Temples is of no importance to us who in a spiritual sense are Christians who understand our divine position in the eyes of God through the revelation of “the Mystery” taught by Paul in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

However, the construction of a new Temple is the center-point of all prophetic teaching in the Old and New Testament. While we should be aware of these important political and religious events for our own instruction (remember 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12). So, it is incumbent on each of us who are Christians (each of us who has the Holy Spirit in him or her — and who is even now reckoned to be a “Temple” of God) to be aware of these impending events and to teach them to the world. As a witness, God states that He will reveal these things to the world just before the Second Advent of Christ.

Let us keep our eyes on political and religious affairs now occurring in the world. We are now on the threshold of that period of time known in the Holy Scriptures as “the Time of the End.” It will begin in a few short years ahead of us. So, let us keep our eyes open. **“Behold, I have told you before”** (Matthew 24:25)