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READY TO REBUILD

by Thomas Ice

In 1992 Randall Price and I wrote a book about current efforts in Israel to rebuild Israel's Third Temple called *Ready to Rebuild*.¹ One of the key Israelis leading the charge to build Israel's next Temple, that we featured in the book is a man named Dr. Gershon Salomon. Dr. Salomon is head of an organization called The Temple Mount Faithful which he founded to do anything they can to attempt to rebuild the Jewish Temple. My wife and I were privileged to have him in our home for a meal a few years ago. Gershon, as he is known by his friends, was recently in the news in Israel, as he usually is this time of the year.

Dr. Salomon began to be known to some Americans as a result of his bold initiative to lay the cornerstone of the Third Temple in October 1989. At that time he tried to drive a truck up the Temple Mount carrying a 4.5 ton cornerstone in an effort to provoke his fellow countrymen to rise up and undertake the rebuilding of the Temple. Instead, it served only to provoke the Arabs. The next year (October 1990), when Gershon attempted his laying of the cornerstone, 19 Palestinians were killed when it was rumored throughout the Islamic quarters that the Israeli "infidels" were taking over the Temple Mount. This incident demonstrated to many around the world the importance of the Temple Mount to Arab and Jew.

No matter how much the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is thought by Arabs to be significant to them, it pales in comparison to the passion that religious Jews have for that 35 acre piece of real estate. Nothing captures that passion as much as the following Jewish expression:

"As the navel is set in the centre of the human body, so is the land of Israel the navel of the world . . . situated in the centre of the world, and Jerusalem in the centre of the land of Israel, and the sanctuary in the centre of Jerusalem, and the holy place in the centre of the sanctuary, and the ark in the centre of the holy place, and the foundation stone before the holy place, because from it the world was founded."

—Midrash Tanchuma, Qedoshim

Yet because of current Arab occupation of the Temple Mount Jews are forbidden by their own government to even ascend the Mount for prayer. Recently The Temple Mount Faithful lost their bid in the Israeli Supreme Court that would grant them permission to assemble 30 to 40,000 Jews upon their Holy Mount. The basis for rejecting Dr. Salomon's petition was that it would be too dangerous. The Jerusalem Post said: "Tension over the status of the Temple Mount has increased in the nine years since a clash triggered by Palestinians who threw rocks at Jews worshipping at the Western Wall on Succot led to 19 deaths, Jerusalem police chief Cmdr. Yair Yitzhaki said yesterday."² But it is clear that issues in Israel relating to the Temple Mount are not cooling, but rather gaining steam.

Since Dr. Price and I wrote our book, there haven't been any real dramatic events, other than Benjamin Netanyahu's opening of a tunnel that does not even journey underneath the Mount, but because of Arab propaganda resulted in over 100 deaths due to Arab rioting. Yet, many orthodox Jews are steadily preparing for the time when there will be a Third Temple. One of the more recently reported efforts of preparation was reported in *Arutz-7* (Sept. 27, 1999).

A census of all Kohanim (Priests) and Levi'im (Levites)—the first of its kind in 2,000 years—will kick off tonight in Jerusalem, in the context of the annual gathering of supporters of the building of the Third Temple.

With the census, organizers are attempting to recreate the schedule of priestly and Levitical duties that existed during Temple times.

No doubt many orthodox Jews are preparing for the next Temple with serious plans ready to spring into action when the opportunity presents itself.

Why can't Israel rebuild her Temple in her own land? Because of the political impasse between the Arabs and Jews over the land of Israel itself. In a recent article on efforts to rebuild the Temple it was noted:

Salomon and his supporters are zealous in their efforts, however, few believe they will have any success and as author David Dolan has stated: "There's not a chance in the world that the cornerstone will be laid. It's a publicity thing. There would be huge riots if this happened."

In August, Prime Minister Ehud Barak sent Israeli police to the Temple Mount to seal an opening in the southern wall near the Dome of the Rock. The Muslim Waqf religious authority had widened a window, which Israeli Public Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami called "a flagrant violation, not only of the law, but also of the (religious) status quo."

After Israeli police sealed the opening, Barak ordered reinforcements to the highly volatile area to ensure there wouldn't be any Palestinian backlash. There were no reported incidents.

In a press release, Salomon said: "The Israeli authorities will only allow the cornerstone to be brought close to the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount and to the City of David. However, we will do our best to convince the Israeli authorities to open the gates of the Temple Mount for the cornerstone."

He added that the rebuilding of the Temple, which was the biggest dream over the last 1,900 years since the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, "will completely change the status quo in Israel, the Middle East and all over the world."

Most dismiss Salomon's scheme as a "publicity stunt."³

But Israel's Third Temple will one day be rebuilt as Dr. Price and I showed in our book from Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 11:1-2. Few observers of world events ever thought Israel would become a nation again, but it did occur in 1948. So too, there will be a rebuilt temple by the middle of the seven year tribulation. Frankly, it does not appear that there are any events on the horizon that might lead to Israel's next Temple. But, since the rapture of the church could happen at any moment, things could certainly change in a big hurry.

I have often taught that the long-awaited permission for the Jews to rebuild their Temple will likely be part of the covenant between Antichrist and Israel which starts the seven-year tribulation after the rapture. Biblical scholar and prophecy expert Dr. John Whitcomb has said in his commentary on Daniel:

Thus, part of the strong covenant with "the many" in Israel must be permission to offer sacrifices again "in the temple of God" (2 Thess. 2:4). In light of the current situation in Jerusalem, it would take a very powerful person to obtain and guarantee such access by Israel to the Temple area. It seems possible that the "two witnesses" of Revelation 11:3-6, who have irresistible authority in Jerusalem during the first three-and-one-half years, will also be instrumental in arranging the terms of this covenant with the "little horn," for not until they are killed by him (after he "comes up out of the abyss") is he able to break the covenant and terminate the sacrificial system.⁴

This suggestion makes sense, since Dr. Whitcomb is suggesting that the Temple will be rebuilt and supervised supernaturally by the two witnesses during the first half of the tribulation. Since one of the two witnesses will most likely be Elijah, then this would mean that the ministry of Elijah would likely tell us more about the ministry of the two witnesses. Malachi 4:4-5 says, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." Perhaps the ministry of Elijah, where he will help the Jewish people "get right with God," before the return of the Lord will involve their Third Temple, until commandeered by Antichrist.

Regardless of how the Lord works out the details, His plan will be brought to pass. In the meantime, many of the current events now taking place in and around Jerusalem and the Temple Mount are setting the stage for what will be a string of events that will usher in the second coming of Christ. The church is looking for the rapture, where Christ will take us in an instance to be with Himself for all eternity. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ Thomas Ice and Randall Price, *Ready To Rebuild: The Imminent Plan to Rebuild the Last Days Temple* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1992).

² "High Court Snubs Temple Mount Faithful," *Jerusalem Post*, September 27, 1999, Internet Edition.

³ "Faithful try to lay cornerstone again", by Kaye Corbett 1999 WorldNetDaily.com

⁴ John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 134.