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The Kryptonite of Bible Archaeology?

If the Western Wall is not the ruins of the ancient temple, then what is it?

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. --Matthew 24:2

Let's just say that global events are unusually fluid at the moment—maybe even apocalyptic. In particular, the attention focused on Israel of late, has many believers wondering if the time of the gentiles is coming to a close and if the *son of perdition* is soon to be introduced. But, doesn't that require a third temple to be readied in Jerusalem for his repugnant occupancy? More so, how can that happen except the current temple mount "squatters" first be evicted?

In a recent Internet piece, Leo Hohmann writes about Robert Cornuke, a retired Los Angeles policeman turned amateur archeologist, who thinks he has the answers. In his new book, "Temple: Amazing New Discoveries that Change Everything About the Location of Solomon's Temple," Cornuke asks, "...what if the spot where Solomon built the first Jewish Temple, and Herod built the second, was actually about 600 feet to the south, in a place known as the ancient City of David?"¹

Suffice to say, Hohmann says Cornuke's book is turning heads in scholarly circles for its pure audacity. Yet, according to various other reports, Cornuke's case has been so well researched, a number of scholars say it's hard to ignore. "We have an opportunity to impact history, positively or negatively," Cornuke says. "What we're sitting on is the kryptonite of Bible archaeology."

Cornuke is careful to say he is merely following up and expanding the work of Ernest L. Martin, an archaeologist who wrote the 1994 book, "The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot."

A starting point for Martin and Cornuke, is the prophetic word in Matthew 24. As Jesus and His disciples exited the Temple, Jesus said, *Do you not see all these things? Assuredly I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down.* "But," says Cornuke, "the Western Wall where Jews still pray has thousands of stones remaining intact. They believe it is the western wall of their temple and, therefore, a holy place, often referred to as the Wailing Wall. Historical accounts, however, say the Romans so fully destroyed the Jewish Temple in 70 A.D., it became nothing but a field of weeds."

Cornuke says the first century historian Flavius Josephus wrote that the site that today is considered the Temple Mount was actually a Roman fort called Fort Antonia. The fortress was large enough to support the Roman Tenth Legion, about 6,000 soldiers plus support staff for a total of about 10,000 personnel. The Roman fort would need at least the area of the present day Temple Mount (36 acres) to sustain itself. And, according to Josephus, the fortress overlooked the temple.

Eyewitness Eleazar Bin Jari, commander of the Jewish rebels at Masada, described Jerusalem as lying in total ruins, noting: "It (Jerusalem) is now demolished to the very foundations, and hath nothing left but that monument of it preserved, I mean the camp of those (the Romans)

“that hath destroyed it, which still dwells upon its ruins.” In other words, nothing was left standing in Jerusalem other than the Roman Fort Antonia, with its high stone walls still intact. Eleazar said the temple was completely gone, even its very foundation uprooted, fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus.

Perhaps this account also fulfills the prophecy of Micah 3:12: It says “Zion (which is the City of David) shall be plowed like a field. Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins. And the mountains of the Temple like the bare hills of the forest.”

Cornuke cites other Bible verses that support his theory about the temple site being at “the stronghold of Zion” in the City of David. A powerful clue can be found in 2 Chronicles 3:1, which describes the location where Solomon built the temple “on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” This threshing floor, where wheat was separated from chaff, had been purchased by David after he conquered a 12-acre fortress on a hill south of today’s Old City section of Jerusalem. That hill is today located within the City of David (Jerusalem Walls) National Park.

Leo Hohmann says the clincher for Cornuke came when he considered the Book of Acts, Chapter 21: 27-32. It describes a riot scene in which Paul was arrested at the temple by the commander of the Roman garrison. The commander *immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them* (toward the temple). If the Temple Mount was the place of Paul’s riot scene, Cornuke wonders where would someone go down from to reach Paul? The answer seems to suggest that the traditional Temple Mount was actually the Roman Fort and the true temple site was below, at the City of David.

Cornuke also found clues in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which contained this cryptic instruction: “You shall make a channel all-round the laver within the building.” Evidently, a channel ran from the building to a shaft so that water flowing from within the Temple site would be directed outward and into the ground. Tacitus, the Roman historian, affirmed that the temple at Jerusalem had a natural spring of water that welled from its interior. There is only one spring this could be referring to, the Gihon Spring, in the old City of David, also called the stronghold of Zion in Scripture.

“The spring connection,” says Cornuke, “especially a robust gushing spring, seems to be like a laser pointer aimed at the City of David and not at the Temple Mount as the temple site.” The many animals slaughtered for the temple sacrifices would have required a powerful water source to wash away the tremendous amount of blood that would have been left behind. The City of David site has this water source, the traditional Temple Mount would have been nearly a quarter mile away.

On a recent visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, Cornuke said he did an informal straw poll of Jewish people at the Wailing Wall. “Everyone over 40 years old,” writes Cornuke, “said, ‘I don’t care what you say, or what evidence you have, it’s not going to change the way I think. My father brought me here, my grandfather brought me here, and it’s all been at the Western Wailing Wall.’ Those under 40 were less wedded to tradition. They said, ‘Cool, now we can rebuild our temple.’ They were excited... I even had a man who represents an Israeli cabinet official that wanted to get my book to Benjamin Netanyahu.” Cornuke says he signed it and it was delivered to Netanyahu that very day (some few weeks ago).

We know that temple implements are at the ready, and after an absence of some 1700 years, so is the reconstituted order of the Sanhedrin. So, if Cornuke’s speculations are valid, and somehow received by Jews in Israel, it’s literally a game-changer. Construction could begin at a site that is already in their control.

Christians, however, do not have their hopes anchored to a third temple. We believe in the imminency of Jesus Christ. HIS soon return is the next big event on our calendar. Have a blessed RESURRECTION Sunday!

Rick Forcier

¹ Hohmann, Leo, <http://discerningthetimes.me/2015/02/25/prayers-to-god-in-wrong-spot/>