

A city built by God

by Douglas E. Cox

Several prophecies show that Jerusalem is a city that is built by God. However, the *earthly* Jerusalem was built by man, not God. The city built by God is heavenly. So, which Jerusalem does Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks apply to? Many insist that it must be the earthly one. Daniel 9:25 says, "the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." This occurred in the first two sections, of 7 weeks and 62 weeks. When these were completed, Jesus, the Messiah, began his ministry. The first two sections of Daniel's 70 weeks apply to the earthly city, and part of the last week, but not all of Daniel's 70 weeks apply to the earthly city. The ministry of Jesus was the first portion of the 70th week, and he was crucified after he had ministered for three years and a half. The last portion of the 70th week is the "time, times, and a half" of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. This period, half of "seven times," applies to the heavenly Jerusalem. It represents the duration of the present age, when Christ is building his Church. When Jesus ascended to heaven, after his resurrection, Jerusalem also was raised up, as foretold in Isaiah 2:1-2. The heavenly Jerusalem is the city built by God. It is a spiritual, eternal city.

Isaiah identified the walls of Jerusalem with salvation. [Isaiah 26:1] This is a spiritual concept, and it applies to the saints, but not to the literal, earthly city, which suffered destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, and again under the Romans and Titus in 70 AD.

The walls of the earthly city were unable to save the Jews; however Isaiah said of Jerusalem, obviously referring to the heavenly one, "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." [Isaiah 60:18]

Jews in the first century who took Isaiah's prophecy literally, applying it to the earthly city, would have been disappointed, as it refers to the heavenly city that God is building.

Other prophecies and scriptures support this. For example, David prayed, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem." [Psalm 51:17-18]

He prayed that God would build the walls of Jerusalem, which Isaiah showed represent salvation by God, because Jerusalem was a type and figure of the city of the saved.

David wrote, "For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah." [Psalm 69:35] So for David, Zion, and the cities of Judah, are identified with God's salvation.

The Church is the holy city that God is building today, not the earthly city.

When God builds up Zion, David said, his glory will appear. "When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." [Psalm 102:16] No doubt this refers to God's glory revealed in his saints.

David said, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." [Psalm 127:1]

There is only one city that God builds; it is called Jerusalem, but the city is a spiritual one, not made with hands.

Again, David wrote, "The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." [Psalm 147:2]

Isaiah foretold that a person named Cyrus would give the word to build Jerusalem, and the temple. The Gentile king of Persia who conquered Babylon was named Cyrus, and was also known as Darius, according to some scholars. Evidently, in Isaiah's prophecy, Cyrus was a type of Christ. Some of the things said of him apply to Christ. [Isaiah 44:26-28, 45:13]

Isaiah's prophecy also seems to allude to the famous decree that began the 70 weeks of the prophecy of Daniel 9. It was Cyrus who gave the commandment that liberated the Jews from exile, encouraging them to return to their city and rebuilt the temple of God. Daniel wrote: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." [Daniel 9:25]

The decree of Cyrus is recorded in 2 Chronicles 36:23.

Zechariah spoke of the rebuilding of the spiritual Jerusalem when he wrote: "Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem." [Zechariah 1:16]

Matthew's gospel reports that Jesus said he will build his Church. Jesus said to Peter: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." [Matthew 16:18-19]

The Church is the Jerusalem that Christ is building.

In Acts, James quoted a prophecy of Amos, that said the tabernacle of David would be rebuilt. James applied this to the Church. He said: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things." [Acts 15:14-17]

Here, it is God who rebuilds the tabernacle of David.

Paul described Christians as "God's building." [1 Corinthians 3:9-10]

Paul also wrote: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." [2 Corinthians 5:1]

Paul described Christians and the Church as a temple having the prophets and apostles as its foundation, and Jesus Christ as its chief cornerstone. [Ephesians 2:19-22]

The Church is the city that is built by God, which the prophets foresaw, and described in their prophecies, under the figure of the earthly city of Jerusalem. The author of Hebrews said that Abraham looked for this eternal city which is made and built by God. [Hebrews 11:9-10]

In the following chapter this city is called "the heavenly Jerusalem." [Hebrews 12:22] Mount Zion is spiritual, and cannot be touched. [Hebrews 12:18]

In Revelation, Jesus promises to make those who overcome pillars in the temple of God. [Revelation 3:12]

The "Jerusalem" that God is building, to which many of the prophecies and promises apply, clearly is not the earthly city. Rather, the saints are collectively referred to by the name Jerusalem, and Zion. The Church is the "heavenly Jerusalem" which John described as "the bride, the Lamb's wife." [Revelation 21:9]