

# Kingdom Report

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## **The City of David: The Template for the 21st Century Church**

At some point in the near future as the years pass our evangelical charismatic movement are going to realize we are in a generational struggle.. It will require a new template. I suggest to you Ezra's template. The City of David built on Zion.

Last week I blogged on Ezra and his New Jerusalem project begun in 485 BC. He arrived 57 years after Zerubbabel and the first settler party. By 515 BC under the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah they had finally finished the Temple. Certainly not the glorious Temple of Solomon restored but at least functional. But Ezra had a new vision that he had to convey to the Jerusalem community.. And it is this vision I want to convey to the church of the 21st Century.

Ezra as a professional scribe/scholar of the Persian court highly learned but also of the priestly line of Aaron, had studied all the prophetic and historical documents of his people. The historical documents of Samuel, Gad the seer and Nathan the prophet. The prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah. But especially the visions and prophecies of Daniel who preceded him in the courts of Persia under Cyrus and Darius.

What Ezra knew was that God still had a prophetic destiny for his people, that a Messiah was to come, that the Jews were to prepare the way for the Messiah's mission by teaching the nations the way of the Lord from the laws of Moses.

Most importantly just as Jeremiah had prophesied that the people would be captive for 70 years and Isaiah prophesied that a ruler by the name of Cyrus would release them....so he came convinced with Daniel's message from Gabriel that it would be 490 years until the Messiah would bring in righteousness into the world.

That meant Ezra needed to build a structure, a witness to the nations that would be a continuous witness for the next 490 years. It could not be just the Temple. It needed to be an entire social, and economic system that would support and stand the test of time to keep the witness shining from generation to generation. That required a city.

And so he came with his history of how his people founded their city and civilization. The city of David. Not just how it was founded but where and how was it organized. Ezra's message was yes it was great you restored Solomon's temple, but if we are to have an international witness sustainable for hundreds of years we need to restore the City of David.

And that is my message in this series. It is great we have built churches as temples for worship and praise and preaching. That is fine to do the Great Commission and preach to every creature...and then comes the end?

Except what if that is not the end. What if the plans of God are greater and more extensive and far longer in time and reach? What if the end that we face in our time is the end of manmade civilization and fragile economic castles built on sand. What if in fact we need to plan and survive and thrive over long generations still ahead.

If that is the case then we need to build like Ezra not just temples but cities that will be testimonies to the nations and places of blessing and prosperity to the people as we show the world the ways of the Lord.

### **Zion and the City of David**

Let me give you some historical background to make my case.

If you go to Jerusalem and get a city tour they will take you to a hill site outside called 'The city of David'. There are actually 7 hills in and around Jerusalem. Mt Moriah is famous as the place where Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac and where Solomon built the great Temple.

But the hill called Zion is where David established his palace and government and where he pitched the tent that housed the Ark...it was called David's Tabernacle. This is what the scripture says....

2 Samuel 5:7 states, "Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David".<sup>2</sup> The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 11:5 is equally direct: "Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David".

So the City of David is not Jerusalem. It was David's residence and government and tabernacle on the hill of Zion outside Jerusalem proper. This is important for my narrative template. You know all the wonderful scriptures that extol "Zion the city of God"? And all our songs?

The firm establishment of the City of David/Zion as Israel's politico-religious center created a foundation upon which a profound theological evolution occurred. The names associated with this specific hill began to acquire layers of meaning, expanding from a physical location to a poetic symbol and, ultimately, a transcendent eschatological hope.

The term "Mountain of the Lord" or "mountain of the house of the LORD" represents the apotheosis of Zion's sanctity in the prophetic imagination. In nearly identical passages, the prophets Isaiah and Micah articulate a vision of a future time, "the last days," when this mountain would be established as the world's supreme spiritual center, to which all nations would stream for instruction and peace.

Crucially, the prophets explicitly link this exalted "mountain" to the known sacred geography of David's capital. Isaiah 2:3 and Micah 4:2 both conclude the vision with the declaration: "For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem". This parallelism demonstrates that the "Mountain of the Lord" may start on Zion but will spread to Jerusalem.

In the poetic and prophetic literature of the Old Testament, where it appears over 150 times, "Zion" is frequently used as a poetic symbol for the entire city of Jerusalem and, by extension, the people of Israel. It is personified as the "daughter of Zion," a figure representing the covenant community in its relationship with God, whether in suffering or deliverance. Ultimately, Zion transcends geography entirely to become a theological ideal. It symbolizes the object of longing for the exiles in Babylon (Psalm 137), the locus of messianic salvation, and, in New Testament theology, the heavenly Jerusalem—the spiritual kingdom of God and the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed. But at the same time still the Bride of Christ or the Church.

The analysis of biblical texts, supported by archaeological and geographical evidence, reveals a coherent and unified progression of thought. The concepts of the City of David, Mount Zion, and the Mountain of the Lord are not disparate but represent a single, dynamic idea that evolves over time. And has evolved today as the Church...the Ekklesia of God.

The process begins with a historical event: King David's conquest of a specific, identifiable hill—the Jebusite fortress of Zion—which he rebrands as the City of David. This location, the small southeastern ridge of ancient Jerusalem, is archaeologically distinct from the later, larger city. David then transforms this new political capital into Israel's spiritual center by installing the Ark of the Covenant within its walls, establishing its sanctity and making it the focal point of national worship before the Temple was built. This sanctified place, Zion/City of David, becomes the geographical and theological foundation for the prophetic concept of "the Mountain of the Lord," the future spiritual center for all nations. From this concrete beginning, the names "Zion" and "Mountain of the Lord" undergo a profound theological expansion, evolving from a physical place to a poetic symbol for Jerusalem and its people, and ultimately to a transcendent concept representing God's eternal kingdom and his dwelling place among humanity. The three terms, therefore, form an inseparable conceptual triad, rooted in a physical hill, sanctified by a pivotal act of piety and statecraft, and elevated by divine revelation into an enduring symbol of God's presence in the world. A place now occupied by the Church.

And it was this "City of David" that Ezra wanted to repeat in the midst of the Persian empire as a witness to the nations. He wanted the Jerusalem settlement to see a bigger vision. Not just a settlement with Temple. No they must become Zion, the City of God. God is not finished with either His temple or Jerusalem or the vision of Zion. God has started over with just 50,000 settlers that must now carry on the Abraham calling of being a blessing to all the nations of the world.

That is why he reformed the priesthood, set up teaching and the law of God, established judges and laws and ordinances. Regulated feasts and Sabbaths. Organized economy and tithes for continuity and support of government and priesthood.

Ezra was creating a parallel civilization in the midst of a Persian civilization. Within the Persian empire the largest in the world till that time each national group of a multicultural empire were permitted to worship their own gods. The new Jerusalem civilization that was founded by Ezra and Nehemiah was strategically placed by God at the crossing point of trade routes from east to west and north to south. They had

more than 450 years to prepare the world for the coming of the Lord. Not just by preaching but by living the Word of the Lord as a witness to the nations.

### **The 21st Century Church - and the Ezra Template**

Today we are characterized in our church expression by division. We divide our tribes of the Israel of God by denomination or "apostolic network". It seems like differing fast food franchises in every city. Each offering their unique menu.

We justify that by the urgency of the hour to just get the gospel message out into every place we can so that we can fulfil the end times mandate of preaching into all the world and then comes the end.

I suggest this. What if this is not the end. What if this is not "this generation that sees the fig tree blossom (the return of the Jews)" and therefore this is the generation that sees the Coming of Jesus.

Have you seen what is happening in Gaza, what is happening in Israel? Are they really "Zion, the City of God, the Mountain of the Lord". Is the Israel you see now in Palestine is this the Mountain of the Lord that Micah says the nations will flock to this Jerusalem to say "teach us your ways"? Who is fulfilling the Abrahamic calling "through your seed will I bless all the nations of the earth"? Who is blessing the nations...the Church or the Jews? Who is teaching the nations the ways of the Lord...the Church or the Jews?

It is time for the Church to organize ourselves for the long term as the New Jerusalem the City of God in every city of the world. Every city in the world has a mount Zion that needs to be transformed into "Zion, the City of David, the Mountain of the Lord".

Let's do what Ezra challenged....after you build a temple. Build Zion, the City of David, the Mountain of the Lord.

When we have all built our various churches in the city....then it is time to build the City of David. Every city needs a Mount Zion that must be delivered of the Jebusites and it is on Mount Zion you build the City of David that is the parallel civilization for the assembly of God's people to express the Kingdom of God as a witness to the city by living example.

It is only when we build the City Church as all believers that we create the networks of fellowship that can bring resources together for healing the cities and by that healing the nation. And that is also the Ark of Safety that will carry us through a disintegrating old world order.

Next week...."How to Raise up the Tabernacle of David" to establish the government of God over a city.