

When Believers Turn to Face Jerusalem in Prayer

The eleven disciples stood breathless with mouths open, staring into the sky. Their feet remained firmly planted in their sandals atop the Mount of Olives, but where the Messiah had just been standing there were now only empty footprints.

Not only did Jesus soar into the sky from Jerusalem's Mount of Olives, but Zechariah 14:4 confirms that this is where He will return "in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Jerusalem by no means lost its significance after the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus took place there. It remains the starting place and focal point for God's activities on Earth, especially as we near the end times.

The prophets depict for us a beautiful future when the Messiah returns. He will establish the kingdom of heaven on Earth, which will span the entire world; Jerusalem will be the capital, where Jesus will establish His throne. This message of the kingdom of God was at the core of the gospel that Jesus taught, and that is why He proclaimed His message so strongly in Jerusalem.

The list of end-times prophecies involving Jerusalem is far too extensive to include here. Often, the prophets endearingly refer to Jerusalem by the name Zion, after one of its great hills.

In the Messianic kingdom, living water will flow out from Jerusalem (Zech. 14:8). The city will be rebuilt never to be destroyed (Zech. 14:11).

Ultimately, Jerusalem will be the site of the annual pilgrimage for all nations: "Then it will be that all the

nations who have come against Jerusalem and survived will go up each year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zech. 14:16).

Isaiah envisions Jerusalem as the hub of knowledge and justice in the Messianic future:

"In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall go and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:2-3, MEV)

The prophet Joel describes Jerusalem as the "dwelling place of God":

"The Lord roars from Zion, and sounds His voice from Jerusalem, and heaven and earth quake. But the Lord is a refuge for His people, and a stronghold for the children of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who dwells in Zion, My holy mountain. And Jerusalem will be holy, and invaders will never again pass through her" (Joel 3:16-17, MEV).

Considering these prophecies, it is no surprise that in the book of Revelation, God promises to send down a New Jerusalem from heaven. This shows that Jerusalem is and will always be at the center of God's interaction with the world.

When Jews and Christians turn as one to face Jerusalem in prayer, we envision it not as it is, but as it will be when Jesus returns. Doing so places our prayers in the context of the Messianic kingdom and expresses our hope in the soon-coming Messiah. It shows that we await God's solution to all our problems—the redemption of Jerusalem. {eoa}

Note: This is part one of a two-part series.

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