

MISTAKE 13

THE LOCATION OF THE FIRST AND SECOND TEMPLES WAS ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT NOT 1/3 OF A MILE SOUTH OF IT

The author first heard this odd theory in the 1990's when he received a book by a man named Ernest Martin. Martin argued that the Temple Mount was never the site of the two Temples in the history of Israel. I was incredulous about his thesis and his conclusions.

As one who had visited the Temple Mount dozens of time, who had done intense study on its history as well as its geography, it was hard to believe that someone would come up with a theory so wrong-headed.

Well, as Solomon said, there is “nothing new under the sun.” This theory has been revived in recent years and has gotten a lot of traction through the internet.

Rather than re-invent the wheel, and write my own evaluation on the subject, I've decided to list the conclusions of three world class archaeological specialists on this matter: Henry Smith, Dr. Scott Stripling, and Scott Lanser.

They wrote the following summary of some of the errors of those who would claim that the Temple Mount was not the location of two temples in Israel's history. They belong to a wonderful group known as biblical research associates. Their website is biblearchaeology.org. If you are looking for a worthwhile group of Christians to financially support you could not do better than them.

The following is their summary on the matter:

SUMMARY OF REVISIONIST ERRORS

1. Jesus did not predict that every single stone in every single building in first century Jerusalem would be torn down to bedrock by the Romans. This hyper literalizing of Jesus' words is not supported by the context of his statements, the point he was making, or the archaeological evidence (Mt 24:1–2, Mk 13:1–2, Lk 21:5–6, Lk 19:41–44). Paradoxically, revisionists (wrongly) claim the existing Temple Mount platform was actually the superstructure of the Antonia Fortress. If this were the case, and the hyper literal interpretation of Jesus is correct, then why is the platform consisting of 30 courses of stone still there?
2. The present-day Temple Mount was not the superstructure of the Roman Antonia Fortress. Its remnants have been found on the northwest corner of the Temple Mount, confirming Josephus' statements about its location and its destruction by Jewish rebels during the Great Revolt.
3. Josephus did not claim that an entire Roman legion could have been housed or must have been housed in the Antonia Fortress. The word Josephus uses to describe the Roman legion is distorted by the revisionists to support this claim.
4. Archaeological evidence unearthed from around the Temple Mount is entirely Jewish in nature. This includes inscriptions and iconic objects near Robinson's Arch, gentile prohibition and the place of trumpeting inscriptions, opus sectile pavers, and Jewish ritual baths (*miquaot*). If the Temple Mount was the Roman Antonia Fortress instead, there would be no such archaeological evidence.
5. Revisionists misinterpret future looking prophetic passages in Joel and Ezekiel to claim that there must have been a spring in the Temple complex. Nowhere does the Bible say that there was a spring inside the Temple complex in antiquity.

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6. The Temple did not need a spring inside its complex to operate the biblical sacrificial system. Millions of gallons of water were available by way of cisterns, aqueducts, and *miqvaot*. Water could also be brought by manual labor from the Gihon Spring, and also from the Strouthian Pool, and the Pools of Bethesda and Siloam. Thus, the Temple did not have to be over or next to the Gihon Spring.

7. Upon close examination and analysis, ancient sources which purport that the Temple had a spring within its precinct are problematic and unreliable. The *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates* (§§83–120) is the best-known example. As it pertains to the geography of Israel, *Aristeas* is unreliable. The letter states that the Jordan River flows into the Mediterranean Sea! It clearly was not authored by someone who had visited Jerusalem. Dr. Stripling and Dr. Craig Evans will examine *Aristeas* and other sources in detail in a forthcoming article in the *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin*.

8. Archaeological evidence from the City of David has irrefutably shown that a massive garbage dump was there in the first century, right where the revisionists claim that the Temple stood. This makes it physically impossible for the Temple to have stood in the City of David in the days of Jesus.

9. All relevant biblical texts indicate that the Temple was built on Mount Moriah, not in the City of David.

10. Revisionists wrongly argue that the statement “Solomon repaired the millo” means he built the Temple in the City of David (1 Kgs 9:18, 9:24, 11:27). The biblical texts say no such thing, and they clearly distinguish the Temple from the millo: “And this is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon drafted to build the house of the Lord and his own house and the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer” (I Kings 9:15).

11. The use of the term “Zion” in the Bible does not necessitate that the Temple was in the City of David. The meaning of Zion changed over time and was used differently depending on the context. “Zion” is used over 150 times in the OT, often as a synonym for Jerusalem. “For out of Zion shall go forth the Law [Torah], and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3). The term is not limited to the City of David, and often encompassed what it now the Temple Mount. The phrase “Mount Zion” is also used many times and is not limited to the City of David.

12. Archaeological discoveries found in and around the Temple Mount indicate that the Temple stood there, not down in the City of David. Archaeological evidence does not migrate uphill. Erosion migrates archaeological material downhill. This is *Archaeology 101*.

13. Solomon brought the ark of the covenant **UP AND OUT** of the City of David and into the Temple. Thus, the Temple was not in the City of David. “Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers’ houses of the people of Israel, in Jerusalem, **to bring up** the ark of the covenant of the Lord **out of the city of David**, which is Zion” (II Chronicles 5:2).

14. Araunah’s threshing floor was not located in the Jebusite fortress in the City of David (2 Sam 24:18–25, 1 Chron 21:18–30, 2 Chron 3:1). The threshing floor and the Temple itself were on Mount Moriah: “Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite” (2 Chronicles 3:1).

15. A large city wall from the time of Hezekiah on the eastern slope of the City of David has been discovered just south of the Gihon Spring. This wall stood at the time when the revisionists claim that the Temple and its massive superstructure stood in the same place. This discovery, like the garbage dump from the time of Jesus, makes the revisionist theory physically impossible.

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16. Qualified, trained, and credentialed archaeologists disagree with one another on just about everything regarding the archaeology of Israel with one salient exception—the location of Solomon’s and Herod’s Temple on the modern-day Temple Mount in Jerusalem!

We strongly urge professing Christians to reject theories and arguments which advocate (re)locating the Temple in the City of David. The arguments are vacuous and do not advance the case for the reliability of the Bible or the Gospel itself.

This article was from biblearchaeology.org titled *Temple Mount Revisionism, Requisite in Pace! (Rest in Peace)*

To sum up, the idea that the Temple was located any place other than the Temple Mount is ludicrous. As the writers mentioned in point 16, there is complete agreement among all experts in the field as to the general location of the Temple, it was on the Temple Mount.

WHERE DID THE TEMPLE STAND ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT?

Having said this, there is no agreement whatsoever as to where the precise location of the Temple was on the Temple Mount.

The following is what I have written in my book *The Jews, Jerusalem and the Coming Temple* (it is a free download on our website educatingourworld.com under the section on *Bible Prophecy*).

Since the Temple Mount is presently under Muslim control, any on site work to determine where the Temple had once stood is simply impossible. The Muslims, for their part, do not even acknowledge there ever was a Jewish Temple located on the Temple Mount.

The fact that archaeological excavation on the Temple Mount is not possible has not stopped scholars from attempting to locate the Temple site through other means.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE LOCATIONS AS TO WHERE THE TEMPLE STOOD

There have been various theories as to where the ancient Temple stood. They include the following popular ones:

1. The Temple stood over the site of the Dome of the Rock Shrine. The sacred rock was where the Holy of Holies was located.
2. Another view says that the sacred rock was where the altar of sacrifice stood, not the Holy of Holies. The altar was located slightly east of the Temple proper. Therefore, the Temple would have stood slightly west of the Dome of the Rock.
3. The Temple stood 106 meters to the north and the west of the Dome of the Rock shrine. A small monument known as the “Dome of the Spirits” or the “Dome of the Tablets” stands today where the Holy of Holies once stood.
4. The Temple originally stood to the south of the Dome of the Rock—between it and the Al Aksa Mosque. A large fountain stands today where the Holy of Holies once stood.
5. Another recent theory says the Temple originally stood even further to south of the Dome of the Rock, near the Al Aksa Mosque.

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6. One other theory, which has not gained any prominence among scholars, for obvious reasons, is that the present-day Temple Mount is not the site of the Temple. The Temple was actually built about one third of a mile to the south of the Dome of the Rock in the ancient city of David.

We can summarize them in the following manner.

OPTION 1 THE TEMPLE STOOD OVER THE PRESENT-DAY DOME OF THE ROCK

The most generally accepted view among scholars is that the Dome of the Rock shrine was built over the location of the First and Second Temple. The Dome was built over a rock-mass known to the Muslims as *as-Sakbra*. This rock-mass, where it is thought that the Holy of Holies was located, is the highest point on the Temple Mount.

Because it is believed that this golden Dome was purposely erected over this rock-mass to keep the Jews from ever building another Temple, the site of the Dome of the Rock has been a popular choice for the original location of the Temple.

OPTION 2 THE TEMPLE STOOD WEST OF THE DOME OF THE ROCK

Another possibility is that the Temple stood west of the sacred rock. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* notes:

The most probable site of the Temple is just west of the “Dome of the Rock” in the center of the Mosque of Omar. The bronze altar was probably built upon this rock. The mosque was built over a rock the traditions of which are sacred; probably the site was the same as that of the temple which Hadrian erected to Jupiter. This in turn was the site of Herod’s temple, which would naturally be that of Solomon’s. The persistency of sacred sites in the East makes this most likely (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, p. 139).

According to this theory, the sacred rock was the where the altar of sacrifice stood—not the Holy of Holies. This would place the location of the Temple a little to the west of the Dome.

WHAT WAS THE ROCK?

As we have just noted, there is disagreement among those who propose the Dome of the Rock site as to where the Holy of Holies stood. Some believe the rock-mass marks the spot of the Holy of Holies. Others believe the Holy of Holies was further west on the Temple Mount. The rock-mass was where the altar of sacrifice stood.

Each of these theories asserts that the “sacred rock” was an integral part of the First and Second Temple. In recent years, the Dutch architect, Leen Ritmeyer, has made a solid case for the Dome of the Rock site as the original location for the Temple with the sacred rock as the location for the “Holy of Holies.” As mentioned, this is the generally accepted view of where the ancient Temples stood.

OPTION 3 THE THEORY OF ASHER KAUFMAN: THE DOME OF THE TABLETS

There is another theory as to where the Temple had originally stood—one that has been proposed by a plasma physicist and an observant Jew, the late Dr. Asher Kaufman. In 1974, Kaufman began to explore the subject of the original location of the Temple.

Being an observant Jew he faced an immediate problem. According to Jewish Law, no observant Jew is allowed to walk on the Temple Mount for fear he might accidentally walk upon the Holy of Holies. This rule seemed to keep Dr. Kaufman from making a first-hand examination of the Mount.

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However, he discovered that a non-priest could walk upon the area if he were considered to be cleaning, repairing, or rebuilding the Temple. Though the rebuilding for him was purely theoretical, this allowed him to walk upon the Temple Mount and do his research.

THE APPROACH OF KAUFMAN

Kaufman's approach combined a number of methods. These included the study of ancient Jewish sources that describe the Temple, and its vicinity, along with the Temple rituals. He also applied techniques from modern methods of measurement, astronomical observations, as well as onsite inspection. In 1977, Kaufman wrote:

An air of mystery surrounds the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Where was it situated in the Temple area (Haram ash-Sharif)? What did it look like? For generations, scholars in general, clergy, archaeologists, engineers and historians have attempted to answer these two questions. The rock as-Sakhra in the Dome of the Rock plays a central role in the vast majority of these deliberations. It is regarded as the site either of the Holy of Holies or of the Altar of Sacrifice. A third question—is there any visible sign of the Temple today?—was answered by Simons (1952, p. 435) in the negative: “In contrast, however, with the principal monument of ancient Athens the buildings within the sacred precincts at Jerusalem have utterly disappeared.”

THE TEMPLE WAS IN A DIFFERENT LOCATION THAN USUALLY BELIEVED

Dr. Kaufman's research led him to a startling conclusion—the site of the Temple is not the Dome of the Rock! According to Kaufman, the Temple's original location was 330 feet to the north and the west of the Dome. The site has a small shrine, or cupola, known as the “Dome of the Spirits” or “Dome of the Tablets.” He believed that the flat rock, which this small shrine covers, was the location of the Holy of Holies—where the Ark of the Covenant stood. He wrote:

It is almost axiomatic among scholars that no trace of the Jewish Temple is to be found on Jerusalem's Temple Mount. . . . Despite this scholarly consensus, there *are*, however, traces of remains—a line of stones, a worked rock-mass, a cistern—and these ancient relics are sufficient, when added to the literary sources to locate the Second Temple, and even to trace out the First Temple, on the Temple Mount.

One of the most surprising conclusions from this evidence is that the golden Dome of the Rock in the middle of the Temple Mount was *not* built on the site of the Temple but to the south of it. The Original Temple site is approximately 330 feet (100 meters) to the northwest of the Dome of the Rock (Asher S. Kaufman, “Where The Ancient Temple of Jerusalem Stood,” *Biblical Archeological Review*, Vol. IX No. 2, March/April 1983, p. 42).

THE DOME OF THE SPIRITS

Kaufman believed that the title of this small shrine may be a reminder of its original purpose. He wrote the following:

In Arabic this cupola is called Qubbat el-Arwah, Dome of the Spirits. Has this Arabic name preserved an ancient memory of the holiness of the site? In Sinai, where the glory of the Lord appeared before the whole community of Israel, Moses and Aaron addressed the Lord as “God of the spirits of all mankind” (Numbers 16:22; see also Numbers 27:16, Ezekiel 37, Job 12:10). Dome of the Spirits is certainly an appropriate name to mark the dwelling place of the Lord's name, the center of his Divine presence (Kaufman, *Biblical Archeological Review*, p. 45).

The biblical basis for this name, the Dome of the Spirits, is possibly found in two passages in the Old Testament Book of Numbers. We read these words:

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But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, “O God, God of every human spirit, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?” . . . May the LORD, the God of every human spirit, appoint someone over this community (Numbers 16:22; 27:16 NIV).

THE DOME OF THE TABLETS

The shrine has another name, the Dome of the Tablets. Kaufman noted its significance:

But this cupola has another Arabic name: Qubbat el-Alouah, Dome of the Tablets. In the Holy of Holies of Solomon’s Temple was kept the Ark of the Covenant, now lost, containing the two stone Tablets of the law given to Moses on Mount Sinai. According to M. de Vogue, the name Dome of the Tablets was given to this cupola because it is dedicated to the memory of the Tablets of the Law. Once more a name preserves the ancient memory of the location of the Holy of Holies (Kaufman, *Biblical Archeological Review*, p. 45).

Kaufman traced the tradition regarding the Dome of the Tablets back to the seventh century A.D. Some Christians, Jews, and Muslims have accepted his view as the actual site of the Temple. However, his theory has been rejected by other scholars and archaeologists. Again, only time will tell whether or not this was the original site.

On a personal note: The author became good friends with Asher Kaufman and had the privilege of touring the Temple Mount, as well as the Mount of Olives, with this wonderful and brilliant man. I’ll be forever thankful for hours we spent discussing the location of the Temple.

OPTION 4 SOUTH OF THE DOME

A fourth possibility is that the Temple stood on the southern side of the Temple Mount. This would place it between the two later structures built upon the Mount—the Dome of the Rock Shrine and the Al Aqsa Mosque. The *Jewish Encyclopedia*, though noting that people in the past have argued for a southern location of the Temple, dismisses the theory:

There can be no doubt that the Temple of Solomon was situated upon the more easterly of the two hills which form the present Haram area in Jerusalem, in the center of which is the Mosque of Omar. Ferguson, Trupp, Lewin and W.R. Smith held that the Temple was built in the southwest corner of the present Haram area: but this view is false. That site is a part of an artificial extension of the level of the Temple area over the Tyropeon valley and probably was not made before the time of Herod (*Encyclopedia Judaica* p. 114).

However, there have been some recently discovered facts that may provide evidence that the Temple did stand on the southern part of the Mount. Israeli architect Tuvia Sagiv has presented a case for the southerly location. However, as with the case of Asher Kaufman’s “northern hypothesis,” not everyone is convinced by his evidence.

OPTION 5 THE TEMPLE STOOD FURTHER SOUTH ON THE MOUNT

Similar to the previous option, is a new theory that claims the Temple stood even further to the south of the Dome of the Rock—at the site of the Al Aksa Mosque rather than between these two structures. Only time will tell if this theory gains any traction among the experts.

OPTION 6 IT WAS NOT BUILT ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT

This is the theory of the late Bible scholar Ernest Martin. He concluded that scholars have made wrong conclusions with respect to the site of the ancient Temple. His view is that the Temple was located some one

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third of a mile south from the present-day Mount in the area of the ancient City of David. The problem is that this theory has never gained any traction with qualified scholars (as we have just illustrated!).

ONLY TIME WILL TELL AS TO WHERE THE TEMPLE STOOD

This is a brief summary of some of the more popular theories which have been proposed as to where the Temple originally stood. In fact, about twenty different sites on the Temple Mount have been suggested for the exact location of the Temple. It would take an entire book to examine the arguments for each site, pro and con.

In sum, we again emphasize that only time will tell which theory is correct since it is presently impossible to do any excavating on the Mount.

However, what we can conclude is that the First and Second Temples were indeed built upon the Temple Mount and not to the south of it as this popular new theory claims.