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The Temple of Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future

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John M. Lundquist.

The Temple of Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future.

Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishing, 2008

Reviewed by Jared W. Ludlow

John M. Lundquist is the Susan and Douglas Dillon Chief Librarian of the Asian and Middle Eastern Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences Library within the New York Public Library. He has written many books and articles on diverse subjects for both general and Latter-day Saint audiences. The title of this book—*The Temple of Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future*—captures well the scope of Lundquist’s work. He addresses the role of the Jerusalem temple in ancient Israelite society, its role in the contemporary world, and the prophecies and apocalyptic notions about its future. The book mostly focuses on the ancient temple and its different phases, as well as its meaning to Western religious communities—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—covering six of the eight chapters. In addition to these chapters, one chapter discusses the meaning of the temple in our day, and one looks at the influence of the future temple on Jewish, Christian, and Islamic apocalyptic ideas.

The book incorporates complex archaeological, architectural, and typological discussions of the Jerusalem temple in comparison with other ancient Near Eastern temples, vocabulary, mythologies, rituals, and cosmologies. Since there are no “architectural or decorative or archaeological remains from this Temple known to have survived to the present time” (xvi), Lundquist relies heavily on textual accounts from “scriptural and historical records, as well as eyewitness accounts from ancient times” (xvi–xvii). He also looks at the archaeological excavations from the Syro-Palestinian cultural area to learn more about the Jerusalem temple through comparison with other temples of the same period.

There is a persistent view among the ancients, highlighted by Lundquist, that an earthly temple is in the image of a heavenly temple and

often marks the site of creation. As such, its location is immovable and its sanctity must be maintained. The earthly temple is usually divided into three distinct architectural units: the porch or vestibule (*'ulam*), the cella or nave (*heikal*), and the inner sanctuary or Holy of Holies (*debir*). The innermost sanctuary is “heaven on earth,” the “throne of God” on earth (17, 19). An interesting point the author returns to often is the possibility that the *debir* maintained its tentlike quality from the earlier Tabernacle because it was made (or lined) with cedar wood and was perhaps initially divided by wooden doors (and later by a tapestry veil). In other words, the ten-meter cube was treated as a separate unit and placed within the stone structure of Solomon’s Temple. Within the *debir*, of course, was the Ark of the Covenant, the puzzling details of which Lundquist introduces but can give little resolution. There are simply too many unknowns about the size and placement, form of the cherubim and poles, and the final loss of the Ark to satisfy our scholarly or religious curiosity about it. The absence of the Ark of the Covenant in the Second Temple Period raises perplexing questions about how the Israelites reconciled this loss with their theology and practice of sacred space. What was once viewed as God’s throne on earth and a central part of the yearly purification on the Day of Atonement was now gone, yet the temple remained the central focus of Israel’s worship. Within Second Temple literature, there is a more developed theory of the temple, or temple ideology, as Lundquist likes to call it; these later writers were more interested in the primordially and cosmic scope of the temple rather than its physical construction on earth.

Lundquist strongly pushes the notion that the Jerusalem temple influenced, and continues to influence, Western religious tradition through the temple’s lingering memory in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim architecture and thought. The Jews primarily spiritualized the temple in their synagogue worship. The Christians, he argues, superseded the Temple Mount with first the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and then Saint Peter’s tomb in Rome because Jesus’ sacrifice removed the need for the temple sacrificial system.

The Crusades ignited a new focus on the ancient temple and created new movements (such as the Knights Templar and Masons) that were supposedly patterned on the ancient temple’s initiatory rituals. These rites were not really discussed in the first part of the book when Lundquist talked about the actual temple and the worship that took place within its walls. The Muslims were heirs to the biblical tradition as well as believers in significant events that occurred at the former site of the temple during the ministry of Muhammad. As such they transformed the mount into a

Muslim worship site with the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosques, both of which still stand today, centuries later.

While reading the book, I frequently felt frustrated that there were no diagrams and reconstructions of the architectural temple components being discussed. It was often hard to visualize exactly how the different parts of the temple fit together, such as the annex surrounding the *heikal* and the *debir* discussed on page 22. There were also several places in the text where the ordering of material lacked logic. For example, on page 24, the author presents three common theories about the exact location of the ancient Jerusalem temple on the current Temple Mount. He mentions a southern possibility but does not return to it, and then he jumps back and forth between a northern possibility and the current location of the Dome of the Rock. I would have found it easier to follow the discussion if each theory were presented in sequence. Furthermore, for those less familiar with biblical criticism, Lundquist's use of academic terminology, such as the P document and the Deuteronomic editor, could be confusing. The author does give a brief description of some of these textual critical aspects later (31), but a discussion of the term when he first introduces it would be more helpful. Another difficulty with the published book is that the endnotes are included in the back, broken down only by chapter number, without page ranges for the notes or even chapter titles. If readers do not remember the chapter number in which they are reading, they will have to flip back and forth to find the right endnote.

Although the Jerusalem temple was certainly preeminent and the model for all Israelite temple worship, I feel the author too easily dismissed other ancient Israelite and Jewish temple worship sites such as those at Arad and Elephantine. It would have been interesting and informative if the author would have explored their possible meaning, function, and relationship to the Jerusalem temple within the temple ideology he explained.

For LDS readers hoping to gain more insights into current LDS temple practice, this book will probably disappoint. Lundquist is more interested in the symbolism of the temple structure itself, not about what goes on inside the temple. However, the first few chapters provide a detailed background of the construction and world of the first temple (somewhat repetitively between the first two chapters), so those who may want the Old Testament fleshed out on these matters can find much of value. Also, the discussion on Christian views of the temple in the Middle Ages can provide some insight into similarities between Masons and Mormons.

The last chapter dives into prophecies about the future of Jerusalem and its temple, which provides interesting discussions on passages of scripture. In a world of potential religious conflict among Western religions, the

Jerusalem temple stands at the heart of volatile apocalypticism. How will a possible reconstruction of the temple on the Temple Mount affect the future of the three Western religions? It is certainly a thorny political and religious issue for any involved in the current affairs of Jerusalem. When dealing with sacred space—and the Jerusalem temple site is considered one of the holiest in the world—there is usually no alternative space that will satisfy believers.

I think this book's strength lies in its use of comparative Near Eastern archaeology, but the discussion on the Jerusalem temple and its important role in modern and future Western religious tradition was somewhat less enlightening. Readers who have great interest in the ancient Near East will probably gain the most from this book. As someone who is interested in this area of study, I found the book engaging and well researched.

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