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The Temple Of Jerusalem (Wonders Of The World)



Synopsis

Read the Bldg Blog interview with Mary Beard about the Wonders of the World series(Part I and Part II)It was destroyed nearly 2000 years ago, and yet the Temple of Jerusalem--cultural memory, symbol, and site--remains one of the most powerful, and most contested, buildings in the world. This glorious structure, imagined and re-imagined, reconsidered and reinterpreted again and again over two millennia, emerges in all its historical, cultural, and religious significance in Simon Goldhill's account.Built by Herod on a scale that is still staggering--on an earth and rock platform 144,000 square meters in area and 32 meters high--and destroyed by the Roman emperor Titus 90 years later, in 70 A.D., the Temple has become the world's most potent symbol of the human search for a lost ideal, an image of greatness. Goldhill travels across cultural and temporal boundaries to convey the full extent of the Temple's impact on religious, artistic, and scholarly imaginations. Through biblical stories and ancient texts, rabbinical writings, archaeological records, and modern accounts, he traces the Temple's shifting significance for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. A complex and engaging history of a singular locus of the imagination--a site of longing for the Jews; a central metaphor of Christian thought; an icon for Muslims: the Dome of the Rock--The Temple of Jerusalem also offers unique insight into where Judaism, Christianity, and Islam differ in interpreting their shared inheritance. It is a story that, from the Crusades onward, has helped form the modern political world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The writing is clever, with the right zest of irony. The book is sparkling, with the right cocktail of erudition, trivia bits, political analysis and text criticism. My intention was to browse this short volume just to find the dates and facts I needed, but I found myself reading it almost cover to cover (chapter 10, "Archeology and Imperialism", was too English-centered for my taste, and the last chapter, "The Temple is ours!", failed to teach me something new). The main contribution of the book, in my view, is to put the historical facts in a much broader perspective -- the influence of the destruction of the Jewish Temple on modern political discourse, for example, is dissected in a truly fascinating chapter. Goldhill (great name, since the Temple was located on Jerusalem's most sacred hill!) excels in clarifying the biblical text and in explaining the motivations behind it. The Koran gets the same analytical treatment. The book includes lots of illustrations (black and white, alas), some I've never seen before. If you're looking for an intelligent commentary on the Temple of Jerusalem thru history, don't look any further.

This little book describes not just the historic Temple(s), but also how Christians and Muslims have perceived the Temple. By and large, I already was aware of much of what this book says about the Temples. However, Goldhill does alter the common chronology slightly- while most commentators speak of the First Temple and the Second Temple, Goldhill suggests that Herod's renovations to the Temple [which include the Western Wall] were so extensive as to create a sort of Third Temple. Goldhill's discussion of Christian and Islamic perspectives was more interesting. For example, Goldhill discusses Paul's use of the phrase that "your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit"; he asserts that Christians have used this phrase to justify celibacy. After all, if the body is a temple, is it appropriate to have sex in it?

This is a fascinating history of this most sacred building. It sets the social context as well as the day-to-day workings of Temple worship. Extremely well-written!

Great book to own.

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