

The Herodian Street

Stones Testify to the Spoken Word of Jesus

Nestled beneath the towering southwestern corner of Temple Mount is a section of street dating back to King Herod, at the time of Jesus. Near this area are also many mikviot (ritual baths), used according to Jewish custom to purify themselves prior to entrance upon Temple Mount. Wealthy Jerusalemites often had their own mikvah, or access to those near the Southern steps we see excavated today. But commoners, such as Galileans, dipped in the Pool of Siloam at the far southern tip of the City of David.

From there, pilgrims made their way uphill, passing stalls and shops selling wares and sacrificial animals for service at the Temple. Today, that walkway is called Pilgrimage Road, and once up the hill, it connects along the southwestern corner of Temple Mount, a busy intersection of Jewish life in Jesus' day.

Still visible today are very large stones (2.5 - 600 tons) in heaps on the Herodian-era street. Discovered among them is a niche stone with an inscription: House of Trumpeting. It is believed to be the cornerstone that once graced the top of the southwest corner of Temple Mount. It was from there priests blew the trumpet, signaling to the people of Jerusalem below that the Sabbath, a new moon or a holiday was commencing, or a visiting dignitary was coming.



Interestingly, part of a verse from the Hebrew prophet Isaiah is visible on that niche. The visible portion is from Isaiah 66:14, referencing rejoicing hearts and flourishing bones because the hand of the Lord is upon His servant. The context, though, is centered on the Lord who will come in a chariot of fire. The coming of the Lord is often linked to the blowing of a trumpet!

But what about those large stones? Where did they come from and why have they crushed the pavement stones of the Herodian street? Jesus prophetically answered those questions roughly 40 years before the stones appeared there!

*24 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
(Matthew 24:1-2)*

It is easy to understand how stones weighing many tons, thrown down from over 60 feet above, would crush the street below!

As observant Jews, Jesus and His family journeyed to Jerusalem for the feasts. Knowing His days were numbered during His last journey, Jesus took His disciples aside. Together they traversed the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives where they sat to discuss future things. Not that they understood it, but it was here Jesus made known the Temple would be destroyed. The stones lying at the base of the southwest corner of Temple Mount today are a testament to Jesus' spoken word, fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans conquered Jerusalem and tore down the glorious Temple. Not one stone was left upon another. Instead, they were shoved off of Temple Mount, crushing the stone pavement below.

It was inconceivable to the people that their Temple would ever be destroyed. Confidence in their religious system was sky high and everything was good at the time. Religiosity was the name of the game, and living by the law was the mode of operation. The condition of one's heart didn't matter so long as the law was fulfilled and God was made happy.

Oh, what a miserable life it turns out to be when we follow that path! Isn't it interesting that, during good times, our human nature takes us down a pathway in which it is difficult to believe bad things happen to good people, and easy to forget that without God, we are nothing. Our heads puff up, we break our arms patting ourselves on the back, and we "play church" by making sacrifices while our heart condition deteriorates. Suddenly the streets of our life are crushed by boulders!

The prophet Isaiah reprimanded the kingdom of Judah for their backslidden ways in Isaiah 1. The entire chapter is scathing, but consider this one verse:

*⁴ Alas, sinful nation,
A people laden with iniquity,
A brood of evildoers,
Children who are corrupters!
They have forsaken the Lord,
They have provoked to anger
The Holy One of Israel,
They have turned away backward. (Isaiah 1:4)*

Wow! Provoking the Holy One of Israel never turns out well, and turning away from Him, even temporarily while "things are good," might end in rebuke! In essence, what God wants is for hearts to be right and His children to seek Him. That brings Him delight and blessings from on high!

Have you ever noticed in church circles, we usually agree regarding fulfilled prophecies of Jesus' first coming (virgin birth, son of a carpenter, crucifixion and resurrection), but some tend to doubt yet-to-be fulfilled prophecies of His second coming (eternal life for those saved by grace, His imminent return, the rapture, the Millennial reign, etc)? For some reason, we try to work our way to heaven, live as though His return is not imminent, or believe that we currently live in the tribulation.

But the stones are testimony to the spoken words of Jesus! If He said it, take it to the bank. It will happen! Consider Luke 24:6-7:

⁶ He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" (Luke 24:6-7)

He spoke and it was done! He also spoke of future things, and we can be assured those will be fulfilled just as faithfully! Here is one promise we can be sure of:

¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:10-11)

Or how about this one:

14 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)

He is gone for a little while, but is coming again for us! The stones on the Herodian street are testaments of His Word! We can count on it!

Not only will He come again to snatch us from this planet to be where He is, but we will also come back with Him when His feet touch down on the Mount of Olives.

*⁴ And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,
Which faces Jerusalem on the east.
And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two,
From east to west,
Making a very large valley;
Half of the mountain shall move toward the north
And half of it toward the south.
⁵...Thus the Lord my God will come,
And all the saints with You.
(Zechariah 14:4, 5c)*

As sure as those Temple stones were thrown down upon the street below, just as Jesus said, so we will return with Him when His feet stand on the Mount of Olives!

Don't be amazed and don't be like the people of the world who do not understand! The horrible Day of the Lord is coming, but we have assurance in the One who speaks salvation and resurrection to us! The apostle Paul had confidence we would be wise to have:

*5 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. ¹¹ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.
(1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)*

Yes, the stones we see crushing the Herodian street are tokens that God's Word is true. May they be a constant reminder, particularly in times of trial and doubt!