

WORSHIP IN MESSIAH'S KINGDOM: AN EXAMINATION OF ISRAEL'S FUTURE

WORSHIP IN THE COMING AGE

Kent T. Maitland

Box #205

TH 888 Seminar in Eschatology

April 21, 2010

## CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION .....	4
Thesis.....	6
Hermeneutics and Theological Assumptions .....	6
Grammatico-Historical Exegesis .....	6
Intermediary Kingdom.....	8
Distinction Between Israel and the Church.....	9
WORSHIP IN THE NATION OF ISRAEL ACCORDING TO EZEKIEL'S VISION ....	10
The Priests .....	11
The Prince.....	13
The Temple.....	15
The Uniqueness of the Future Temple.....	15
Elements of the Future Temple.....	18
The Eastern Gate .....	20
The Altar .....	23
The Temple Sacrifices.....	24
CONCLUSION.....	30
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	31
APPENDIX A: CHARTS OF ISRAEL'S TEMPLE(S) .....	33
The Tabernacle .....	33
Solomon's Temple .....	34
Ezekiel's Temple.....	36
Ezekiel's Temple with Measurements .....	37
The Altar of Ezekiel's Temple.....	39

APPENDIX B: CHART COMPARRISON OF THE MOSAIC LAW AND EZEKIEL'S  
VISION.....41

## INTRODUCTION

The recent paradigm shift within Evangelical scholarship is astonishing. Although Dispensational Theology has typically been the predominant view in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is yet now, a diminishing popularity of its interpretive norms. With the resurgence of Covenant theology and a new counterpart known as New Covenant Theology, the academic community has never been more diversified in explaining ecclesiology, eschatology, and the teachings therein of the two schools. Even Dispensationalism has undergone a dramatic shift from its traditional teachings to new proposals in understanding the people of God continuum.<sup>1</sup> These changes have resulted in an unnecessarily ambiguous outlook on eschatological dogma.

A unique example of the ambiguity that plagues present-day scholarship is the interpretation of Ezekiel's Vision (Ezek. 40-48). For example, commentator John B. Taylor suggests, "There is much more which can be adduced through detailed exposition. But if the vision is interpreted on these lines [symbolically], and not as prophecy in the conventional sense, readers will be spared the necessity of trying to look for some fulfillment of the words in past or future history."<sup>2</sup> This is as if to say that the symbolic view is somehow a means of liberation from the tyrannical prophetic 'necessity' placed over the interpreter. Leslie C. Allen also writes,

Readers will find themselves embarrassed by these chapters. To some extent at least they were presumably presented as normative for the future. Yet the post-exilic community, even when adoption of their rulings was within its power, found other models for its

---

<sup>1</sup> This movement has been termed, "Progressive Dispensationalism." Scholars of this school typically part ways with what's been traditionally held by dispensationalism in that they believe in partial fulfillment of Israel's covenants in the present church age. In this sense, the covenants are 'progressively' fulfilled throughout redemptive history. Proponents also blur the line between Israel and the church, and if not, dismiss it altogether. For a sample of the typical ideas proposed within this system, see Bock, Darrell L, *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig A. Blaising, Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 37-67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1969), 247-48.

worship, while the different orientation of the Christian faith has left these chapters outdated. Must one relegate them to a drawer of lost hopes and disappointed dreams, like faded photographs? To resort to dispensationalism and postpone them to a literal fulfillment in a yet future time strikes the author as a desperate expedient that sincerely attempts to preserve belief in an inerrant prophecy.<sup>3</sup>

The assumption is that dispensational scholars resort to the prophetic interpretation only as a last minute effort to prop up their theological system. Whatever the text means, it simply cannot be known with as much clarity as they claim to possess.<sup>4</sup> These attacks are baseless and usually not followed by a noteworthy alternative in handling the text.

Much to the contrary of these proposals, there yet remains a legitimate element of prophetic foretelling in Ezekiel's vision. It is not the result of importing theological biases, but instead, a necessary outcome of grammatico-historical exegesis. Indeed, this has been a major tenet of dispensational theology.<sup>5</sup> The dismissal of futurism as a legitimate proposition is to commit the same error that these opponents assume others to make.<sup>6</sup> An accurate understanding of God's Word will naturally be its most straightforward meaning. Assumptions of ambiguity are to be rejected since they fail to account for what the text plainly says.

Could there be a lesser form of futurism in Ezekiel's vision? Perhaps the vision is prophetic, but not to such an extent as dispensationalists claim. What purpose could there be in

---

<sup>3</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ezekiel 20-48*, WBC (Dallas: Word, Inc, 2002), 214.

<sup>4</sup> For other examples, see John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments, Ezekiel-Malachi* (Paris: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Reprinted 1989), 218 and Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 505.

<sup>5</sup> Michael J. Vlach, *Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths* (Los Angeles: Theological Studies Press, 2008), 13-17; especially, Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 20.

<sup>6</sup> That is, theological bias. This is not to say that they have a theological system of their own that they seek to employ, although such is not beyond possibility. However, they do possess a bias *against* dispensationalism which is just as grave an error should that system be right in their interpretation of the text. To be sure, a system is never the final authority on the meaning of scripture, but it is also not illegitimate in the process just because some of its components might be wrong elsewhere.

interpreting the vision as fulfilled at a future time subsequent to the present day? Could it have been fulfilled at a time prior? These questions are legitimate and require careful consideration.

### **Thesis**

In light of this pervasive ambiguity surrounding the interpretation of Ezekiel's vision, it is necessary that a consistently literal analysis of the text be offered in order to rightly understand its message. The contents heretofore presented shall argue for a future, literal fulfillment of Ezekiel 40-48 on the basis that it has not seen fulfillment at any point throughout Israel's history. This will be shown first by examination of Israel's citizens within their respective caste. Then, the temple structure will be examined, making significant proposals with regard to the peculiarity of its placement within history.

### **Hermeneutics and Theological Assumptions**

#### **Grammatico-Historical Exegesis**

Although briefly mentioned, it must be further elaborated that this analysis shall operate under the assumption that the Bible is best understood in its plain, straight-forward language. The consistent implementation of Grammatico-Historical Exegesis – that is, a derivation of the Biblical meaning by the study of the rules of grammar and the facts of history – will most naturally serve as the means by which the meaning is derived. Moreover, sensitivity to authorial intent in light of the progressive unfolding of revelation will be maintained. This is especially important in the book of Ezekiel where many have attempted to violate sound hermeneutical principles through symbolic interpretation. Justification for accepting this approach is usually *sensus plenior*, the notion that there is a divine, fuller meaning for any given

OT text not realized until the NT.<sup>7</sup> That subsequent passages are utterly incapable of shedding light on the message of earlier texts should certainly be rejected. However, what light is shed on the latter is not necessarily related to the former's originally intended meaning.<sup>8</sup> Thus, OT passages as studied in this analysis will be interpreted under the assumption that what the original author intended is likewise what God Himself intended *en totem*.

Another argument which continues to plague the non-literalist spectrum is that symbolic interpretation is justifiable because of the apocalyptic genre a text is assumed to consist of.<sup>9</sup> This also is unacceptable. To begin with, the supposed similarities between apocalyptic literature and the Biblical Canon have received some challenges.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, genre distinction is never sufficient reason to make conclusive decisions with regards to a text's meaning. Thomas Howe writes,

An interpreter cannot know the genre of a text before he knows how the text is structured or before he finds the characteristics in the text that suggest its genre. And an interpreter cannot discover how a text is structured until he reads the text, grasps the meanings of the words and sentences, and thereby uncovers the structure of the piece. In other words, the

---

<sup>7</sup> Proponents suggest that this can be seen in the writings of the Apostles where, upon quoting OT passages, they quote them so as to emphasize the necessity that the text's true meaning not be understood apart from the fuller revelation in the New Testament. To be fair, they may or may not emphatically intend to suggest that the NT authors have no regard for authorial intent of the original text. However, they are comfortable with the assertion that God's meaning transcends the original author, which, is often the hermeneutical validation for interpretations that deviate from the plain meaning. See Raymond E. Brown, "Hermeneutics," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Brown, Raymond E., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 161.

<sup>8</sup> Greater insight of what will occur on the redemptive-historical timeline is not the same as changing the meaning of earlier passages. This is made most clear by the very notion of a 1000-year kingdom. No OT passage ever suggested such a span of time, but Revelation 20 has made clear that the formerly prophesied events will transpire in this manner. Revelation 20 does not altar the previous meaning of the prophets' message, but simply explains in greater detail the same 'millennial kingdom' truth that they spoke of.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 248; John W. Wevers, *Ezekiel*, *The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 207.

<sup>10</sup> A most exceptional example would be John N. Oswalt, "Recent Studies in Old Testament Eschatology and Apocalyptic," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* vol. 24 (1981): 286-300.

genre must be discerned and discerned as one reads it.<sup>11</sup>

There must necessarily be a certain level of understanding that comes prior to genre analysis. Indeed, this is the foundation upon which genre identification is made possible. Genre may better enrich one's understanding, but it is not what determines it. Thus, an operative assumption of this analysis will be to discern the literal meaning of passages unless there are micro-symbolic reasons for assuming otherwise.<sup>12</sup>

### Intermediary Kingdom

In addition to these foundational principles of hermeneutics, it is of the writer's conviction that their consistent application to all passages of scripture will result in a premillennial eschatology. Tenets of this conviction are threefold. First, there yet remains the future fulfillment of a Messianic kingdom on earth wherein Jesus Christ will establish Himself as the supreme monarch over all nations, especially God's covenant-nation, Israel. Second, this kingdom is not to be confused with the similarly prophesied eternal state wherein all wickedness is forever obliterated. Rather, it is intermediary, occurring prior to the eternal state and subsequent with a time of great wrath known as The Great Tribulation (cf. Mat. 24:21; Rev. 2:22; 7:14). Thirdly, the fulfillment of these promises is for God's intended purpose to restore Israel in salvation and through which, extend the same salvation to all other nations in mass quantity. These three tenets provide the context upon which this analysis is based. It is an attempt to discover what God's Word says concerning *future* worship, and not present. It concerns the

---

<sup>11</sup> Thomas A. Howe, "Does Genre Determine Meaning?," *Christian Apologetics Journal* vol. 6, no. 1 (2007): 3.

<sup>12</sup> Micro-symbolic reasons would assume that a symbolic meaning be limited to a specific word or group of words, opposed to macro-symbolic, which assumes that overtly large portions of the passage can possess broad, symbolic schema.

things to come, not the things that are. It handles the time of restoration, not the time of renewal. It is, most importantly, an attempt to ask how Israel will operate as a post-resurrection nation, fully restored with a fully implemented nationalistic structure of worship. Its aim is not to formulate a treatise on premillennial eschatology, but on what that eschatology will look like when actualized.

### Distinction Between Israel and the Church

This final assumption must be recognized as an 'in-house' debate amongst those who share the aforementioned premillennial conviction. Historically, the Israel/church relationship is the most widely debated issue within evangelicalism and is not by any means, easily solved. Nevertheless, let it be known that this analysis shall operate under the assumption that the church is a specific community of the people of God set apart from God's normative kingdom citizens for the purpose of bearing their own unique relationship with Jesus the Messiah and a unique function in His future kingdom. Although the phenomenon known as the church will exist and operate within the kingdom, it is understood as a separate people from both Israel and other Gentile nations.<sup>13</sup> This analysis shall assume that citizens of the coming kingdom will be designated by ethnic descent and the church will simply operate alongside those ethnicities.<sup>14</sup> The arguments presented will focus on the body of God's covenant-nation, Israel and how they will operate in the Kingdom to come.

---

<sup>13</sup> Significantly, the church will consist of people from all ethnic backgrounds, including Israel. However, their identity will be primarily designated to their being part of the church body rather than mere ethnic descent. An example of this can be seen in Acts where Luke consistently declares that both redeemed people of Israel and Gentile nations were being 'added' to a specific body rather than simply denoting their ethnicity within the body of redeemed (cf. Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 11:24).

<sup>14</sup> In this sense, Israel, Gentiles, and the Church are three separate communities that together will compose the whole of God's people in the Messianic reign.

## WORSHIP IN THE NATION OF ISRAEL ACCORDING TO EZEKIEL'S VISION

One of three functional communities within the coming Messianic Kingdom will be the covenant-nation of Israel. Immediately, such a notion conveys a sigh of relief. Since the time of the Mosaic Covenant, Israel has consistently functioned in apostasy to the God who chose them, resulting in devastation (cf. Deut. 29:1-29). Although God is perfectly just in administering discipline to Israel, the unconditional nature of His initial choosing cannot be overlooked. He declares,

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set His love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all people, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that He swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deut. 7:6-8)

God's covenant love was not contingent on any external circumstances, but based in His own sovereign choice. Moreover, those whom He loves are those to whom He will be faithful to keep His promises. This was the great recognition of the prophets. Isaiah declares,

Thus says the Lord, "The Redeemer of Israel and His Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you (Is. 49:7).

Jeremiah says also, "Thus says the LORD: 'If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD (Jer. 31:37)." Even in the midst of Israel's wickedness, God's faithful character is in question should He not be faithful to His covenant nation. Their partaking in the coming kingdom is a display of His goodness to bring their received promises to full fruition.

On the basis of her future restoration, it is without question that Israel's worship will

be especially significant. The most predominate characteristic is that for the first time in history, she will corporately worship God out of a pure heart (cf. Deut. 30:1-10; Jer. 31:31-34; Ez. 37:15-23). It is a time when "they shall all know me (Jer. 31:34)," – namely, Yahweh, their God. They will not only worship, but delight in worship because of what blessings they've received through the redemption of their people. Their purified heart will result in holy conduct, righteous deeds, and pure worship before God. This 'heart of flesh' will render capable the fulfillment of their divine ministry in daily activity. Exodus 19:6 says, "And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (...)." This was how God's promise toward Abraham would be fulfilled. Israel was to be a nation before God by which all peoples of the earth would look to as mediator for salvation. The Messianic Kingdom will be the first time in salvation-history that Israel will rightly fulfill her purposed, ministerial function for Gentile nations. Isaiah foretells this phenomenon, saying, "But you shall be called the priests of the LORD; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God (Is. 61:6)." In more vivid an oracle, he declares, "Many peoples shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Is. 2:3)." Israel's future worship will consist of fervency to rightly exercise their mediatory role for all nations. They will fulfill the patriarchal promise.

### **The Priests**

Although Israel will rightly function as a 'kingdom of priests,' the nation will also possess a specific priesthood through whom worship will be exercised. Herein the first significant peculiarity of Israel's future worship is manifest. Initially, it would seem that Israel will operate in accordance with the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law, which, in light of Christ's

work, is problematic. However, the future priesthood Ezekiel portrays is dramatically different from the former Levitical order in that no mention is made of the original Aaronic descent, but instead, “the rules of access are tighter than those of the tabernacle, and the basis for those rules is now bound up in the past obedience of the parties concerned.”<sup>15</sup> The future priesthood is not simply Levites, but the Zadokite descendents within Levi, whom historically, remained faithful to their duties as priests when the rest had abandoned Yahweh.<sup>16</sup> Their faithfulness to God invoked a similar faithfulness by God, which would be remembered throughout all subsequent generations. Although Levi will not function in the same way that it did prior, this smaller sect within Levi will retain the priestly duties of the coming kingdom. They will minister by means of offering “the fat and the blood (Ez. 44:15),” no doubt a reference to the offering of sacrifices.<sup>17</sup> They will teach God’s people in order to “distinguish between the unclean and the clean (v. 23).”<sup>18</sup> They will also serve as judges in civil disputes, seeing to it that all of God’s commands are rightly observed, especially those pertaining to feasts, Sabbaths, and other cultic ceremonies (v. 24). Additional regulations bear striking resemblance with Nazarite law (cf. Num. 6:1-21). They require linen clothing (v. 17), proper hair length (v. 20), abstinence from wine (v. 21),

---

<sup>15</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 500. Interestingly, this is even recognized by Block, whom insists that Ezekiel’s vision cannot be understood as a forward-looking prophecy, but as a look back to the Mosaic Law. Block, *Ezekiel*, 633.

<sup>16</sup> Zadokite behavior is first prophesied in 1 Sam. 2:35 (cf. 2 Sam. 8:17; 15:24-29; 1 Chron. 6:7-8). Placement of Zadokites in Solomon’s Temple and account of their behavior found in 1 Kings 2:26-35.

<sup>17</sup> This is reiterated in 44:16, saying, “They shall enter my sanctuary, and shall approach my table to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge.” What is meant by ‘my table’ is not easily explainable, since the table of bread is absent from the temple’s future schematic. It probably refers to the face of the temple altar, the flat portion on which to make burnt offerings. Ralph H. Alexander, *Ezekiel*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 976. For controversial and theological implications surrounding reinstitution of sacrifices, as well as a detailed description of the temple’s absence of traditional elements, see discussion below.

<sup>18</sup> Significantly, this includes both ‘teaching’ and ‘showing.’ They will not only teach holy truths in precept, but live holy truths by example. Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, NAC, vol. 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 395.

marriage only within the priestly order (virgin daughter or widow of another priest; v. 22), and refrain from touching the dead (v. 27). Each prescription symbolically expresses what is required of God's ministers. They imply a unique consecration before God to insure that priests remain an example of holiness, faithfulness, and unblemished character. More specifically, the linen clothing is a symbol of purity. In contrast to wool, linen was not an animal by-product and therefore considered clean in the eyes of God. The vestments will not be common clothing worn in day-to-day activity, but uniquely preserved vestments for the administration of temple duties (v. 19).<sup>19</sup> Most importantly, the future order will follow these regulations in obedience, which again is in contrast to the Levites of old. They will not only administer sacrifice before God, but will maintain a willingness to make whatever sacrifice is necessary for moral purity. This is, to be sure, the essence of spiritual worship (cf. Rom. 12:1).

### **The Prince**

The caste of Israel will also consist of royalty in the coming kingdom, an established prince who will reside within the land and serve over the temple. Many suggestions have been offered as to the identity of this individual. Some suggest that it is David resurrected, which would make good sense considering a previous allusion within Ezekiel's prophecy.<sup>20</sup> There are however some theological implications that would make this unlikely. To begin with, resurrection requires that glorification accompany it. Should the prince be a resurrected David, one would have to explain why he is required to have a sin offering presented for himself (Ezek.

---

<sup>19</sup> For an especially helpful study on Priestly regulations and further examples of symbolic underpinnings, see Cooper. *Ibid.* 394-395.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ezekiel 34:24; 37:25. The prophet declares, "David my servant will be their prince forever."

45:22).<sup>21</sup> It's clear that he will be susceptible to sin alongside all other non-glorified citizens. This admittedly, makes identifying the prince even more problematic since it would seem that Ezekiel's prophecy advocates the appointment of a non-perfect being to 'royalty,' what Jesus Himself is also considered in the coming Kingdom. Assuredly, the prince is neither 'second-in-command' nor successor to the Messiah. Comparison between the God-man and natural man would reveal a contrast beyond explanation. Some tension with the problem could be eased if the word commonly translated, "prince" was considered differently. The word's denotation is not necessarily 'prince' or even royalty in the Hebrew mind, but simply a prominent position of leadership.<sup>22</sup> Although it was often used within the context of royalty, its translation as such is not a conclusive limitation. Thus, some have rightly suggested that the idea may not be so strongly the case in Ezekiel's prophecy. The 'prince' is thus rightly understood as a future position of administration within the temple area, as well as a special representative on behalf of the Messiah.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, his prominence cannot be too harshly diminished in light of the massive privileges that he alone will possess.<sup>24</sup> However, if he is royalty, it would be best to conclude that he is a much lesser form of the ultimate King and Ruler of all nations.

How does such a figure correlate with Israel's kingdom worship? As already mentioned, he will administrate burnt offerings for both sin and peace. This would confession as an essential discipline in the worship schema. More significantly however, he will preside as

---

<sup>21</sup> This is not to suggest that the offerings made for himself is capable of eternal efficacies. Rather, the significance is that he is numbered amongst those who sin. Israel's offerings never provided permanent atonement for sin in the past and no doubt must be understood likewise for the future. This text is also sufficient grounds to reject any notion that the identity of the prince is Messiah.

<sup>22</sup> נָשִׂיט, (*nāsiṭ*) which, prior to the monarchy, meant 'leader,' or 'chief.' Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 389.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Also, Alexander, *Ezekiel* 974.

<sup>24</sup> For example, the placement and size of his personally apportioned land (Ezek. 45:7-8; 48:21, 22).

Israel's representative judge on behalf of Messiah. Ezekiel explicates the duty as 'worship' before Yahweh (Ezek. 46:2). By his leadership, the 12 tribes will function orderly and in perfect accordance with mercy, justice, and righteousness. In facilitating holiness for the people of God, he will magnify God's precepts for all generations. These duties require an intimate communion with Messiah (Ezek. 44:3), since to know God's truth requires that he know the God of Truth. Thus, his worship will also consist of continual fellowship with God. A modern-day prefiguration of Israel's prince is the church pastorate. Through intimate communion and the exercise of sound judgment, they too act as representative shepherds for the people of God. They are models of what comes hereafter for Israel, God's kingdom of priests. Although the significances surrounding Israel's prince remains a mystery, his duties are consistent with offices which God has similarly ordained in salvation history.

## **The Temple**

### **The Uniqueness of the Future Temple**

The unique caste of Israel's people, in possession of both a Zadokite priesthood and an administrative official, will worship within the confines of a future, reconstructed temple. The blueprint of such is described by Ezekiel in exhaustive detail (Ezek. 40-42). Although the concept of temple is not unique within Israel's history, the future temple is vastly different from anything yet realized in Israel's history. Its measurements, topography, and elements represent a peculiar design which often puzzles interpreters. As will be argued, the differences are indicators that Ezekiel's vision can only be a phenomenon reserved for the future.

Views that typically predominate the 'non-futurist' paradigm consist of either a belief that the temple in its full and final form has already come, or that what was prophesied is merely

symbolic of divine presence in Christ's present kingdom.<sup>25</sup> The latter is to be rejected for three reasons. First, nowhere does the text of Ezekiel indicate that a non-literal interpretation was intended. On the contrary, if the foreseen events would reverse that which Ezekiel had been a first-hand witness of in literal form, – the return of God's glory to the temple and a consequent purification of Israel's worship – a literal rendering is most likely. Second, a symbolic interpretation cannot be maintained in light of the meticulous detail of Ezekiel's prophecy. If it were merely symbolic, then every minute detail must necessarily fall under the symbolic schema; all nine chapters. Such an exhaustive blueprint like Ezekiel's prophecy renders this a hard-sell. Third, similar accounts of structural descriptions must also be open to the same possibility of symbolism, should the same be granted to Ezekiel's temple. Yet, the accounts of both Israel's Tabernacle (Ex. 25:9) and Solomon's Temple (1 Chr. 28:19) are unmistakably literal.<sup>26</sup> The former view rightly avoids the error of blanket symbolizing, but likewise must be rejected on the basis of contrary historical fact. The temple measurements make this most clear.<sup>27</sup> Some suggest that Herod's Temple, if measured with its outer courts, is an exact replica of Ezekiel's prophecy

---

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth L. Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion* (Tyler: Inst for Christian Economics, 1992), 356.

<sup>26</sup> At this point, one might argue that genre differences are the necessary key to distinguish between allowing for a symbolic meaning with Ezekiel's prophecy and a literal meaning for both the Exodus and Chronicler's accounts. However, given that chapters 1-24 are narrative and chapters 30 and 32 are lament, it would seem that the supposed 'apocalyptic' genre by which the prerogative for symbolic interpretation is defined cannot be clearly specified. In addition, micro-symbolic language does not lend itself to a macro-symbolic meaning. Figurative language exists, especially in prophecy. However, those figures are specified with individual words, not extended descriptions of a particular phenomenon. If Ezekiel's description is not parallel with the accounts of either the Tabernacle or Solomon's Temple, it nevertheless remains the most strikingly similar prophecy to their content amongst any other latter prophet. This, to be sure, is not without significance.

<sup>27</sup> Compare measurements of the Tabernacle (30 x 10 Cubits = 75 ft. x 150 ft.), Solomon's Temple (60 x 20 Cubits = 105 ft. x 35ft. [or, 90 ft. x 30 ft. depending on whether short or long cubit is the standard]), Zerubabel's 'second temple (measured closely similar to if not exact with Solomon's Temple),' and Herod's Temple (1500 x 900 ft. if measured without its outer court), with Ezekiel's Temple (500 x 500 reeds = 5250 ft. x 5,250 ft. depending on whether the reeds measurement is accepted. [if cubits, 500 x 500 cubits = 875 ft. x 875 ft. or, 750 ft. x 750 ft. using smaller cubits]).

and is therefore the historical fulfillment.<sup>28</sup> This too is not accurate and must be rejected for three reasons. To begin with, Ezekiel's temple is measured in 'reefs,' not cubits, suggesting a much larger temple mount than what existed in Herod's day.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Herod's temple contains elements that are not present in Ezekiel's prophetic description.<sup>30</sup> Thirdly, the outer court of Herod's temple cannot be measured because of God's prescribed guidelines for what is acceptable in the holy sanctuary's blueprint.<sup>31</sup> Ezekiel's vision could not have been fulfilled in Herod's day, nor at any time prior in Israel's history.

Regardless that any previous temple is the object of Ezekiel's prophecy, there are yet others who object that futurism is not possible on account of the present-day measurements of the temple site. This however fails to recognize that the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy will come subsequent to global tribulation where God is said to realign the topography of the earth (cf. Zech. 14:5). Moreover, the grandeur that is to accompany the future temple requires that it be a large structure. Unger explains,

---

<sup>28</sup> Block, *Ezekiel*, 570; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 752.

<sup>29</sup> Only with the common translation '500 cubits' can Herodian fulfillment be supported. Although it is commonly translated as such in Bible translations, it is nevertheless, inaccurate on the basis that there exists a large number of Hebrew MSS and a Qere reading that argues strongly against it. Furthermore, such a rendering is in contradiction to Ezekiel 45:2, which says, "Of this square plot of 500 by 500 cubits shall be for the sanctuary, with fifty cubits for an open space around it." The 'sanctuary' is no doubt, a reference to the inner sacred area of the temple structure. See Alexander, *Ezekiel*, pp. 967, 979; Merril F. Unger, "The Temple Vision of Ezekiel, Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 106 (1949; 2002): 47. Keil, Carl Friedrich, Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. Vol. 9, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 390.

<sup>30</sup> For example, a wall of separation, and a lamp-stand are existent in Herod's temple, but absent in Ezekiel's prophecy.

<sup>31</sup> By this, it is meant that God only renders acceptable that which He considers holy. This is especially true with regards to temple measurements (cf. Ezek. 42:20; 43:12; esp. Rev. 11:12 which says, "But do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty two-months." God prohibits John from measuring the temple outer courts in his vision primarily because they were regarded as unholy). In order to establish that Herod's temple is worthy of being measured *en totem*, it must first be proven how it is that God would view that temple as holy. Given the undisputed apostasy of NT Israel (cf. John 19:15 [the generation whom murdered Jesus]), the burden seems most difficult to prove.

When the divine Glory takes up its residence in the temple, the announcement is not only that the temple is God's dwelling-place and the seat of worship, but also that it is the radiating centre of the divine government. "This is the place of my throne..." (43:7). Jehovah's Presence there will make it the executive focal-point of the whole earth, from which will originate and radiate all the righteous laws and holy principles which will bless the millennial earth with equity and peace (Isa 2:2, 3; Mic 4:2). The whole "top of the mountain," the height on which the temple will stand, will be "most holy" and this holiness will be the "law of the house" (43:12). From the "mount of holiness" will radiate righteous and holy government.<sup>32</sup>

The temple will be the center of law and worship for the entire known world, and therefore must necessarily be a large structure so as to withstand the worldwide populace whom will freely pass through its gates. Present-day measurements is a red-herring. Whether or not the temple will be built at all is the real question. If God will literally establish rule on earth in a manner consistent with what Ezekiel's prophecy says, then how He does so is not necessary.

#### Elements of the Future Temple

Apart from measurements, the temple will also be unique by the elements it will not possess. This includes things like the veil, the table of showbread, and the lampstand. The veil is the most easily acceptable since the NT portrays Jesus as having accomplished its removal by His sacrificial work, and consequent institution as High Priest (Mt. 27:51; cf. Heb.6:19; 10:20).<sup>33</sup>

Jimmy DeYoung provides a helpful synopsis:

The description of Ezekiel's temple doesn't say anything about a veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. At the time of the crucifixion of Christ, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. Ever since that time, the people of God have had access into the presence of God as a result of Christ's death. Because Ezekiel's temple is future, it reflects the victory of the Lamb that will one day be understood not only in Jerusalem but throughout the world.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup>Unger, "Temple Vision, pt. 2" *BibSac*, 61.

<sup>33</sup> It is interesting that Ezekiel first prophesies this concept, however.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Dehaan and Jimmy Deyoung, "Temple of the Lost Ark," *Bible and Spade* Volume 7 (1994; 2004): 46.

In His death, Christ accomplished the abolishment of the Levitical stipulations that had formerly limited God's personal communion to those descended of Levi. Presently and henceforth, all of God's people have unmitigated access to the Father through Jesus, His son. Future temple worship will not restrict God's presence to a particular group, but will exert in abundance for all people. The remaining elements are the table and lampstand. In Israel's history, they were first mentioned in both the Exodus narrative and the Levitical law. Together, they were symbolic of Yahweh's intimate communion with His people. The bread, broken into twelve slices, represented Yahweh as a gracious and hospitable host, having prepared a meal for the twelve tribes of Israel at His own place of residence – first the tabernacle and later, the temple. The lampstand represented God's presence within the Holy of Holies by a light persistently kindled. Why neither are in the temple is unclear. Although, God's presence in the form of the risen Christ is not insignificant. It is interesting that the Gospel of John portrays Jesus as applying to Himself those things that the two elements were intended to represent. With regards to the lampstand, He declares, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (Jn. 8:12)," and concerning the bread He says, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst (Jn. 6:35)." The two elements seem to have been no more than types of what would ultimately come in the form of Israel's reigning Messiah. The coming kingdom will not require that future Israel participate in the prescribed ritual of the table and lampstand since they will not necessarily have need to be reminded of God's presence with them. Indeed, "they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest (Jer. 31:34)."

Another significant absence within the coming temple is the Ark of the Covenant. Initially, this is not surprising since there has yet to be any archaeological discovery of the Ark's

physical relic.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, its existence is now, unnecessary because of a type/antitype relationship between it and the risen Christ. As with the presence of God in the table and lampstand, the Ark represented the glory of God in the most holy place, an area where only the chief priest was granted access. In contrast, God's glory in the coming kingdom will radiate throughout the nation of Israel *en totem*. The prophet Isaiah declares,

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising (Is. 60:1-3).

God's glory will exude itself in a manner that could not have been possible under the Mosaic Covenant. This is realized in the person of Jesus Christ. The glory of God will not merely sit atop the Ark, but will manifest in bodily form (cf. John 1:14), rendering the Ark an unnecessary element in the coming temple.

### The Eastern Gate

Another unique characteristic of the future temple is that its eastern gate will remain closed. Ezekiel prophesies,

Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east (Ezek. 43:1-4).

This gate is the divine entranceway by which the glory of God returns to the nation of Israel, thus permanently establishing the manifestation of God's presence throughout the physical world.

Following this however, the gate will remain permanently closed. Ezekiel continues, "Then he

---

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Jer. 3:16: "And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, declares the LORD, they shall no more say, 'the ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind or be remembered

brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east. And it was shut. And the LORD said to me, ‘This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it. Therefore it shall remain shut’” (Ez. 44:1-2). Further reading reveals that only the inner portion of the gate will be opened on such occasions as Sabbath and new moon (Ez. 46:1). Apart from these, its normative function will not be for common people to come and go as they please, but only the LORD himself. That this is Christological is most likely (cf. Heb. 1:3). Deciphering God’s reasoning for this is nevertheless, unclear. The eastern gates of Israel’s former temple structures are not discussed at length, making it difficult to understand their functions as originally intended.<sup>36</sup> Regardless, Ezekiel’s prophecy indicates that preservation of a peculiar sanctity is most likely the intent since by way of the eastern gate, the LORD departed from Israel prior to captivity and will in the future, return to her in the coming restoration (cf. Ezek. 10:19; 43:2-4). Cooper suggests a symbolic significance might also be evident. He writes, “When God returned, He promised never again to depart the city or temple (37:28; cf. 14:11; 34:30-31; 37:24-28). Closing the east gate was a way of providing an affirming sign of his intention to remain in permanent residence.”<sup>37</sup> To be quite sure, the suggestion is compelling. Yet, the fact that it cannot be dogmatically proven from scripture is a great weakness. Uncertainty is admittedly, inevitable when discerning the intentions of God, especially as they relate to future events. Regardless, the closing of the eastern

---

or missed; it shall not be made again.”

<sup>36</sup> Exodus 27:13 is the only formal, prescribed mention of an eastern gate, and even still, the text is in reference to the gates of the Tabernacle, bearing only its measurements and no mention of a specific function. It’s significant that there is no indication of its necessity to be shut, with the exception of certain occasions like the Sabbath and New Moon. There are three additional passages that mention the east gate, but don’t give any more details than that of the Tabernacle (see 1 Chron. 9:18; 31:14; Neh. 3:29).

<sup>37</sup> Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 387.

gate remains a unique characteristic for the coming temple, whether one or both of these suggestions are valid.

It is still not without difficulty to interpret the relationship between the eastern gate and kingdom worship. If all that can be gleaned is God's decree that the gate will be closed, then it would seem that the only possible outlet for worship is obedience to divine imperatives. This is, after all, the primary mark of reverent worship (cf. Rom. 12:1-2).<sup>38</sup> More specificity is possible however, upon considering the gate's inner portions. Ezekiel says, "The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened (Ezek. 46:1)." Interestingly, this passage is one of six occurrences in Ezekiel 44-46 which alludes to reinstatement of Sabbath observance.<sup>39</sup> If taken at face value, it would seem that Sabbath observance will be reinstated in the worship ritual of the coming kingdom. Even apart from Ezekiel, Isaiah speaks of the same eschatological phenomenon, saying, "'From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me,' declares the LORD (Is. 66:23)." The eastern gate will then serve as the people's entranceway on such occasions. It will be the divine invitation for corporate worship, allowing what would normally be prohibited as an extension of God's gracious call to commune with Him in worship. As the church now enjoys a free invitation to approach the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16), so all nations in the coming kingdom will similarly be recipients of the same in Sabbath ritual.

---

<sup>38</sup> Although significantly, when Yahweh will, at last, rule the nations through a physical, Messianic reign, Israel will not be limited only to the obedience of scripture given beforehand, but will also submit to the temporal laws of the land instilled by Christ for the purpose of civil conduct. What these commands will look like is speculative. However, the inevitability of such a phenomenon is apparent.

<sup>39</sup> Ezek. 44:24; 45:15; 46:3; 46:4; 46:12. For a brief description of each of the commands prescribed by these texts, as well as other significant issues pertaining to future observance of the Sabbath, see Joel T. Williamson Jr., "The Sabbath and Dispensationalism," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 11, no. 32 (2007; 2008): 87.

## The Altar

A final trait unique to the coming temple is its altar. Like the temple, it too will have measurements dissimilar with that of any historical altar that existed prior in Israel.<sup>40</sup> Significantly, its design will also be altered from what was originally prescribed in the Mosaic Law.<sup>41</sup> Its placement will be at the center of the temple confines, which suggests that whatever ritual should occur, it will be the center of attention.<sup>42</sup> Its function is debated since its existence would seem to fulfill no other purpose but the offering of sacrifice. The notion of post-resurrection sacrifices will require further discussion. However, it is undeniable that the future temple will possess an altar if the language of Ezekiel's prophecy is taken at face value.

What theological significance lies behind the altar of the coming temple? Cooper provides seven helpful suggestions.<sup>43</sup> Especially significant is the necessary fire required for operation. The element is used frequently throughout scripture as a symbol for God's presence (Exod. 19:18), power (Exod. 9:24), wrath (2 Kgs. 1:9–12), guidance (Exod. 13:21–22), protection (Zech. 2:5), purity (Isa. 6:5–7), deliverance (2 Kgs. 2:11), and judgment (Matt. 25:41). These characteristics will be operative in the person of Christ as He rules the nations. The altar

---

<sup>40</sup> Compare Solomon's Temple Altar (20 cubits x 20 cubits x 10 cubits = 30 ft. sq. and 15 ft. High [cf. 2 Chron. 4:1]), Herod's Temple Altar (Mishna measurement = 30 cubits sq. 1 cubit high; Josephus Measurement = 50 cubits x 50 cubits x 15 cubits high. [midrash does not include the structure upon which the altar itself rests whereas Josephus does.]), with Ezekiel's temple (11 royal cubits high = 19<sup>1/4</sup> ft. high. Base = 18 royal cubits sq. or 31.5 ft. sq.).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Exod. 17:25, "And you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it." Yet Ezekiel describes the blueprint of the coming temple with an inclusion of steps. The fact that Ezekiel foresaw what is in contrast to the Law is highly noteworthy since such can only be accomplished by the initiation of a new and greater covenant than what was received at Sinai (cf. Jer. 31:31-33; 32:40; Heb. 8:1-9:22). For more on the law's abrogation, see discussion below.

<sup>42</sup> Unger, "Temple Vision, pt. 2" *BibSac*, 52. Compare with other temple structures where the altar was typically placed to the side of the temple sanctuary.

<sup>43</sup> Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 384.

was also, the table of God, upon which sacrifices were offered as gifts (cf. Ps. 50:1-2; Ezek. 43:27).<sup>44</sup> In burning the 'gift,' it was made irrevocable on the part of man and then converted to the spiritual realm of God's existence. The Messianic Kingdom will possess God's divine hearth and table upon which Israel will freely offer contributions to God in worship.

### The Temple Sacrifices

The single-greatest difficulty for the interpreter is understanding the sacrifices in Ezekiel's vision. New Testament truth teaches that there is no further need for such ritual in any worship subsequent to Christ's death (Heb. 10:1-10). Thus, Ezekiel's vision would be contradictory to what is now the superior revelation if taken at face value. Such an objection is typical and no doubt, compelling to those unfamiliar with the already formulated debate in academic circles. However, it should be noted that the concept of sacrifices is not limited to the vision itself. On the contrary, although Ezekiel's description just happens to be a fuller image than what is portrayed elsewhere, the dilemma will invariably come up when considering the meaning of other OT prophets.<sup>45</sup> To synthesize the notion of post-resurrection sacrifices with NT truth, two crucial questions require answering. First, how similar/dissimilar are the intermediary kingdom and the eternal state? Second, what is the function of sacrifices if they will indeed, be offered?

#### *Dissimilarity with the Eternal State*

The first question with regards to millennial sacrifices concerns how much similarity will exist between the intermediary kingdom and eternal state. A Biblical comparison reveals

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Isa. 56:5-7; 60:7, 13; 66:20-23; Jer. 33:15-22; Zech. 14:16-21.

that both continuity and discontinuity exist in large measure. Since a conclusive discussion falls outside the boundaries of this examination, it should only be stated and heretofore understood that there exists discontinuity between both eras. This is evident primarily in that the former era will operate within a sin-fallen world, whereas the latter will have had sin obliterated permanently.<sup>46</sup> If sin's inherent consequence is operative amongst kingdom citizens – that is, the grip of death over the fallen creation – then sacrifices cannot be regarded as an impossible phenomenon. Whether sin will be atoned by these sacrifices is a legitimate question, but the fact that death exists renders them a possible occurrence, nevertheless.

### *The Function of Sacrifices*

The pivotal issue surrounding the necessity for future sacrifices is what their intended purpose is. Although the text plainly states that they will make atonement for the people,<sup>47</sup> such is highly problematic when considering the NT declaration of Christ as the final, efficacious sacrifice required for sin. In order to synthesize these truths, some have suggested that the millennial sacrifices are merely memorial, looking back to Christ's ultimate work at Calvary.<sup>48</sup> In this sense, proponents suggest that they function similarly to how the Lord's Supper is performed

---

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Isa. 65:20: "No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be occurred." This passage suggests that (1) death will still be present and (2) sin will still occur. The latter is also supported in Zechariah 14:17 where a famine is said to befall all those who refuse to observe the Feast of Booths. These are assuredly not what characterizes God's glorified saints, those whom will exclusively encompass the eternal state following Christ's reign on earth (cf. Rev. 21:22-22:5).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ezek. 43:20, 26; 45:15, 17, 20. These passages specifically use the word, **כפר** in explaining the function of the sacrifices. The same word is used in describing the pre-advent sacrificial system and the atonement it provided (cf. Lev.16:6, 24, 30, 33).

<sup>48</sup> Alexander, *Ezekiel*, 952; Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 381; Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 263; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Dunham, 1958), 525-27.

in the church age. As satisfactory as this may seem, the view is inadequate in explaining what will transpire in the coming age. Nowhere does Ezekiel indicate a memorial function and the fact that Church communion is not as conclusive of a comparison is equally problematic.<sup>49</sup> It would seem that if Ezekiel's vision is to be adequately understood, then the language it employs should be of primary consideration. Plainly stated, Ezekiel's vision declares that the offerings will "atone" (כפר) for the sins of the people. Admittedly, OT sacrifices never truly atoned for sin in the same manner as Christ's death did. Whatever sin was atoned for either under the Mosaic Law or as portrayed in Ezekiel's vision, it cannot be the atonement of what ultimately renders man guilty before God. This is the argument of the writer of Hebrews. Indeed, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). Interestingly however, "the blood of bulls and goats [did] sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh" (Heb. 9:13). Commenting on this, Bruce writes, "The blood of slaughtered animals under the old order did possess a certain efficacy, but it was an outward efficacy for the removal of ceremonial pollution."<sup>50</sup> The extent to which millennial sacrifices 'atone,' may then only be in terms of temporal, ceremonial forgiveness. When the Israelites had formerly failed to observe an ordinance of the Mosaic Law, the priests were required to offer sacrifices on behalf of those failures (Num. 15:22-29).<sup>51</sup> Their sacrifices would provide the cleansing needed to render them approachable before God.

---

<sup>49</sup> Although communion looked back (1 Cor.11:26: "...you proclaim the Lord's death"), it seems to also possess a function of looking forward ("...until He comes"). If this function should also carry over, it's not evident what the forward-object would be. Moreover, the church's function will be dissimilar with that of Israel in the coming kingdom.

<sup>50</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 214.

<sup>51</sup> This is not to be confused with open, defiant disobedience. The sin that was atoned for was 'unintentional sins' that would inevitably result from presiding within a sin-cursed world. For various illustrations of what these impurities might look like, see, Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40-48," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 607 (July 1995): 285-287.

Whitcomb writes, "Within that structure, national/theocratic transgressions would receive national/theocratic forgiveness when appropriate sacrifices were offered to God through legitimate priests at the tabernacle/temple altar."<sup>52</sup> Physical worship was restricted because of various impurities. These same impurities will exist in the millennial age, requiring similar ritual.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the function of millennial sacrifices will be efficacious, but only in a ceremonial, theocratic sense for the nation of Israel.

### *The Question of Abrogation*

One final issue regarding the millennial sacrifices concerns what seems to be the reinstatement of a former law, which the NT claims is no longer operative. For example, Pauline literature largely attests that the law is limited within the bounds of a specific point in history, the end of which came after Christ's redemptive work. He writes, "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (Col. 2:16-18). He writes elsewhere, "Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (Gal. 3:23-26), and even, "...Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4). This is, to be sure, not a Pauline phenomenon. Other NT writers similarly address the

---

<sup>52</sup> John C. Whitcomb, "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel," *Grace Theological Journal* Vol. 6, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 209.

<sup>53</sup> The similarity is not to suggest continuity of the Mosaic Law, but only that God's presence on earth will necessitate that those who are susceptible to ceremonial impurity will need cleansing in order to approach God in the full manifestation of His glory.

issue, including James (Jas. 2:8), Matthew the Apostle,<sup>54</sup> and the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 7-9). Each affirms that Christ's fulfillment of all that the Law anticipated now renders it as a legislative body, no longer authoritative on the NT believer. Instead, a 'royal' law, the Law of Christ, has superseded it. The Law of Christ entails all of Christ's commands and those of His apostles. It furthermore excludes any mention of ceremonial ritual as prescribed formerly by the Mosaic Law.

How is it to be explained that future ordinances similar to the Mosaic Law will be in full force at the time of Christ's reign? It should be acknowledged first that abrogation of the Mosaic Law is indeed, full and final. However, as has been consistently stated, what is said to occur within the Millennial Kingdom is not an exact replica of what the Mosaic Covenant prescribed. As many similarities as there may seem at surface level, there are yet many drastic variations from the original form. As with the temple itself, the sacrifices described in Ezekiel's vision are uniquely different from what had been instructed in the Mosaic system. The animal prescriptions are similar, but Ezekiel's vision makes no mention of (1) a Day of Atonement, (2) the Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost), and (3) a high priest. The absence of a Day of Atonement may stress the fact that the work of propitiation has already been accomplished by the risen Christ. Furthermore, His own high priesthood supersedes anyone whom might have fulfilled the office on a purely human level. Specific laws may be *comparable* to the Torah, but those laws *are not* the Torah. In accordance with the primary argument of this examination, these divergences argue significantly for a future fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision. Since Israel has yet to experience its

---

<sup>54</sup> Matthew does not teach about the Law's abrogation as didactically as Paul. However, his consistent portrayal of Jesus is one who, although respecting the Mosaic Law, places his own words on a level of authority beyond which even the Law itself carried. An example of such would be His repeated mention of the phrase, "you've have heard it said...but I say..." throughout His Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43).

enactment, then it must be subsequently inevitable. Abrogation can thus be fully maintained alongside the notion of future millennial sacrifices. Although Ezekiel's vision is similar to the Mosaic Law, it is not exact and therefore cannot be retrogression in the truest sense.

## CONCLUSION

The single greatest argument in favor of a future fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision is the dissimilarities it shares with anything Israel has yet experienced in its prior history. She will worship with a pure heart, something prophesied on numerous occasions, but never fully implemented (cf. Deut. 30:1-10; Jer. 31:31-34). Her priesthood will be of Zadokite descent, those who proved themselves worthy amidst an unworthy Levitical order. She will possess a figure known as the prince, a divinely appointed authority figure whom will fulfill various administrative duties amidst the temple grounds. She will possess a rebuilt temple with a structure almost unfathomable to any Jewish historian. Its ritual will consist of many elements that although resemble the Mosaic Law, are largely different from its stated imperatives. An example includes an operative sacrificial system which similarly atones for Israel's ceremonial defilement while dissimilarly excluding things like the Day of Atonement, Ark of the Covenant, and a High Priest. These characteristics do not correspond with any former generation of Israel and must therefore await a future consummation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Leslie C. *Word Biblical Commentary: Ezekiel 20-28*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Inc, 2002.
- Block, Daniel I. *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition*. Edited by Craig A. Blaising, Darrell L. Bock. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Brown, Raymond E. "Hermeneutics." In *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Brown, Raymond E., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, 161. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Cooper, Lamar Eugene. *Ezekiel*. The New American Commentary, vol. 17. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.
- Dehaan, Mark, and Jimmy Deyoung. "Temple of the Lost Ark." *Bible and Spade* Volume 7 (1994; 2004): 46.
- Duguid, Iain M. *Ezekiel*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Feinberg, Charles Lee. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*. Chicago: Moody, 1969.
- Gentry, Kenneth L. *He Shall Have Dominion*. Tyler: Inst for Christian Economics, 1992.
- Gill, John. *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*. Edited by . *Ezekiel-Malachi*. Paris: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Reprinted 1989.
- Howe, Thomas A. "Does Genre Determine Meaning?." *Christian Apologetics Journal* vol. 6, no. 1 (2007): 3.
- Hullinger, Jerry M. "The Problem of Animal Sacrafices in Ezekiel 40-48." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 607 (July 1995): .
- Keil, Carl Friedrich, Franz Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Edited by . Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Revelation*. BECNT. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Oswalt, John N. "Recent Studies in Old Testament Eschatology and Apocalyptic." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 24 (1981): 286-300.

- Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Things to Come*. Grand Rapids: Dunham, 1958.
- Ralph H. Alexander. *Ezekiel*. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.
- Ryrie, Charles C. *Dispensationalism*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1995.
- Taylor, John B. *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1969.
- Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1995.
- Unger, Merrill F. "The Temple Vision of Ezekiel, Part 2." *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 106 (1949; 2002): 61.
- Vlach, Michael J. *Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths*. Los Angeles: Theological Studies Press, 2008.
- Wevers, John W. *Ezekiel*. The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.
- Whitcomb, John C. "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel." *Grace Theological Journal* Vol. 6, no. 2 (Fall 1985): .
- Williamson, Joel T. Jr. *Journal of Dispensational Theology* Volume 11, no. 32 (2007; 2008): 87.

## APPENDIX A: CHARTS OF ISRAEL'S TEMPLE(S)

### The Tabernacle

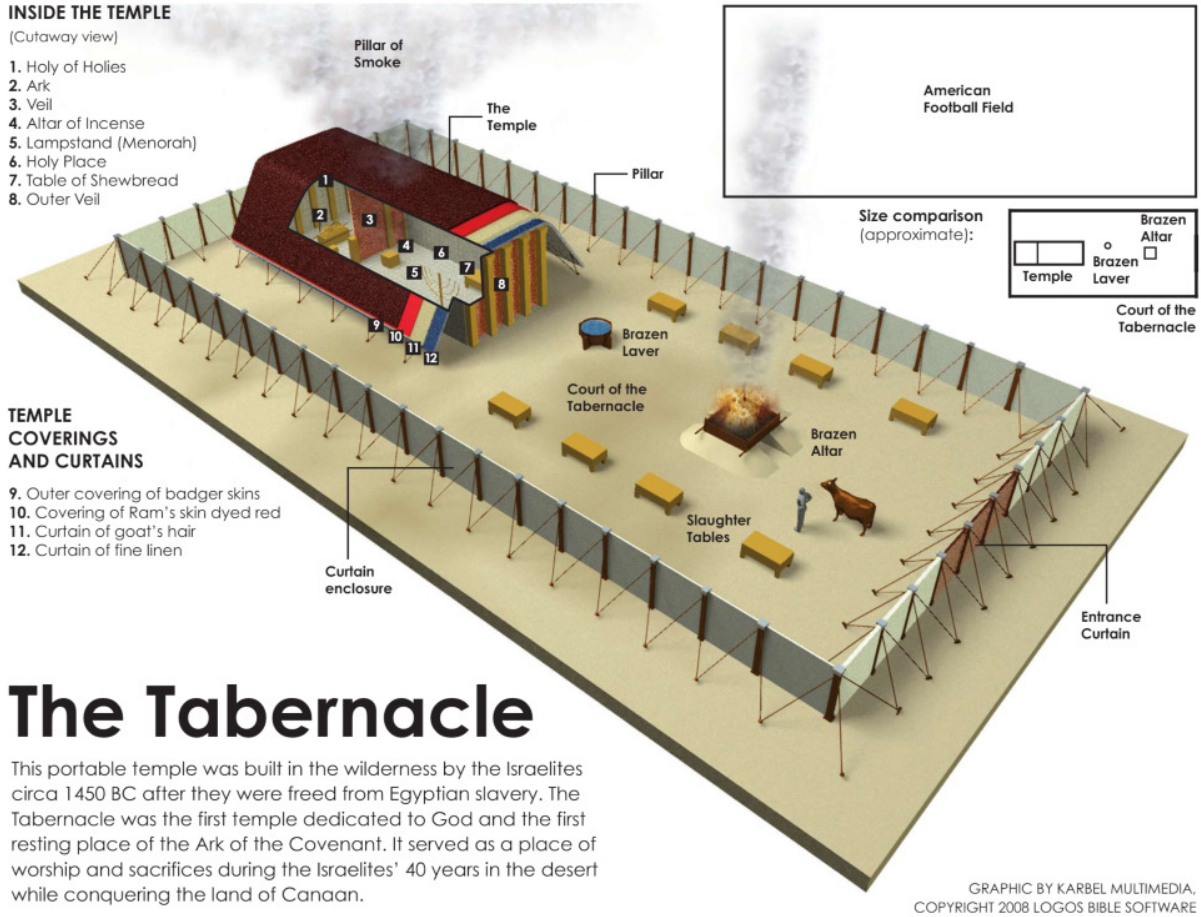


Figure 1. "The Tabernacle," *Logos Bible Software Infographics* (2009)

## Solomon's Temple

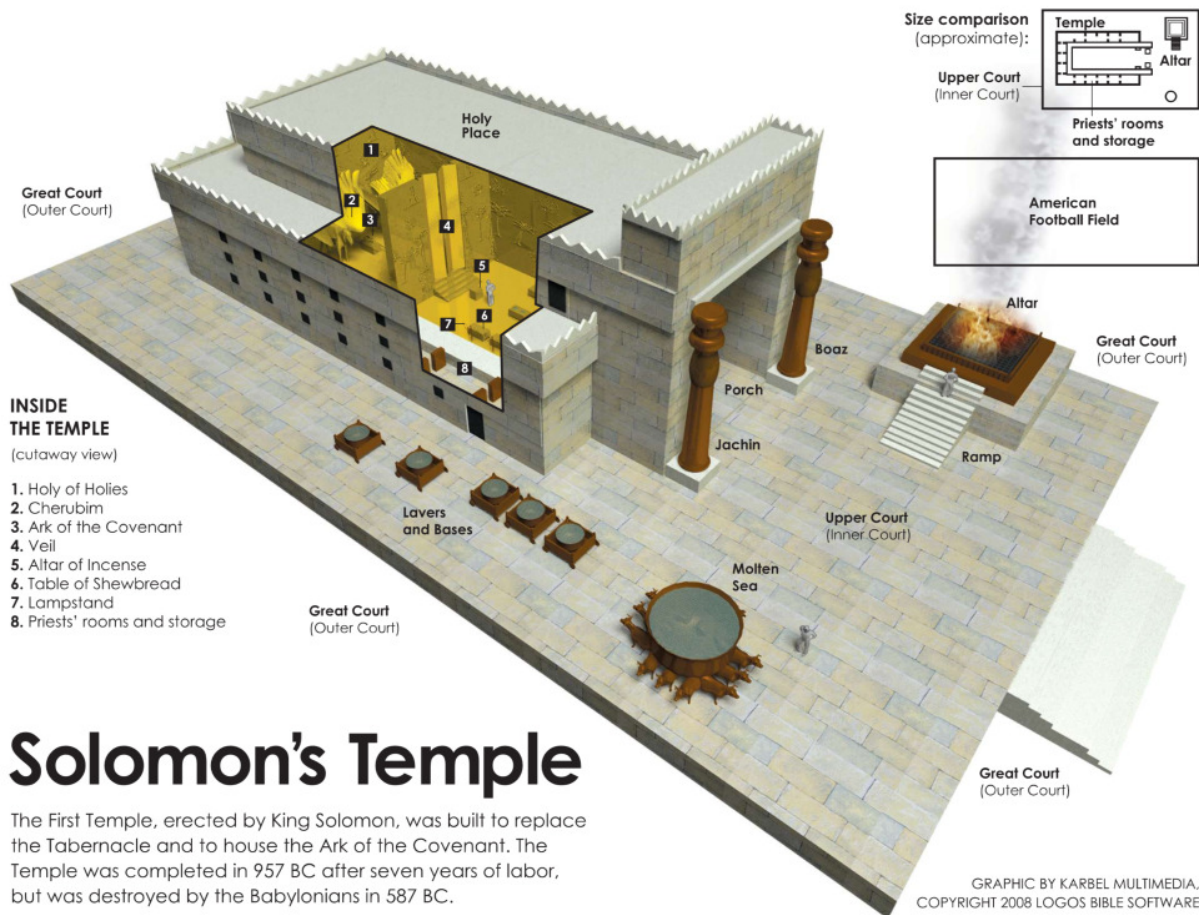


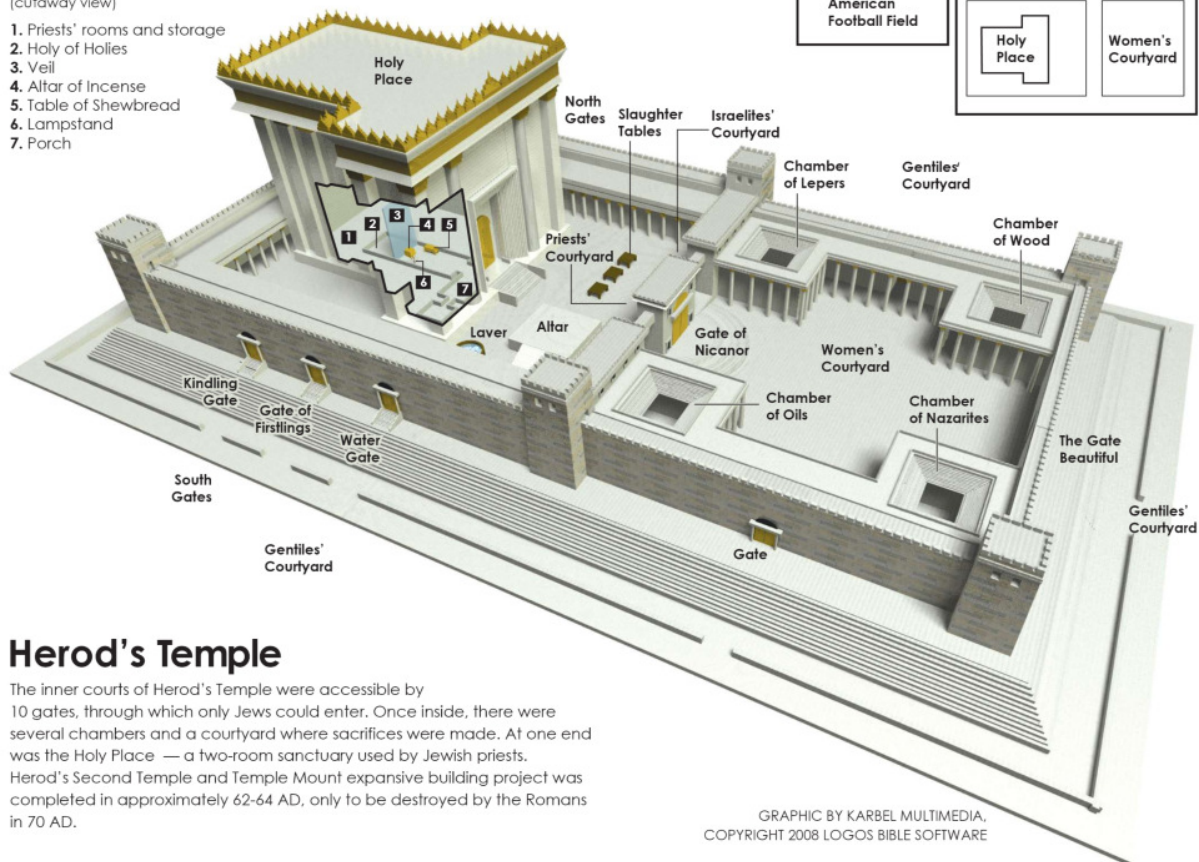
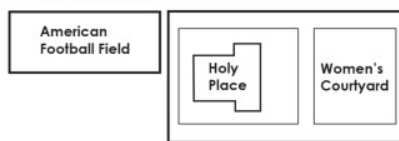
Figure 2. "Solomon's Temple," *Logos Bible Software Infographics* (2009)

## Herod's Temple

### INSIDE THE HOLY PLACE (cutaway view)

1. Priests' rooms and storage
2. Holy of Holies
3. Veil
4. Altar of Incense
5. Table of Shewbread
6. Lampstand
7. Porch

Size comparison (approximate):



### Herod's Temple

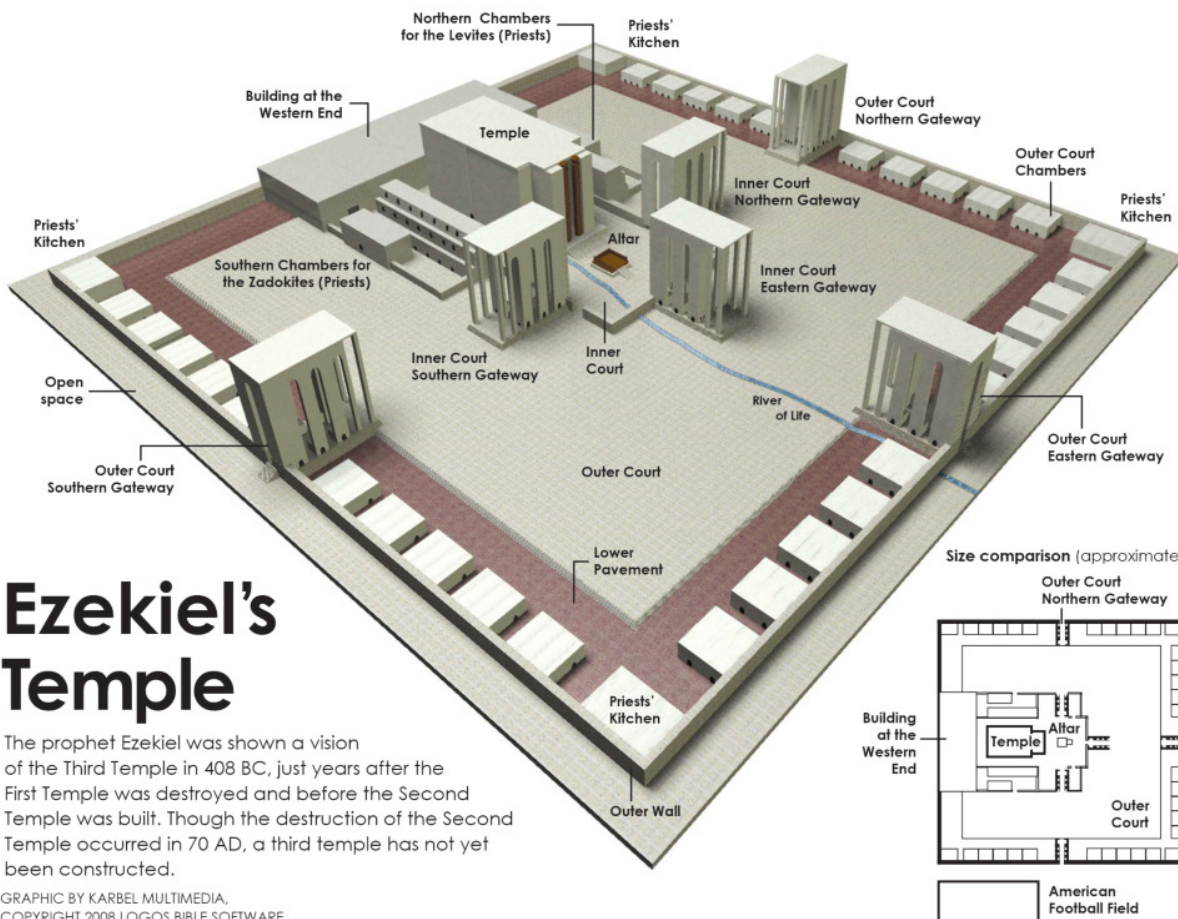
The inner courts of Herod's Temple were accessible by 10 gates, through which only Jews could enter. Once inside, there were several chambers and a courtyard where sacrifices were made. At one end was the Holy Place — a two-room sanctuary used by Jewish priests. Herod's Second Temple and Temple Mount expansive building project was completed in approximately 62-64 AD, only to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

GRAPHIC BY KARBEL MULTIMEDIA,  
COPYRIGHT 2008 LOGOS BIBLE SOFTWARE

Figure 3. "Herod's Temple," *Logos Bible Software Infographics* (2009)<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Note that only 1900 ft. x 500 ft. temple mount is measured and not its Gentile courts.

## Ezekiel's Temple



# Ezekiel's Temple

The prophet Ezekiel was shown a vision of the Third Temple in 408 BC, just years after the First Temple was destroyed and before the Second Temple was built. Though the destruction of the Second Temple occurred in 70 AD, a third temple has not yet been constructed.

GRAPHIC BY KARBEL MULTIMEDIA,  
COPYRIGHT 2008 LOGOS BIBLE SOFTWARE

Figure 4. "Herod's Temple," *Logos Bible Software Infographics* (2009)



## Key:

A	Altar (Ezek 40:47b)
WB	Building of the separation yard (Ezek 41:12, 13b, 15)
K	Kitchen for priests to boil sacrifices (Ezek 46:19–20)
OK	Kitchen for priests to boil people's sacrifices (Ezek 46:21–24)
LP	Pavement Strip (Ezek 40:17–18)
PB	Priests' chambers (Ezek 42:1–14)
R	Rooms in outer court for storage or priests' quarters (Ezek 40:17)
PS	Rooms for singers (priests) (Ezek 40:44–46)
T	Tables for slaughter of sacrifices (two at each point) (Ezek 40:39–43)
TEM	Temple proper (Ezek 40:48–41:11, 13a, 14, 16, 23–26)
W	Rooms for washing offerings (Ezek 40:38) Inner court (Ezek 40:44–47a) Outer court (Ezek 40:17–19, 23, 27, 39–43) Width from outer gates to inner gates (Ezek 40:19, 23, 27)

The Altar of Ezekiel's Temple

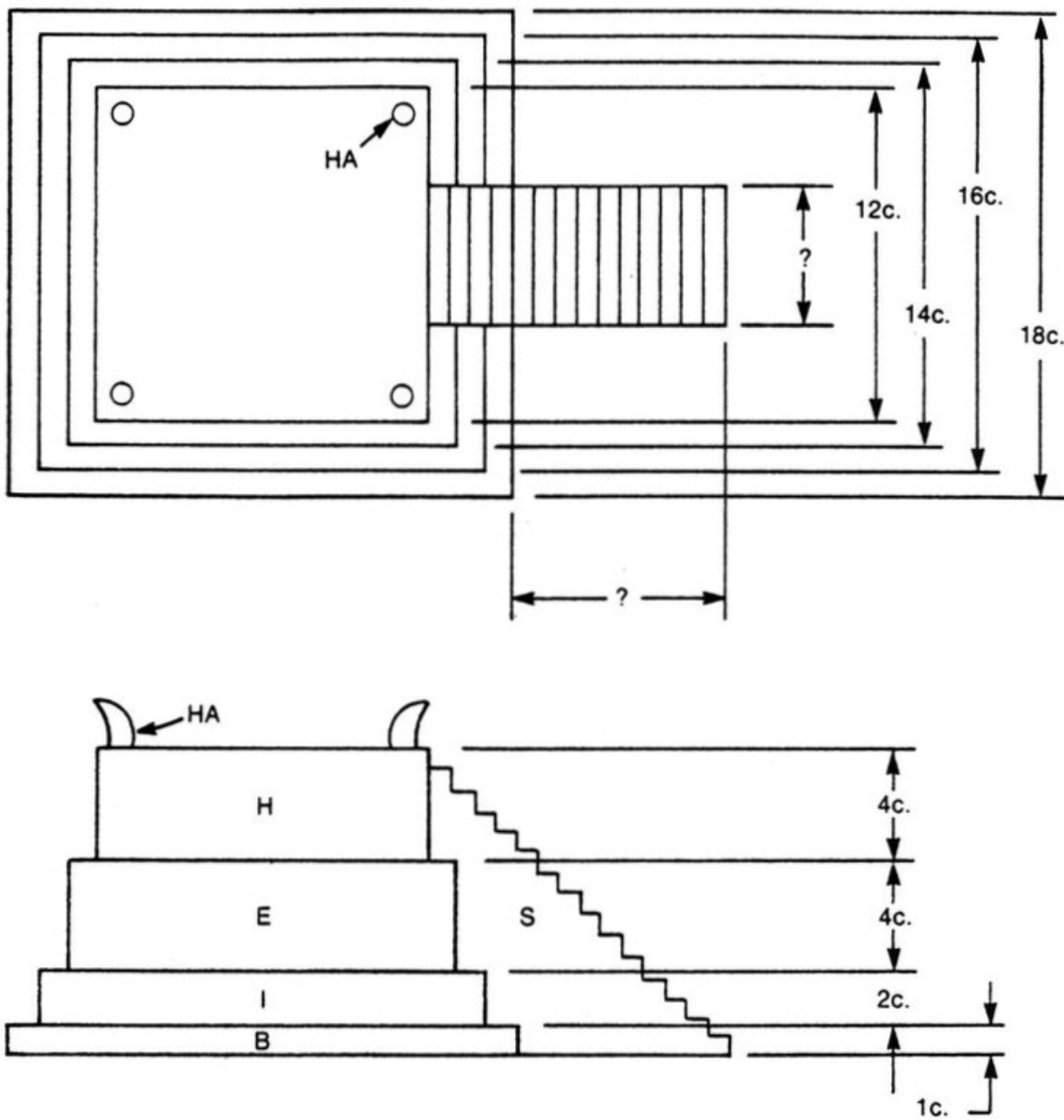


Figure 6. Ralph Alexander, "Altar of Sacrafice." *Ezekiel* (1986), Vol. 6, Figure 4.

**Key:**

H	Altar hearth (Ezek 43:15–16)
E	Enclosure (Ezek 43:14, 17)
I	Interior (Ezek 43:14, 17)
B	Bottom (Ezek 43:13)
HA	Horns of the altar (Ezek 43:20)
S	Steps (Ezek 43:17b; cf. Ezek 40:47b)

APPENDIX B: CHART COMPARRISON OF THE MOSAIC LAW AND EZEKIEL'S VISION

Mosaic Law	Ezekiel's Prophecy
<b>The Altar</b>	
The altar must have no steps (Exod. 20:26; 17:25).	The altar will have steps (Ezek. 43:17).
	The altar will be in the middle of the temple mount, facing the throne of God (Ezek. 40:47).
	The altar will have a river that flows out of the bottom (Ezek. 47:1-12).
<p>Measurements:  <b>Solomon's Temple Altar</b> = 20 cubits x 20 cubits x 10 cubits = 30 ft. sq. and 15 ft. High (cf. 2 Chron. 4:1)  <b>Herod's Temple Altar</b> = Mishna measurement = 30 cubits sq. 1 cubit high; Josephus Measurement = 50 cubits x 50 cubits x 15 cubits high. (Mishna does not include the structure upon which the altar itself rests whereas Joesephus does).</p>	<p>Measurements:            11 royal cubits high = 19<sup>1/4</sup> ft. high. Base = 18 royal cubits sq. or 31.5 ft. sq.</p>
<b>The Sacrifices</b>	
Day of Atonement	
Feast of Weeks	
Levitical High Priest (Lev. 21:10).	No high priest specifically mentioned.
<p>Sin Offering:            (1) 1 Bull and 2 Rams (Ex. 29:1, 10).            (2) 1 Bull Offered for 7 Days (Ex. 29:36; cf. Lev. 8:33, 35).            (3) Blood sprinkled on the four horns and the rest of the blood poured at the base of the altar (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 8:15).            (4) Burned Outside the Temple Grounds (Ex. 29:14).</p>	<p>Sin Offering:            (1) 1 Bull; 1 Male Goat on the Second day; 1 Bull and 1 Ram to follow after the altar is purified (Ezek. 43:19, 21, 22, 24).            (2) 1 Goat Offered for 7 Days (Ezek. 43:25).            (3) Blood sprinkled on the four horns and on the rim around the altar, but not at the base (Ezek. 43:20).            (4) Burned Outside the Temple Grounds (Ezek. 43:21).</p>
<b>The Temple</b>	
Table of Bread	
Lampstand	
Ark of the Covenant	
<p>Measurements:  <b>The Tabernacle</b> = 30 x 10 Cubits (75 ft. x 150 ft.).  <b>Solomon's Temple</b> = 60 x 20 Cubits (105 ft. x 35ft. [or, 90 ft. x 30 ft. depending on whether short or long cubit is the standard]).  <b>Zerubabel's 'second temple</b> = measured</p>	<p>Measurements: 500 x 500 reeds = 5250 ft. x 5,250 ft. depending on whether the reeds measurement is accepted. (if cubits, 500 x 500 cubits = 875 ft.. x 875 ft. or, 750 ft. x 750 ft. using smaller cubits [Ezek. 42:20]).</p>

closely similar to if not exact with Solomon's Temple. <b>Herod's Temple</b> 1500 x 900 ft. (if measured without its outer court).	
	Eastern gate will remain shut (Ezek. 44:1-3).
The glory departs (Ezek. 8, 10, 11).	The glory of God to return (Ezek. 43:1-12).
<b>The People</b>	
Worship without a pure heart (Deut. 29:4)	Worship out of a pure heart (Ezek. 37:18-28; cf. Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25).
Divided kingdom (cf. 1 Kings 12:1-20).	United Kingdom (Ezek. 37:19, 22-25).
	The Prince (Ezek. 45:9-46:18).
<b>The Priests</b>	
Aaronic Descent (Num. 3:10).	Zadokite Descent (Ezek. 44:4-16).
Clothing: (1) Linen Garments (Ex. 28:39; 39:27). (2) Garments Must be Changed (Lev. 16:11).	Clothing: (1) Linen Garments (Ezek. 44:17). (2) Garments Must be Changed (Ezek. 44:).
Hygiene: (1) No bald patches (Lev. 21:5). (2) No consumption of wine while ministering (Lev. 10:9).	Hygiene: (1) No shaved heads, nor long hair. Simply trimmed in proper fashion (Ezek. 44:20). (2) No consumption of wine while ministering (Ezek. 44:21).
Marriage only within the House of Israel (Lev. 21:7, 13, 14).	Marriage only within the House of Israel (Ezek. 44:22).
Function: (1) Teach the people of Israel (Lev. 10:1-11; 11:47). (2) Judge the people of Israel (Deut. 33:10).	Function: (1) Teach the people of Israel (Ezek. 44:23). (2) Judge the people of Israel (Ezek. 44:24).
Food: (1) Provided sustenance through the people's offerings (Num. 18:10-13). (2) Could not eat anything that had been torn by a wild animal or found dead (Lev. 17:5; 22:8; Deut. 14:21).	Food: (1) Provided sustenance through the people's offerings (Ezek. 44:29-30). (2) Could not eat anything that had been torn by a wild animal or found dead (Ezek. 44:31).