



Good News
Bible Reading Program

A free educational service provided by the United Church of God, *an International Association*

— February 2004 —

DATE	READING TOPIC	SCRIPTURES
January	MONTH BREAK	
1-2 Feb	The dry bones will live again; Israel and Judah will be one nation ruled by King David	Ezekiel 37
3-4 Feb	Future invasion of Israel by Gog of Magog	Ezekiel 38
5-6 Feb	Destruction and burial of Gog's forces	Ezekiel 39
7-8 Feb	Lamentation for Pharaoh and Egypt; Egypt to follow other nations to the grave	Ezekiel 32
9-10 Feb	The watchman's responsibility; God's way is fair	Ezekiel 33:1-20
11-12 Feb	Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in the fiery furnace	Daniel 3
13-14 Feb	Description of the millennial temple complex	Ezekiel 40
15-16 Feb	Description of the millennial temple complex cont'd	Ezekiel 41
17-18 Feb	Priests' chambers and holy area	Ezekiel 42
19-20 Feb	God's glory to fill the millennial temple; Altar consecrated	Ezekiel 43
21-22 Feb	Only circumcised admitted; Priestly ordinances	Ezekiel 44
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27-28 Feb	Life-giving river and trees; Borders of the Promised Land	Ezekiel 47
29 Feb	Promised Land apportioned among the tribes	Ezekiel 48

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Highlights to Think About From This Month's Reading

MONTH BREAK

January 1-31

There is a month-long break in the program due to some production delays. We apologize for any inconvenience but expect that this will provide an opportunity for many who have fallen behind in the program to catch up. Thanks for your patience.

“O Dry Bones...You Shall Live” (Ezekiel 37)

February 1-2

As chapter 37 opens, it appears to continue right on from the prophecy of Israel's restoration in the previous chapter. Consider the great hope that was there offered to the people of Israel, to be realized at the time of Christ's return and reign, when they would ultimately return from captivity and receive a changed heart. Yet how could that help the Jews who were hearing Ezekiel's message at the time he received it? They would be long dead and gone by the time Israel's great restoration was accomplished. And what about all the Israelites who had already died or the millions who would yet die before that restoration? Where was their hope? Things looked rosy for their end-time descendants—but what about them personally?

God reveals in the wonderful prophecy of Ezekiel 37:1-14 that all hope is *not* lost. He intends to raise all the Israelites who have ever lived from the dead! Some see this passage as merely figurative of national resurrection—that is, restoration of the country of Israel—at the time of Christ's return. But it more naturally reads as something that is actually going to happen—a literal resurrection of people to physical life. Indeed, their being literally raised from the grave will serve as a proof of God and His omnipotent power (verse 14).

However, figurative language certainly is used here. For instance, to represent the apparent hopelessness of death, the dry bones are portrayed as saying as much (verse 11). Some, influenced by the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul, might view even that as somewhat literal—thinking it pictures disembodied souls once connected with the bones doing the speaking. But that is not the case. The imagery is similar to Abel's blood crying out to God in Genesis 4:10 or the slain martyrs crying out to God in Revelation 6:9-11. These are all figurative images, as there is no consciousness in death (see Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10).

The bones of all Israel being in one valley may also be figurative, since the people of Israel actually died in many different places over the millennia. However, it could be that the bones—or at least whatever is left of them—will actually be miraculously gathered together by God in one place prior to the resurrection described. Of course, even if He were to do it this way, the Almighty God does not actually need bones or any other body parts to recreate human bodies. What about the covering with sinews and flesh and being brought out of graves? The description given may be literal, although the process could be somewhat figurative, the main point being the ultimate *result*—an actual physical bodily resurrection. We don't really know exactly how God will reconstitute those who are long dead—especially considering that for many any physical remains long since decomposed or were otherwise destroyed. It may look like the vision Ezekiel described, or it could appear like a Star Trek “beam up” or something entirely different—we just don't know.

Now, what is the time frame of this resurrection? We find that spelled out in Revelation 20:4-6. That passage explains that the saints of God—His spiritually transformed servants of all ages (that is, the faithful people of Old Testament times and all faithful true Christians of New Testament times)—will be resurrected at the time of Christ's return in what is referred to as the “*first* resurrection,” to reign with Him over all nations for 1,000 years, a period Bible students often refer to simply as the Millennium. Verse 5 contains this parenthetical note: “But *the rest of the dead* did not live again until the thousand years were finished.” The NRSV appropriately places this sentence in parentheses.

Since the resurrected Israelites of Ezekiel 37 are not saints—indeed, they receive God's Spirit only *after* they are raised from the dead (verses 13-14)—they will not be part of the first resurrection. Therefore they must be part of “the rest of the dead” in the second or general resurrection, which occurs *after* the Millennium.

This fact is further substantiated by the nature of the resurrections. The first resurrection is described in 1 Corinthians 15, where we are told that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (verse 50). According to that chapter, the saints of God, who formerly had “natural bodies” of flesh, will be resurrected with “spiritual bodies.” Some think this merely refers to spirit-preserved

physical bodies, but that is not the case. When Jesus Christ, the “last Adam,” was resurrected to glory, He returned to the state of being “a life-giving spirit” (verse 45). And that is what resurrected Christians will be like (verse 49)—having bodies actually composed of spirit. While these glorified spirit beings will be able to manifest themselves as flesh if they so choose (just as Christ did after His resurrection to spirit), they will not actually be composed of flesh as is clearly the case with those in the resurrection of Ezekiel 37.

Since the resurrection of Israelites in Ezekiel 37 must be part of the general resurrection at the end of the Millennium, it follows that all others of that resurrection will experience basically the same thing. So this prophecy is representative of how God will deal with all people, not just Israel. What this means is that all the unconverted of mankind who have ever lived—which is almost everyone—will be raised at this same time to physical life. Revelation 20:11-12 describes this time in which people will be judged according to their works. Yet it should be explained that this will be a *judgment over a period of time*—not an *immediate sentencing*. Just as God’s Church is being judged *now* (1 Peter 4:17), so will the rest of mankind be judged according to how they live their lives *then*—following their resurrection. Those who never knew God or His truth will at last be given the opportunity to repent of their sinful past, understand and receive forgiveness through Christ’s sacrifice and be converted through receiving God’s Spirit. And they will be evaluated according to how they live out the rest of their physical lives. This is not a “second chance” at salvation, as some would argue, for none of these people will have ever had that opportunity when they lived previously.

Jesus Himself referred to this future judgment period as a time when people who lived many centuries apart “will rise up in the judgment” together (Matthew 11:20-24; 12:41-42). During that judgment period, those who choose to serve God and remain faithful to Him until the end of their lives will ultimately be changed into immortal spirit beings, joining the saints who will have been glorified with eternal life 1,000 years before.

How wonderful and amazing this truth is! It answers so many questions. For instance, if it is only through Jesus that human beings can be saved (Acts 4:12), what about the untold millions who lived and died without ever hearing His name or anything He ever taught? Answer: the second resurrection! What about the billions of little children who have died over the millennia of human history? Answer: the second resurrection! What about the vast numbers God destroyed in the Flood of Noah’s day? Answer: the second resurrection! What about the millions dying of AIDS today in Africa? Answer: the second resurrection! What about the 6 million Jews who died in the Nazi Holocaust of World War II? Answer: the second resurrection! What about the millions of men, women and children who have lived and died under communist dictatorships where religion was forbidden? Answer again: the second resurrection! And what about our relatives and friends who have died without understanding and obeying the Bible? Yes, the answer yet again is the second resurrection! Without the reality of this wonderful and paramount truth, the vast majority of mankind truly is lost and without hope. Thankfully, God has a plan to offer His salvation to *all* humanity, not just a few.

Israel and Judah to Be One United Nation (Ezekiel 37)

Feb. 1-2 Cont’d

Another prophecy is given in verses 15-28 of Ezekiel 37. It returns to the beginning of the Millennium—continuing the theme of Ezekiel 36 and the other chapters at the end of Ezekiel’s book. (The flash-forward to the end of the Millennium at the beginning of chapter 37 was to give hope to those who would be dead at the time of the initial restoration.)

Here we see that the descendants of the southern kingdom of Judah and the descendants of the northern 10 tribes of Israel will ultimately be reunited as one nation, never to be divided again. (The northern tribes are represented by the birthright people of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh—chief among whom is Ephraim.) This reuniting will happen when the remnant of Israel and Judah are brought back to the Promised Land when Jesus Christ returns to rule all nations. As we have seen in other passages, David will be resurrected (as part of the first resurrection) to serve as king, under Christ, over the entire reunited nation (verses 24-25; 34:24; Jeremiah 30:9).

Of course, while this passage will be fulfilled at the time of Christ’s return, its fulfillment won’t end there. That is, it is not just a millennial prophecy. There is obviously also a relation to the time, following the Millennium, of the second resurrection—when all Israelites who have ever lived will be joined together as one nation and David will reign over them all.

Indeed, while verse 27—regarding God’s tabernacle or dwelling being with the people, they being His people and He being their God—finds initial fulfillment at the time of Christ’s return, greater

fulfillment will still lie yet ahead. For this verse is used in Revelation 21:3 to denote the time of the new heaven and new earth, when even God the Father will come to dwell among His children forever.

Gog of Magog and His Allies (Ezekiel 38–39)

February 3-6

We come now to a remarkable prophecy, spanning chapters 38 and 39. It is God's message to Gog of Magog and his allies, who dwell far to the north of the Promised Land and of Ezekiel's place of exile in Babylon but will one day come down into the land of Israel with a vast invasion force. Notice that Gog's invasion will occur "after many days...in the latter years...in the latter days" (38:8, 16). So we are clearly dealing with an end-time prophecy.

Before more specifically examining the time factor, let's look at the identities of the various peoples mentioned.

"Gog, of the land of Magog," is called the "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal" (verses 2-3; 39:1). He is allied with "Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya" (verse 5)—or, as Ezekiel actually wrote, "Peras, Cush and Put" (Living Bible)—as well as "Gomer and...the house of Togarmah" (verse 6).

Most of these names can be found in the Table of Nations of Genesis 10, which lists the families of humanity descended from Noah. Notice: "Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood. The sons of Japheth were *Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech,* and *Tiras*. The sons of *Gomer* were *Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah*.... The sons of *Ham* were *Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan*...." (verses 1-2, 6 emphasis added).

Notice that *Gog* is not mentioned here. That may be because the name *Magog* actually means "land of Gog"—so that perhaps the actual son of Japheth was named Gog and the nation he founded became known as Magog. The name Gog could in a later context designate anyone who was from the land of Gog (i.e., from Magog).

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus wrote: "Magog founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who by the Greeks were called Scythians" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, chap. 6, sec. 2). The name *Scythians* denoted a wide array of peoples who ranged across the Russian Steppes all the way into China. (The Western Scythians were heavily Israelite and Germanic in nationality.)

One researcher writes of the Eastern-ranging Scythians: "The Assyrians called them *Mat Gugi* (Ma-Gog) which means 'the country of Gog'.... Let Milner, famous for his writings on the Japhetic races, add further to our understanding: 'Magog, as a geographical term used by Hebrews of old and Arabs today (Majaj), denoted that vast stretch of country to the north of the Black Sea, Caucasus, Caspian Sea, Hindu Kush, and Altai, known to the Greek geographers as *Skythia*'....

"The term *Mongol*, sometimes written as *Mongoul*, appears to be directly derived from *Magog*. In India, for example, *Mongol* becomes *Moghul* and a large part of China was known as *Mangi* when Europeans first visited it. The Arabs called the Scythian tribes of Tartary *Yajuj and Majuj* which is Gog and Magog and the Great Wall of China as the 'wall of al Magog'....

"Where is Magog located today? They migrated via southern Russia to their current homeland, leaving behind such place-names as: *Mogliiev city, Mogiolistan, Mugojar Mountains, Mogol-Tau Mountains*. Among the people of *Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, central and much of northern and southern China*...and even some Japanese are also descended from Magog. Here are the hundreds of millions of China today. No wonder the name of ancestor Japhet means 'expansion,' implying a large or expanding race. Other peoples descended from Magog [as well]" (Craig White, *In Search of...The Origin of Nations*, 2003, pp. 189-190, available at www.originofnations.org).

Jones' Dictionary of Old Testament Proper Names states in its entry on Magog: "[English biblical commentator Bishop] Lowth on this place says: 'The *Mogul* Tatars, a people of the Scythian race, are still called so by the Arabian writers.... By Gog and Magog may most probably be meant the Turks, who were originally natives of Tartary, called *Turcheston* [*Turkestan*] by the eastern writers, and whose language is derived from that of the Tartars'" (Alfred Jones, 1997).

Indeed, the Turkish peoples of Central Asia may be included—and are, at the very least, included in the broader alliance, as many of the Eastern Turks appear to derive from Togarmah (see White, p. 198). The Western Turks, as noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on Obadiah, appear to derive from Edom. As also explained there, one such group that appears to have migrated into Central Asia is the Edomite tribe of Amalek (see also White, p. 65). Interestingly, Amalekite kings bore the name *Agag* (Numbers 24:7; 1 Samuel 15:8) and we later see the enemy in the book of Esther, Haman, referred to as an Agagite (3:1, 10; 8:3, 5; 9:24). Josephus refers to him as an Amalekite (*Antiquities*, Book 11, chap. 6, sec. 5). *Agag* is written in the Septuagint as *Agog*, and

there could conceivably be some relation to the name Gog—some, such as Milner cited above, suggesting that Agog is a compound of A (number 1) and Gog (great or high), denoting the ruler (see White, p. 65).

Indeed, it is possible that the names *Gog* and *Magog* may be figurative labels on some level in Ezekiel 38–39. *Gog* basically means “rooftop” and is also thought to mean mountain. As it seems to indicate a peak or highest point, some have viewed it as designating a supreme ruler—a despot or dictator. In that case, Gog of Magog becomes “dictator of the dictatorship.” That would certainly fit the description given. Perhaps both the figurative and national meanings are intended.

On the other peoples listed, a footnote to Ezekiel 38:2-3 in *The Living Bible* states: “The names of Gog’s confederates (Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, Beth-togarmah) can be identified as Mushki, Tabal, Gimaraya, Tegerama, peoples who lived in the mountainous area southeast of the Black Sea and southwest of the Caspian.” This would place them in the region of eastern Turkey and Armenia, just south of the Caucasus Mountains.

The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary states in its entry on Tubal: “Tubal and Meshech, the Tabali and Mushki of the Assyrian monuments, were the representatives of eastern Asia Minor. Their territory originally extended far to the S[outh]. In the time of [Assyrian emperors] Sargon and Sennacherib, the territory of the Tabali adjoined Cilicia [in southeast Asia Minor], while the Mushki inhabited the highlands to the E[ast] of them, where they were in contact with the Hittites. In later days, however, Meshech had retreated to the N[orth], and the classical geographers place the Tibereni and the Mushki not far from the Black Sea.” Thus we see a clear northward progression.

Meshech evidently “migrated with Tubal up to the Black Sea and into the Russian plains. Dr. Gesenius [the famous Hebrew lexicographer] wrote in the nineteenth century that Meshech became the Moschi.... They dwelt, he said, in the Moschian Mountains. The Moschian Mountains were the connecting chain between the Caucasus and Anti Taurus Mountains. The *Scofield Reference Bible* says that the ‘reference to Meshech and Tubal (Moscow [the Russian capital] and Tobolsk [in West Siberia]) is a very clear mark of identification.... Milner explains: ‘...The whole district within five hundred miles of Moscow seems to be saturated with the name of Meshech.’ He then refers...to the following place names: Moscow; the Moskva River; the Novo-Mosc-owsk on a tributary of the Dnieper; Mosch-Aisk near Borodino; Mosch-ok between Moscow and Nijini Novogorod; Mosch-arki stood on a tributary of the Volga River; Misch-etski stood between Moscow and the Tula...Mesch-a, a branch of the Dwina River; Mesch-Tschowsk near Tula [etc.]....” (White, pp. 178-179).

What about the name *Rosh* in Ezekiel 38–39? This name is not found in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. Some translators prefer to view the word as the Hebrew word for “head” or “chief” and link it with the word *prince* in the verse as denoting “chief ruler” rather than as a tribal name. However, other translators prefer *Rosh* as a name. Interestingly, the Mitanni kingdom in eastern Asia Minor became known as the land of Rashu, “Rash or Rosh meaning ‘blond.’ Also, nearby dwelt the Urartians [ancient Armenians].... Their last great ruler was Rusa II who built great cities and huge defences. He established the religious center and fortress of *Rusai-urau-tur* or Rusa-patari which means ‘the small city of Rusa’.... Herodotus wrote that the Matienaians from the land of Rosh were with the peoples of Tubal and Meshech; while Pliny wrote of the Matiani as moving into southern Russia over the Caucasus” (White, p. 267; see also p. 268).

It is commonly believed that the Varangian Rus, Vikings from Sweden, gave their name to Russia. However, “while western scholars accept this as the origin of the Rus, Soviet scholars contend that the Rus were Slavs from the southern steppes. Both are probably correct.... There is no evidence of a tribe from Scandinavia called Ros or Rus. But a tribe of the Antes was known as the ‘Ros’ and later modified to ‘Rus’ which resided along the river Ros, a tributary of the Dnieper in the southern Ukraine, just north of the Black Sea” (White, pp. 268-269).

So far, then, we have an alliance stretching from Russia and Turkestan in Western Asia to Mongolia and China in the Far East. Are other eastern peoples listed in Ezekiel 38–39?

Notice the listing of *Gomer*. This name has caused a lot of confusion as the ancient people near Armenia known as the Gimirrai or Cimmerians migrated around both sides of the Black Sea into Europe—becoming the Celts. For this reason, many equate Gomer with Europe. But the Gimirrai or Cimmerians who migrated into Europe were actually the people known to the Assyrians as *Bit Khumri*, the “house of Omri”—that is, the northern tribes of Israel (once ruled by the dynasty of Omri), who were taken captive to northern Assyria.

The actual people of Gomer (that is, of Japheth’s son Gomer), migrated not to Europe but in the exact opposite direction—to southeast Asia. “Gomer gave rise to the Siamese [Thai], Burmese, Indonesians, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians who all have the same sub-racial

anthropological classifications.... The Cambodians' real name is the *Khmer* which is very likely derived from Gomer. Similarly, one of the regions of Burma is known as *Khemarata*. Also, *Kamara* was the original name of Sumatra.... We also find the area of *Kemarat* in Thailand and the *Gimaras* island in the Philippines. Given the aforementioned, it is highly likely that these place and ethnic names are ultimately traceable back to Gomer. While it is impossible to prove, it is most likely and should be included in our list of strong probabilities" (White, p. 194).

Consider next the people of Gomer's son Togarmah, who appears, as noted earlier, to be the progenitor of some of the peoples of eastern Turkestan. "The name may be preserved in the E[ast] Cappadocian city of Til-garimmu, listed in the Assyrian records" ("Togarmah," *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*). This location was in what is now central Turkey.

The Hittite name, given above in The Living Bible footnote, was Tegerama. The people of this region "lived on the border with *Tabal*. Other names for this people were *Tegaram a Tilgarimma*, *Trochmi* and *Trogmades*. The Tegerama or Tegarama migrated from Cappadocia into Armenia.... From there they moved into Turcoman territory (Turkistan) a possible derivation of Tegarama. In Turkistan, among the tablelands of Pamir, rose a great mount, *Tagharma*.... These were the Mongoloid peoples of the eastern division of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia" (White, p. 197).

An apocryphal Hebrew work known as the *Book of Jasher*, though contradictory of Scripture in a number of regards, may nevertheless contain some accurate historical traditions. It states that "the children of Tugarma are ten families, and these are their names: Buzar, Parzunac, Balgar, Elicanum, Ragbib, Tarki [another possible origin of the name Turk], Bid, Zebuc, Ongal and Tilmaz; all these spread and rested in the north and built themselves cities" (10:10).

"Among the sign-posts indicating where Togarmah settled we find: Tagarchi in eastern Turkestan; Tigranoama in eastern Turkey; Tagarma mountains in eastern Turkestan; the city of Tagarma in western China; Taganrog, Tigeretsk Mountain, Togur town, Turgai province and Turgins, a town in Siberia; many Uighur peoples may be a derivative of Togarmah.

"Tradition speaks in terms of a certain son of Japheth known as Tork [Togarmah or Tarki?]. He in turn had a son Taunak Chan. He was in turn succeeded by Jelza Khan, Dibbakui Khan, Kajuk Khan and Ilinge Khan. Ilinge Khan in turn had two sons: Tatar Khan—progenitor of the Tartars; and Mongul Khan—progenitor of some of the Mongols or Moghuls" (White, pp. 197-198).

If these people did indeed migrate to eastern Turkestan and then up into Siberia and Mongolia, as appears likely, that would certainly fit the biblical description of "the house of Togarmah *from the far north*" (Ezekiel 38:6).

The only ones left to identify in Gog's confederation are "Peras, Cush and Put" (Ezekiel 38:5, The Living Bible). *Peras* is correctly translated in the NKJV and other versions as Persia. Persia is modern-day Iran. The descendants of the ancient Persians may still be found in their homeland of Iran. They can also be found, as noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on Isaiah 21, in parts of Eastern Europe and of India.

What then of Cush and Put? The NKJV and other translations usually render these as *Ethiopia* and *Libya*. Cush and Put (or Phut) were, according to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, sons of Ham, father of many of the dark-skinned people of the world. Cush, it is generally acknowledged, became Ethiopia and other black peoples of East Africa. And the people of Put were indeed the ancient Libyans, whose descendants may be found throughout black Africa (see White, pp. 89-97).

Yet these two would seem to be the odd men out in this prophecy, being African while all the rest of the confederation is Eurasian. Indeed, the alliance thus far appears to include all of Asia north and east of the Euphrates River except for most of the people of the Indian subcontinent. However, when we better understand the identity of Cush and Put, we can see that the people of South Asia are not left out at all (and that the African branch of these peoples are probably not intended by the prophecy).

Concerning the identity of the people of India, 19th-century author George Faber wrote: "Their military nobility is acknowledged to be of the same family as the Sacas or Chasas, who maintain that their great common ancestor was Cush or Cush... But we read in a special manner of two lands of Cush, the Asiatic and the African. These were by the Greeks called the two Ethiopias...but by the Hindoos [Hindus], as by the sacred writers, they are denominated the land of Cush within and the land of Cush without" (*The Origin of Pagan Idolatry*, 1816, qtd. by White, p. 99).

In *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, author Martin Bernal writes: "The tradition of two Ethiopias is much older than [the 5th-century-B.C. Greek historian] Herodotus. In the *Odyssey* [of the Greek writer Homer], the Ethiopians are described as dwelling

‘sundered in twain, the farthermost of men, some where Hyperion [the sun] sets and some where he rises.’ Thus, there were Black men, Aithiopes...from Western Libya (Africa) to Eastern Mesopotamia” (qtd. by White, pp. 100-101).

Those on the east of Mesopotamia evidently migrated further east, giving their name to the Hindu Kush Mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan. “A few other tell-tale signs of the movement eastwards of the sons of Cush include a land called Kushian, in modern Pakistan. Just to the north of India also lay the land *Kashgana*. And in the south of India ran a river called *Kishna*. All of these names are variously derivatives of ‘Cush’” (White, p. 102). Thus, many of the dark-skinned people of the Indian subcontinent are evidently Cushite.

Regarding the people of Put or Phut, historian George Rawlinson wrote: “This term is obscure.... In most {scriptures} Phut is joined with tribes which are distinctively African; but in two of them (Ezek [27].10, and [38].5), the accompanying nations seem to be Asiatic. The explanation of this may possibly be that, as there were two Cushes, so there were two Phuts, one Asiatic, and the other African” (qtd. by White, p. 97).

The eastern branch of Put “may have migrated from the east Mediterranean region as this is where anthropologists trace the northern Indians to. All one can say is that large parts of India were known as *Rajputna* (modern Rajasthan state). *Rajputna* was a group of princely states ruled over by a warrior-caste called the Rajputs (meaning ‘chief of Put’ or ‘chief over Put’). In northern India, near Bhutan, we find the town called Panta, later Patali-putra, the capital city of Maghada State. The Rajputs and others drove the Dravidian Cushites into Central and Southern India. Those Phutites which settled in Central India mixed with the Dravidians. In the east some mixed with the Mongoloids” (White, pp. 97-98).

So rather than present-day Ethiopia and Libya in Africa, it appears much more likely that Ezekiel 38:5 is speaking of the people of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Consider then: the vast hordes of India, China, Indonesia, Russia, Turkestan and more combined—an unimaginable force and staggeringly formidable foe to be sure...

But no match at all for Almighty God.

When Will Gog’s Forces Invade and Be Destroyed? (Ezekiel 38–39)

Feb. 3-6 Cont’d

We have already seen that Ezekiel 38–39 is a prophecy of the latter days (38:8, 16). Yet where does it fit in the march of end-time events?

Some, thinking the Israelites brought out of the nations and back to the Promised Land in Ezekiel 38:8 is referring to the Jews who have returned to the land during the past century, conclude that this prophecy concerns an invasion of the modern Jewish state of Israel prior to Christ’s return. But this view simply does not fit the picture here. The returned Israelites are described in this prophecy as dwelling in peace and safety—in a “land of unwallled villages...without walls, and having neither bars nor gates” (verse 11). While modern cities don’t normally have defensive walls, the image here is mainly a figurative one—of living in complete peace, free from invasion or harm. And that certainly does *not* describe the modern Israeli state. Israel today is constantly under grave threat from hostile neighbors and from terrorists within. In fact, the Israelis are currently building an actual wall or security fence to protect them against Palestinian suicide bombers.

Neither can the prophecy refer to, as some assume, the gathering of forces at Armageddon referred to in Revelation 16 and their destruction in Revelation 19. There is some parallel symbolism, as the sacrificial feast of fallen troops given to birds and beasts is found in both Ezekiel 39 and Revelation 19. However, similar imagery is also used of the defeat of Egypt, as we will next read in Ezekiel 32:4-5. Moreover, the people of Israel will by no means be dwelling safely as the gathering at Armageddon occurs, with the forces of the European-centered Beast power, end-time Babylon, still occupying the Holy Land. And having just experienced the Great Tribulation, with the cataclysmic Day of the Lord still ongoing, the Israelites will not yet be enriched with “livestock and goods” (compare Ezekiel 38:12).

Considering these factors, the *only* time that fits what is described is the period *after* the return of Jesus Christ. When He comes, He will defeat Israel’s enemies and gather those who are left of all Israel in the Promised Land, where they will at last dwell in peace and safety under His rule.

As that stage of Christ’s reign will last 1,000 years (the Millennium), during which time Satan the devil will be imprisoned (Revelation 20:1-6), the question now becomes: At what point following the commencement of the Millennium will the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39 come to pass?

Some think it comes at the end, when there definitely will be a march to battle by Gog and Magog. Revelation 20:7-9 states: “Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released

from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, *Gog and Magog*, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.” It is also claimed that because armaments such as shields, bucklers, bows, arrows, javelins and spears will be able to be burned for seven years (Ezekiel 39:9-10), this must indicate not modern weaponry but wooden implements—fashioned by people at the end of the Millennium who will be without military technology and hardware.

But there are problems with this view. For one, Gog and Magog in Revelation 20 are said to be from the four corners of the earth and therefore apparently represent people of all nationalities. In Ezekiel 38, it is clear the forces are of specific ethnicities and associated with a particular northern region.

Notice also what God says to Gog in Ezekiel 38:17: “Are you not the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel? At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them” (NIV). How then could Ezekiel 38 be a postmillennial reference, as none of the prophets appear to have mentioned this in any other prophecy (unless it was simply not recorded)—the only reference being in the New Testament book of Revelation?

(Granted, there do not seem to be any other references to an invasion early in the Millennium either. Yet the destruction of Gog’s forces at that point in time may simply be part of the fulfillment of God’s general prophecies of calamitous judgment accompanying the Messiah’s coming. Indeed, if Gog is a leader of Edom, which seems possible given that the western Turks may have blended to some degree with those of the East and that Gog may be short for Agog or Agag, there may be more specific prophecies regarding him—that is, those that foretell Edom’s great downfall at the time of Christ’s return.)

A more serious objection to Gog’s invasion in Ezekiel being postmillennial is that it evidently occurs *soon* after the return of Israel to the Promised Land—not after they have dwelt there for a thousand years. Notice Ezekiel 39:7: “So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name anymore.” Clearly, if the Israelites had been living under Christ’s rule for a thousand years at this point, this statement would not seem to make any sense.

Notice also: “So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God *from that day forward*” (verse 22). Yet at the end of the Millennium, Israel will already have been living under God’s covenant for a thousand years, wherein “no more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know [Him], from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Jeremiah 31:34). It thus seems to make more sense to view verse 22 as applying to a time early in the Millennium. (It’s interesting that up to this point, many Israelites are still confused about the identity and character of Jesus Christ and the unlimited extent of His power. It appears that up to this time they have not yet fully and reverently submitted to His rule.)

By the end of the Millennium, the gentiles too will know the Lord—indeed, they will know Him throughout *most* of the Millennium, for of Christ’s 1,000-year reign we are told that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). And yet Ezekiel 38–39 presents the defeat of Gog as resulting in the gentiles coming to know God. It appears, then, that the defeat of Gog described in Ezekiel must come during the *early* part of the Millennium.

Further, God says that in the wake of Gog’s defeat “the Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity” (39:23)—that is, this is the point at which the nations would come to understand it. “Then,” He continues, “they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent [the Israelites] into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land...And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel” (verses 28-29). Again, it seems obvious that this is describing events that take place shortly after Christ’s return.

Indeed, the arrangement of Ezekiel’s final chapters may have some bearing here. God spoke of giving His Spirit to His people after the return of Christ in Ezekiel 36. Ezekiel 37 continues on that theme. Though it briefly flashes forward to the period after the Millennium to show that even all the Israelites who have died will ultimately receive the same opportunity, the story flow then returns to the beginning of the Millennium, when the nations of Israel and Judah are at last fused together as one nation. Continuing with that flow, it would appear that the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39 will come next in time order—followed by that of chapters 40–48, concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple and the reorganization of the Promised Land, events that will also transpire early in the Millennium.

Of course, many of Gog's forces will evidently be destroyed when Christ first returns. For Revelation 16:14-16 says that "the kings...of the whole world" will gather at Armageddon for the "battle of that great day of God Almighty." Yet, understanding the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39 to come early in the Millennium, it is evident that only part of Gog's army will be present in the Holy Land to be destroyed at Christ's coming. It seems likely that vast numbers will yet be stretched across Eurasia—apparently what remains of the 200-million-man force described in Revelation 9. Sometime after Christ smites the forces gathered against Him (which, again, would necessarily include only part of Gog's forces), perhaps even a few *years* later, the remainder of Gog's forces then marches down for the onslaught described in Ezekiel. (This is consistent with the fact that when Jesus returns, He will not bring the entire world into instant compliance with His way. Rather, Isaiah 2:2-4 and Zechariah 14:16-19 demonstrate that there will be a *period* of bringing the nations into line through both instruction and disciplinary measures.)

What then of the seemingly archaic military equipment? Certainly ancient weaponry has been used in other end-time passages to represent modern war implements. Yet does the fact that these armaments are used as fuel for fire for seven years mean none of them can be metal or modern? Many guns and rifles, and most notably the AK-47 assault rifle so popular in third world nations, have wooden stocks. Consider also that there are many flammable elements to even jeeps, tanks and jet planes—not least of which is their fuel. The fuel and reserve fuel for thousands upon thousands of military vehicles is staggering to contemplate. Small quantities of material can be used as a fire starter—and there would be vast quantities available. Furthermore, consider *all* the possessions of an enormous military force on the move—this one perhaps two thirds as large as the current U.S. population. There would be an unimaginable amount of burnable material for the few million Israelites then living in the Promised Land. Also, perhaps new technology, whether invented by man or given by God, could allow even metal to be converted to usable energy.

Of course, it should also be mentioned that a vast Eurasian army would have not only well-trained troops with sophisticated equipment but also huge numbers of poorly outfitted infantry and cavalry. Among hordes of Chinese peasantry and third-world Muslim jihadis, it would not at all be surprising to find large numbers of wooden spears, clubs, crossbows, wood-handled machetes and sabers—even hoes and pitchforks.

So if it is describing a later episode than Ezekiel 38-39, why does Revelation 20 mention Gog and Magog? As already noted, these names seem to be used there in a representative sense for a Satan-led force coming from all nations at the end of the Millennium. It may be that the great invasion of Gog and Magog that occurs near the beginning of the Millennium is being viewed as a forerunner of the postmillennial invasion. The first was a multinational force. The later will be as well—though encompassing even more nations. It may even be that Gog and Magog will constitute the largest portion of this final rebellious force. Some, it should be noted, see numerical significance to the use of Gog and Magog in Revelation, explaining that the words numerically add up to 70, a number the Jews see as representative of all nations (as 70 nations are listed in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10). Or given that Gog and Magog can perhaps mean "dictator" and "dictatorship" respectively, perhaps that is the parallel. In any case, the invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 does not appear to be the invasion of Revelation 20, though there is apparently some tie between them, if only a figurative one.

By the defeat of Gog's forces, God says He will set His glory among the nations—they will know His great power and majesty. The Israelites will come to know Him as their personal Savior and Protector. And the gentiles will see that as well—leading them, at last, to desire to become God's people too.

Egypt to Fall Like Other Defeated Nations (Ezekiel 32)

February 7-8

The next chapter of Ezekiel in time order is not the next one in numerical order. As mentioned before, Ezekiel's arrangement is thematic. The lamentations for Pharaoh and Egypt in chapter 32 have been placed at the end of a whole section of prophecies dealing with Egypt (29-32), part of which we have yet to read.

"The exiles in Babylon had recently learned of Jerusalem's fall when Ezekiel chanted this dirge [in the first half of Ezekiel 32] in March of 585 B.C. Egypt had witnessed the fall of Judah and may have felt proud of her own survival. Ezekiel, however, pictures that great southern land as already dead. God has condemned her, and none of her many gods will be able to help" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on Ezekiel 32:1-16).

The Expositor's Bible Commentary notes: "The lament over Egypt was principally a recapitulation of the judgment messages [already given against Egypt], emphasizing Egypt's false pride and bemoaning the fate of judgment. Once again the double imagery portrayed the Pharaoh's energetic pride but ineffective strength. Hophra was likened to a young lion and a thrashing crocodile that only muddied the streams of the Nile (v. 2; cf. 29:3). The crocodile (Pharaoh) would be captured with a net ([32] v. 3) and hurled on the open field as food for the birds and animals (v. 4). The carnage would be so great that it would fill every ravine and mountain (vv. 5-6). It would be as if a great darkness covered the land (vv. 7-8), demonstrating that Egypt's great sun gods were impotent to help. Cosmic collapse is a common image with earth-shaking events (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2). The nations who sang this funeral dirge would be stunned and horrified that Egypt had fallen in their midst ([Ezekiel 32] vv. 9-10)" (note on verses 1-10). Verse 11 shows that the agent of destruction will be the king of Babylon.

Of course, the heavenly signs could be an indication that this prophecy has some application to the future Day of the Lord, especially as Daniel 11:40-43 shows that the end-time Babylonian ruler of the north will invade and plunder Egypt. Nevertheless, as pointed out in the Bible Reading Program comments on Ezekiel 29:1-16, massive calamity was going to come on Egypt around 568 B.C., 17 years after the lamentation of Ezekiel 32. At that time Nebuchadnezzar invaded the country and laid waste to the entire Nile Valley, evidently deporting most of the survivors for a period of 40 years.

In the latter half of Ezekiel 32, given two weeks after the lamentation of the first half, Ezekiel is told to bewail the fact that Egypt will follow other fallen nations to the grave. "This final prophecy, uttered in April of 585 B.C., sums up God's word concerning contemporary Egypt and concludes Ezekiel's messages concerning foreign nations" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verses 17-32). These other nations have apparently all fallen to Babylon—and so too will Egypt.

It should be noted that though this concludes the prophecies against Egypt in arrangement order, there are two more prophecies regarding Egypt in chronological progression (29:17–30:19). In fact, those two prophecies are the latest dated sections in Ezekiel's book.

A Watchman for the House of Israel (Ezekiel 33:1-20)

February 9-10

"So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me" (Ezekiel 33:7). Some messages in Ezekiel are repeated for emphasis. God had previously assigned Ezekiel to be a watchman—a lookout, sentry or sentinel—for the house of Israel (3:17). Interestingly, that initial assignment came before Ezekiel's first warning message and this one now comes after his final one in time order. What follows chronologically in the book of Ezekiel is a glorious picture of the Promised Land under the reign of Jesus Christ (chapters 40–48). In the first case, God privately commissioned Ezekiel as a watchman. Here the prophet is to explain his role to the people and their responsibility once they have been warned. This is interesting considering that no more warnings were given in the book after this point in time. The point seems to be: "Okay, you've been warned—now it's up to you to follow through." When he arranged his book, Ezekiel placed this passage before the announcement of Jerusalem's fall (33:21-22) and his final warnings to Israel and its leaders (33:23–34:10).

Part of God's standard of fairness is that people should be warned even when those doing the warning don't expect them to necessarily respond and repent. Part of the reason for the warning may be found in 33:33—"And when this comes to pass—surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them." They won't be able to say no one warned them. Though they may have suffered terribly for not responding to the warnings, at least they can still repent after the punishments and ultimately receive God's forgiveness and salvation.

God first explains the basis of the analogy—a watchman watching for an approaching hostile army, "the sword" (verses 2-6). Then in verses 7-9 God applies the imagery to how His watchmen are to relay God's messages that warn people to repent of their sins or else face dire consequences. If God's watchmen—His prophets or His Church—fail to deliver His warning messages of what will befall the nations if they fail to repent, then the watchmen are held largely accountable for the sin and suffering of the people. "His blood I will require at your hand" (verse 8).

The Scriptures make clear that the Church must, until Christ returns, continue to preach the gospel—the good news of the coming Kingdom of God—accompanied by a watchman-type warning message and call to repentance. Plus, the Church must act like a mother to carefully and thoroughly nurture and nourish its members so they can achieve maximum spiritual growth and effectiveness in helping to carry out God's work on earth. Indeed, the elders of God's Church are to "watch" over the

spiritual welfare of its members—warning them of outside threats and of sins within (see Acts 20:31; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4), rebuking and correcting as necessary (see 2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Like Ezekiel, the Church of God even has a special responsibility to preach to Israel until Christ returns. As Jesus told His disciples, “You will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23). Yet the vast majority of the people of the modern nations of Israel do not even know that they are Israelites. Therefore, they don’t realize that the prophecies of what is going to befall end-time Israel—such as those in the book of Ezekiel—apply to them. It thus becomes the Church’s responsibility, as God enables and empowers it, to inform the Israelites of their identity and point out these prophecies. We have produced a full-color booklet with that very goal in mind—titled *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Of course, all nations should be warned of what’s coming on the world. Consider that the prophecy Ezekiel relayed immediately before this chapter concerned the judgment coming on Egypt. Still, since the greatest time of trouble ever, which is yet to come, is referred to as the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), it should be clear that the nations of Jacob—particularly the *chief* nations of Jacob—are the lands in greatest need of warning. We should also understand this in terms of the fact that the Israelite nations, having a firmer biblical background than the rest of the world, stand more culpable for disobedience than other nations. And, of course, there is the general principle of “the bigger they are, the harder they fall.” Those headed for the greater fall are in need of the louder warning. Indeed, even apart from all that, the vast majority of prophetic warnings in Scripture are given to Israel. So in teaching all Scripture and giving weight to those things the Bible does, proclaiming warnings to Israel is a necessary part of the work of God’s Church.

In Ezekiel 33:11, God makes it clear that He has no pleasure in death and punishment. His desire is to see people turn—meaning repent—from their evil ways. It’s as if God is saying: “Don’t you want to live?! Then do the right thing!”

God then addresses what’s fair and what’s not—a subject also touched on in a previous chapter (Ezekiel 18). God is not trying to make everything “fair” for human beings in every aspect of this mortal life. Life is often very unfair—we don’t choose where we’re born, our early influences, what we’re taught. And much of what we experience in life is the result of choices made by others. But God is promising to be fair about how our ultimate and eternal fate is determined. Each man’s fate largely depends on how he concludes his life, either faithful to God at the end or unfaithful. If a man lives righteously most of his life and rejects God at the end, all his righteous acts go down the drain—they won’t save him from losing eternal life. But it is never too late to repent if one is capable of repenting. In other words, a man who has lived an evil life can still sincerely repent toward the end of his life and meet God’s conditions for living forever in His Kingdom. Of course, a person is foolish to procrastinate about turning to God, partly because he never knows when his life will suddenly come to an end. Moreover, if we knowingly resist doing what we know is right, we form bad habits that will be difficult to break and damage and sear our consciences so that it becomes increasingly difficult to repent.

The Israelites complain that “the way of the LORD is not fair” (33:17, 20). Yet “in punishing Israel God was being faithful to the covenant stipulations. This covenant had been approved by the Israelites. They had agreed to its commands and accepted the consequences of breaking them, corporately and individually (see 5:8-17; 12:15, 16; 16:60, 61; 18:19-32; 20:5; Ex. 19:1-9; Deut. 27). God presents His rationale in these verses for deciding who would be rewarded with life and who would suffer death: He would save those who repent and turn to Him, but would condemn those who trust in themselves and do evil. After presenting His rationale, God declares that His judgment is just and fair—certainly more just [by any standard] than the practices of the Israelites” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Ezekiel 33:12-20). Ultimately, God is perfectly just and fair.

The most common human approach to fairness is like a balancing scale. All the bad acts are put on one side of the scale and all the good acts on the other side. People think that if there is more weight on the good side, God will usher them into eternal glory. This is why many people live a hypocritical double life. They want to do evil, but they think that as long as they do more good than evil, they will escape God’s punishment. Naturally people imagine that their goodness outweighs their sins, which they view as minor. In fact, they think of themselves as basically good even if most of their actions and attitudes are bad. They play deceptive games with other people, and it seems they think they can also play games with God—that they can pacify God or buy Him off with their offerings, charitable acts and show of religiosity. Man’s approach to fairness leads to hypocrisy and complacency, whereas God’s approach to fairness teaches true heartfelt repentance and spiritual overcoming. Only the latter approach will bring God’s blessings and the opportunity for eternal life.

Into the Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3)**February 11-12**

Some historians believe that the language used in this chapter shows that the story occurred many years after the incidents in chapter 2. While this part of the book was written in Aramaic (the international language in use throughout the Neo-Babylonian Empire), the terms used for the various office bearers were Persian, not Babylonian, indicating that Daniel wrote the story many years later, after Babylon's fall to Persia, using Persian equivalents for the various officers to make them understandable to the Jewish readers of that time. We must remember that the early part of the book of Daniel is not a contiguous narrative, but a collection of independent accounts from the life of Daniel. Chapter 3 contains one of these separate accounts.

It seems that Nebuchadnezzar didn't really get the point from Daniel's interpretation of his dream that there is only one true God. As this chapter opens, the king decides to build a huge idolatrous image or statue. There's no indication that the image was of the king himself. It may have been a representation of his patron god Nebo, or Nabu. The people's "prostration before Nebo would amount to a pledge of allegiance to his viceroy, *Nabu-kudurri-usur*, i.e., Nebuchadnezzar" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verse 1).

The construction was quite large, measuring sixty cubits high and six cubits across. "A cubit in Israel was approximately 18 inches; in Babylon it was about 20 inches. Therefore Nebuchadnezzar's image was 90 to 100 feet tall. The 10:1 ratio of height to width, however, suggests that the image was standing on a high pedestal so that the proportions of the figure itself would be closer to the normal ratio of about 4:1" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 1). That would mean it was perhaps a 40-foot-high statue on a 60-foot-high pedestal—still mammoth and imposing. Alternatively, some have seen the dimensions as suggestive of an obelisk or some other phallic image. Whatever the case, the construction was lavished with wealth, being made of gold, or at least overlaid with gold (the latter seeming more likely, given its great size).

The nature of the image is not relevant to the main focus of the story. If it had been important the account would have been more specific. Whatever the image, most Babylonians were expected to bow down and worship it, including all the Jewish exiles. Just how many Jews refused to worship it is not known since the Bible only records the story of Daniel's three friends. But it seems logical to assume that this was just what the locals were waiting for—a chance to get rid of their Jewish overlords. After all, the Jews were the captives. They were supposed to be *beneath* the Chaldeans, not in positions over them. Whatever the reason for singling out these three, it was to become a major lesson once again for Nebuchadnezzar and, no doubt, the rest of the Jews in Babylon.

Many have wondered why Daniel wasn't accused with his three friends. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* lists six possible reasons:

"1. Since Daniel is not mentioned in this chapter, he may have been absent from Babylon at the time, perhaps on government business in some other part of the kingdom.

"2. He may have been closeted with other members of the king's cabinet, working on legalistic or military plans.

"3. He may have been...too ill to attend the public ceremony; we know from 8:27 that sickness occasionally interfered with his carrying on with government business (cf. also 7:28; 10:8).

"4. It may simply have been assumed that as the king's vizier (prime minister, for his responsibilities amounted to that status; cf. 2:48), he was not required to make public demonstration of his loyalty by worshipping the image of his god. After all, there is no indication that Nebuchadnezzar himself bowed down to the image. It may have been that he simply sat on his royal dais surveying the scene, with his closest friends and advisers at his side.

"5. It is true that Daniel's office as ruler over the capital province of Babylon (2:48) was not specifically listed in the seven categories of public officials (cf. 3:3, though, of course, the rulers of subordinate provinces were required to be on hand); and none of the "wise men" (*hakkimayya*), over whom Daniel had been made chief, were included in the call for this public ceremony. As a type of accredited clergy serving under the state, they may have been exempted from this act of allegiance; their religious commitment would be presumed to be beyond question. In other words, Daniel did not belong to any of the special groups of jurists, advisors, financial experts, or political leaders included in the terms of the call.

"6. Perhaps Daniel's reputation as a diviner was so formidable that even the jealous Chaldeans did not dare attack him before the king" (note on verses 16-18).

Here we also have another proof of genuineness: "[Commentator] Ford...makes the following observation: 'Had the story been the invention that many have suggested; had it originated in the

days of the Maccabees to nerve the faithful against Gentile oppression, it is unlikely that the chief hero would have been omitted. Reality transcends fiction, and the very “incompleteness” of this account testifies to its fidelity.’ It is hard to see how the force of this deduction can be successfully evaded. There is no psychological reason for an idealizing romancer to leave Daniel out of this exciting episode. The only way to account for this omission is that in point of fact he was not personally in attendance at this important function” (same note).

Returning to the story, consider the enormity of the spectacle. A towering golden statue looms over the pageantry as a magnificent orchestra starts playing, giving the signal for the worship to commence. The music is powerful enough to signal worship to everyone in Babylon. (Incidentally, leading the orchestra are the six most common instruments of the day as well as “all kinds of music.”)

Daniel’s three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah—referred to by their Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego—are ready to die for their beliefs. There is no way they will bow down to the image.

Now Judah’s enemies in Babylon get their chance. They report the disobedience to the king and he takes immediate action, summoning them to appear before him and explain their disobedience to his edict.

They demonstrate what the apostles were to teach many years later: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). They tell the king that their God is *able* to deliver them from harm, but even if He chooses not to, they were willing to die rather than disobey God by worshiping the image. Job had made a similar statement many years before: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). Like the apostle Paul’s sufferings many years later, their example of faith will be a marvelous lesson to all mankind (compare 2 Corinthians 4:2, 12; Hebrews 11:35-37).

“These courageous young men were willing to give their lives, if necessary, to show loyalty to God alone. Appreciating their devotion, God spared their lives in a powerful and miraculous witness to King Nebuchadnezzar (verses 19-30). The faith and faithfulness of these young men remains an enduring example of respect for God. Their example should inspire all of us to honor our Creator with a similar sense of loyalty and dedication” (*Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*, p. 22).

“These three young men put their lives on the line when they chose not to bow before King Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image.... They did not know whether God would intervene to save their lives or not. They knew God *could*, but they didn’t know that He *would*. Regardless of the outcome, their living faith convicted them to put God first—a principle Jesus emphasized during His earthly ministry (Matthew 6:33).... Godly belief inevitably leads to *doing*. This is why we read in James that faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26). Living faith comes by doing what God says is good and right and being willing to accept whatever results may come from our actions. The examples and testimonies of the men and women we read about in Hebrews 11 show us we can believe God. He does not lie (Titus 1:2), and, as our loving, faithful Father, He delights in providing for us. ‘Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning....’ (James 1:17-18)” (*You Can Have Living Faith*, pp. 18-20).

The Jews’ open defiance of Nebuchadnezzar only makes his anger worse, and he gives what seem to be absurd orders concerning their execution. Given that the furnace would have been designed for smelting, it would have already been hot enough to consume the men, but he orders additional bellows under it to make it seven times hotter than usual. To make sure that they will be engulfed in flame and won’t escape, he leaves them fully clothed even with their hats on and then binds them before having them thrown into the furnace. The furnace is so hot that even the men who threw them in were killed.

“Apparently there was no door or screen to hide the inside of the furnace from view. Judging from bas-reliefs, it would seem that Mesopotamian smelting furnaces tended to be like an old-fashioned glass milk-bottle in shape, with a large opening for the insertion of the ore to be smelted and a smaller aperture at ground level for the admission of wood and charcoal to furnish the heat. There must have been two or more smaller holes at this same level to permit the insertion of pipes connected with large bellows, when it was desired to raise the temperature beyond what the flue or chimney would produce. Undoubtedly the furnace itself was fashioned of very thick adobe, resistant to intense heat. The large upper door was probably raised above the level of the fire bed so that the metal smelted from the ore would spill on the ground in case the crucibles were upset. So the text says (v. 23) that the three ‘fell down’ (*nepalu*) into the fire. Apart from the swirling flames and smoke,

then, they were quite visible to an outside observer, though, like the king, he would have to stand at a distance” (*Expositor’s*, note on verses 19-23).

Nebuchadnezzar (and no doubt all those with him) are astonished. Not only do they see the three walking around inside the furnace, no longer tied up, but with them is a fourth person whom Nebuchadnezzar says is like a son of gods. The New King James Version translates this as “the Son of God,” but this is misleading because it is the king who says this and he doesn’t know anything about the real Son of God. The Babylonians believed in multiple gods, and the language of the original Aramaic literally means “like a son of gods.” The Bible doesn’t tell us what he really saw. It may have been an angel, it may have been the preincarnate Christ or it may have been a divinely created apparition. Whatever Nebuchadnezzar saw, it must not have appeared as a mere ordinary person for him to think it god-like. When the three men come out, this fourth does not—having apparently disappeared.

Once again the king is stopped in his tracks. But although he knows that the Jews have a very powerful God, he still doesn’t recognize that the God of the Jews is the *only* God (verses 28-29). That lesson is still to come. At this point, God is the God of the Jews, not the God of Nebuchadnezzar. But Nebuchadnezzar is highly impressed and wants to honor their God, while at the same time emphasizing his own authority by issuing another extreme decree (verse 29). And the three Jews are promoted, obviously to the chagrin of their enemies (verse 30). Thus we see God’s ironic and poetic justice.

The three men, literally thrown into a refiner’s fire, could well have quoted the words of King David, which he meant only figuratively: “For you, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined; You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs; You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but you brought us out to rich fulfillment” (Psalms 66:10-12).

Ezekiel’s Detailed Vision of the Future (Ezekiel 40)

February 13-14

Fourteen years have passed since Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed (verse 1). But beginning with chapter 40, Ezekiel relates a vision of a future temple, city and nation, which must have given hope to those in captivity. Indeed, with the Jerusalem temple in ashes, Ezekiel does not only say there will be a new one. He gives extraordinary details of a coming temple complex and a new arrangement of the Holy Land that was quite different than what they knew from the past. This no doubt gave those who heard it great confidence in the truth of it—for how could Ezekiel have come up with all this on his own?

Some have argued for a historical fulfillment of this passage, either through the reconstructed temple by Zerubbabel after the ancient Jewish return from Babylonian captivity or through Herod’s later expansion on this second temple. Others see the prophecy as an allegorical representation of God’s spiritual temple, His Church. And there are other ideas. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* has this to say on the matter:

“These chapters have been interpreted as referring to Solomon’s temple, the temple of Zerubbabel (either real or proposed), Herod’s temple, or a future temple in the Millennium or in the eternal state. Some, having difficulty understanding the passage when taken literally, interpret the section allegorically as teaching about the church and its earthly blessings and glories, while others understand the passage to symbolize the reality of the heavenly temple where Christ ministers today.

“The historical fulfillments do not fit the details of the passage. The temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, or Herod do not share the design and dimensions of the temple described in Ezekiel 40-42. The worship procedure set forth in chapters 43-46, though Mosaic in nature, has not been followed in history in exactly the manner described in these chapters. The river that flows forth from the temple in 47:1-12 has never flowed from any of the three historical temples mentioned above. The only comparisons to this river are seen in Genesis 2:8-14 and Revelation 22:1-2 (cf. Isa 35:6-7; Joel 3:18; Zech 14:8). The geographical dimensions and tribal allotments of the land are certainly not feasible today, nor have they ever been followed in times past. Geographical changes will be necessary prior to the fulfillment of chapters 45, 47-48 [of Ezekiel]. Therefore one would not look to historical (past or present) fulfillments of these chapters but to the future.

“The figurative or ‘spiritualizing’ interpretative approach does not seem to solve any of the problems of Ezekiel 40-48; it tends to create new ones. When the interpreter abandons a normal [literal interpretation] because the passage does not seem to make sense taken that way and opts for an interpretative procedure by which he can allegorize, symbolize, or ‘spiritualize,’ the interpretations become subjective. Different aspects of a passage mean whatever the interpreter

desires. There are no governing interpretative principles [in that case] except the interpreter's mind (though there is appeal to the...[New Testament's revelation of spiritual meaning behind many facets of the Old Testament]). Even apocalyptic visions such as found in these chapters [at the end of Ezekiel] require a normal [literal method of interpretation]. To interpret these chapters in any manner other than a normal, literal approach would appear to contradict the interpretative guide in the vision who warns Ezekiel that he is to write down all the minute details concerning the plan for the temple and its regulations so that these details might be considered carefully and followed in every aspect (40:4; 43:10-11; 44:5; cf. Exod 25:9; 1 Chronicles 28:19). Therefore a figurative approach does not adequately treat the issues of Ezekiel 40-48.

"In order to determine the general time-frame of these chapters, they will be examined in light of the development and flow of Ezekiel's argument in the entire book. He has shown the presence of God's glory in the historical Jerusalem temple and its departure from that temple because of Israel's sin of breaking the Mosaic covenant. The Fall of Jerusalem and the Captivity in Babylon were the consequence (chs. 4-24). After declaring how the nations would also be judged (25:1-33:20), Ezekiel encouraged the Jewish captives through six...messages of hope (33:21-39:29). In these he informed them that the Messiah would restore them to their Promised Land in the future and become a true shepherd to them. They would be cleansed and all their covenants would be fulfilled. Even in the end times, after the land prospers and Israel dwells securely in it, some will try to take the Promised Land away from Israel and profane the Lord's name; but the Lord will not permit it (chs. 38-39). It would seem logical, therefore, that Ezekiel would conclude the logical and chronological development of his prophecy by describing the messianic kingdom and the return of God's glory to govern his people (chs. 40-48) rather than suddenly reverting back to some historical period, whether immediately following the Captivity or during Herod's temple, or to describe an idealistic temple.

"Ezekiel appears to have been contrasting the past and contemporary desecration of the temple and its regulations with the future holiness and righteousness of the temple and its functions. Ezekiel also used this format in chapters 33-39. The correct fixture procedure would bring shame and conviction on Ezekiel's contemporaries (43:6-12; 44:5-16; 45:9-12). This would again point to a future fulfillment of these chapters.

"God's glory is a most important feature of Ezekiel's prophecy. The return of God's glory to the new temple in 43:1-12 is the climax of the book. The context implies that this could only occur after Israel has been restored to her Promised Land and cleansed. The stress is on holiness. Holiness had not characterized Israel as a people heretofore; and, according to Ezekiel 36, Israel would not be a holy people in accord with God's standard till after they had been restored to the Promised Land and cleansed in the Messianic Age. When God's glory returns, it will remain in Israel's midst forever (43:6-7). The development of this unifying factor in Ezekiel's prophecy would argue strongly for a future fulfillment of chapters 40-48.

"Finally, the entire context and argument of the Scriptures concerning God's outworking of his redemptive plan in history would seem to place these chapters and the aspects mentioned above in the time of the consummation of all history. This is perhaps best seen in the river of life that flows from the temple to bring healing to the land (47:1-12). This concept is first seen in Genesis 2:8-14 in the Garden of Eden, the perfect environment of God's holiness. With sin, this garden and its river were removed. When God concludes his redemptive program and brings full salvation to mankind with eternal life through the passion of Jesus Christ his Son, it is most appropriate that the river of eternal life would again flow to demonstrate full healing on the earth. This conclusion to the full circle of God's redemptive program is also shown in Revelation 22:1-6 in God's description of the eternal state. Such is also conveyed by other O[ld] T[estament] prophets (cf. Isa 35:5-6; Joel 3:18; Zech 14:8).

"Therefore, the context and argument of the Book of Ezekiel as well as the development of God's redemptive program argue strongly for a future fulfillment of the events of Ezekiel 40-48 in the end times" (introductory notes on chapters 40-48).

Expositor's next takes up the issue of whether the vision is of the 1,000-year reign of Christ (the Millennium) or the eternal state beyond it. As it explains, the obvious differences between the descriptions in Ezekiel and those of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22 make it clear that Ezekiel's vision is of Jerusalem and the Promised Land during the Millennium.

Many have great difficulty with the concept of a sacrificial system being reinstated in the future. The book of Hebrews explains regarding the Old Testament system that "in those sacrifices there is [only] a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (10:4). Rather, Jesus Christ has "once...appeared to put away sins by the

sacrifice of Himself” and “we have been sacrificed through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (9:26; 10:10). Israel’s ritual system, we are told, “was symbolic for the present time...imposed until the time of reformation” (9:9)—meaning the Church age. This is why many try to interpret these chapters at the end of Ezekiel allegorically.

Expositor’s notes: “The writer of Hebrews goes on to say that where sins have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. Understood in the context of Hebrews described above, there is no longer the need for the picture lessons and reminders now that the reality of Christ’s efficacious blood sacrifice has been offered once and for all. No other efficacious sacrifice could be offered because only Christ’s sacrifice of himself is efficacious. However, the writer of Hebrews does not declare that pictorial sacrifices and festivals absolutely can no longer be observed as reminders and picture lessons of what Christ did after his singularly efficacious sacrifice has been completed. Since the sacrifices and festivals in the O[ld] T[estament] system were only pictures, they could never conflict with the sacrifice of the Messiah. They never were and never could be efficacious. Likewise, the sacrifices in the millennial system described by Ezekiel are only picture lessons and reminders of the sin of man and of the only efficacious sacrifice for sin once and for all made by Christ. The millennial sacrifices will be both reminders to believers in millennial worship and picture lessons to unbelievers born in the Millennium. (These ‘unbelievers’ could be born from the Jews who enter the Millennium from the tribulation period.) On the basis of the O[ld] T[estament] role of the sacrifices and the argument of the writer of Hebrews, it does not appear that the pictorial sacrifices of the Mosaic system nor the memorial sacrifices of the millennial worship conflict with the finished and complete work of Jesus’ sacrifice for all sins once and for all on the cross. Consequently, the sacrifices in the millennial sacrificial system of Ezekiel appear to be only memorials of Christ’s finished work and pictorial reminders that mankind by nature is sinful and in need of redemption from sin. Not only is this view substantiated by comparison with the Mosaic covenant in which the sacrifices were picture lessons and types, but it is also confirmed by the writer of Hebrews as observed above” (emphasis added).

Today, Christians can and should gain a great deal of insight into the reconciling and saving work of Jesus Christ through studying the Old Testament tabernacle and temple and its sacrificial system. Yet that insight is certainly limited by having to construct in mental pictures, based on complex and detailed passages, what it was like. Just imagine the establishment of a living, functioning model at the world’s capital. What a wonderful teaching tool this will provide for the Israelites living in the Promised Land and, as there will likely still be mass communications at that time, for all mankind.

The Millennial Temple Complex (Ezekiel 40)

Feb. 13-14 Cont’d

Ezekiel’s vision was received on the tenth day of the first month. “If it is correct to designate the month as Nisan [the first month on the religious calendar], then this apocalyptic vision would have been received on the tenth day of Nisan, the very day the people may have begun to prepare for the Passover four days later. Whether they actually observed the Passover or not in exile, surely they would be contemplating Israel’s redemption out of Egypt and the creation of their nation. This vision, then, would be an encouragement that the Lord would complete his purposes for the nation in the messianic kingdom” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, note on verse 1-4).

We then get into the specifics of what Ezekiel saw. The details often make the reading of this section tedious and incomprehensible. Also, there is a great deal of dispute about what all of the measurements are, and what they refer to. Nevertheless, with the information provided here and historical details we have of the past Jerusalem temples, we can get a good idea of what the magnificent temple to be built at the return of Jesus Christ will probably look like.

Ezekiel is first taken to a “very high mountain” (verse 2), perhaps signifying the nation of Israel in a figurative sense, as it will be the chief nation of the Millennium. It could also represent the Kingdom of God, the ultimate peak of which will be the heavenly “mount of the congregation in the farthest sides of the north” (Isaiah 14:13)—for despite the fact that Jesus Christ will rule from the earthly Jerusalem over all nations, heaven will, during the Millennium, remain the seat of God the Father and thus the pinnacle of the Kingdom. In any case, the prophet is able to see on the southern part of this mountain what appears to him to be something like a city. Indeed, when we reconstruct the temple complex according to the measurements given, this is just what it looks like. Ezekiel was probably familiar with the city of Babylon with its thick walls and gates, and he probably found some similarity. Yet as a future city, we could perhaps expect some things Ezekiel saw to be more like one of our modern cities than what he himself was accustomed to.

The complex of buildings occupies a square, 500 cubits on each side, covering about 25 acres. Carefully arranged within the complex are variously sized open courtyards surrounded by buildings, many of which are several stories tall. A number of “towers” can be seen (see Psalm 48:13). One structure in the middle of the complex apparently reaches to the height of a modern 25-story building. And surrounding the square of buildings there is a large open parkland that is enclosed by a wall, defining the outer perimeter of the grounds of this “city.”

There is some confusion as to exactly where the millennial temple complex will be located. The question centers on the meaning of Zion or Mount Zion in other passages. The Bible elsewhere makes it clear that Jesus Christ will reign from Zion (Psalm 132:13-14; Isaiah 2:3; 8:18; 18:7; Micah 4:2, 7). Zion was the area of David's Jerusalem. The Temple Mount, a higher hill just north of the City of David where Solomon's and the later temple complexes sat, is Mount Moriah (2 Chronicles 3:1). When Solomon's temple was built, the Ark of the Covenant was brought up to the Temple Mount *from* "the city of David, which is Zion" (1 Kings 8:1).

This has led some to conclude that Zion is restricted to the area of David's city. If that is the case, then the millennial temple will be located here, south of the present Temple Mount. This southern area, however, is a rather narrow hilltop with higher hills surrounding it, so the topography of the area would have to be drastically altered. This could well be as Zion is to be exalted and built up (see Isaiah 2:2; 40:9; Micah 4:1; Psalm 102:16). Indeed, the whole area around Jerusalem is going to become a plain (Zechariah 14:10). Why might the temple be moved? Perhaps to symbolize that God's throne is no longer high above Jerusalem in a heavenly place but has rather come down to the earthly capital—where sits the throne of David that Jesus will assume.

But that's only if the temple really is to be moved. It could well be that Zion applies to all of Jerusalem. Indeed, the name *Jerusalem* originally applied to the City of David. The Temple Mount was then incorporated into Jerusalem. If Zion was simply synonymous with Jerusalem, then the Temple Mount would have been part of Zion. The city later came to encompass a larger area to the west, which all became part of Jerusalem—and perhaps of Zion. Today, the hill to the west of David's city is referred to as Zion. Yet it seems quite possible that the biblical designation of Zion applies to the entire city of Jerusalem. Indeed, in Isaiah 2:3, the two seem to mean exactly the same place. Ezekiel's temple complex could easily fit on the current Temple Mount—yet even in that case, major topographical changes will still be made to the area.

After seeing an overview of the complex, Ezekiel is brought down to it, where he meets his tour guide standing at a gate. This "man" is holding a measuring rod and a line of flax (apparently a measuring tape of unspecified length, used for especially long measurements). He tells Ezekiel to record what he sees for the benefit of the house of Israel, and ultimately for our instruction (Ezekiel 40:3-4).

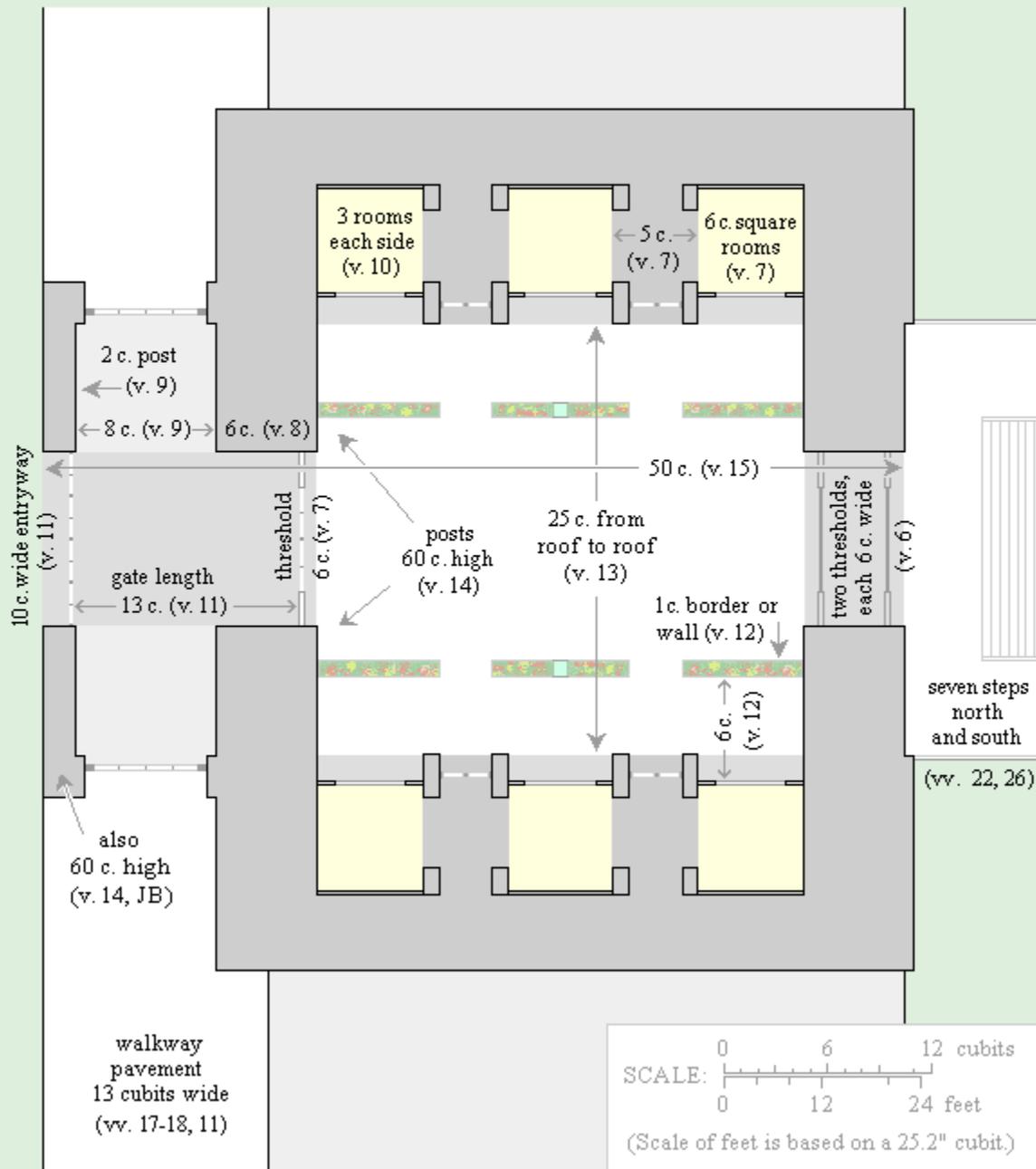
The length of the measuring rod is given as six cubits. There is some dispute about the size of a cubit. Many consider a cubit to have been 18 inches. Others claim a standard cubit was about 21 inches, or some other length. Since the cubit being used here is defined as one handbreadth longer than the standard cubit of the day (verse 5), we could expect something longer than the standard by about 4 inches. (Four inches is the current measure of a "hand," as used in measuring horses). Without going into all of the supporting evidence, there is some indication that the Hebrew cubit was based on "handbreadths" or palms, and that a palm was 3.6 inches. This would make an 18-inch cubit equal to five palms, and a 21.6-inch cubit six palms (perhaps this was the "cubit of a man" after the number of man—see Deuteronomy 3:11 KJV; Revelation 13:18). We are proceeding on the assumption of a seven-palm, 25.2-inch cubit, as described in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, article "Weights and Measures." Some may insist this is too long but the relative proportions of the buildings remain the same regardless of which cubit size is used. And with the seven-palm cubit, rooms that appear to be bed-chambers turn out to have the square footage of modern college dormitory rooms; rooms used for private dining are just over 12 feet square; the tables used for holding the instruments for sacrifice come to a reasonable work table height and the tables for the showbread (Exodus 25:23) would have been as a normal countertop or buffet table in height. Using a much smaller cubit would yield some uncomfortably small rooms and furnishings.

With the seven-palm, 25.2-inch cubit, the measuring rod used by Ezekiel's guide is 12.6 feet long. The tour begins with the measuring of an outer wall, which is one rod high, and one rod thick (Ezekiel 40:5). It is often assumed that this first wall Ezekiel encounters surrounds the "outer court" of the temple (verse 17). There are problems with this, however, as this wall is described as being "all around the outside of the temple," and yet there are a number of other structures that clearly occupy some of the space that this wall would have to occupy if it were there. While it could perhaps be an outer building wall in places, discrepancies in building height and other features make even this resolution awkward. And in verse 6, it says they went to the east gate and went up the stairs (giving the impression of approaching it) after measuring this wall. This seems to imply that the six-cubit wall was behind them, outside of the gate they were approaching. And indeed, as described in chapter 42, there is a freestanding wall much further out to enclose an open parkland around the temple complex. Perhaps it was in one of the gates of this outer park wall that the man with the measuring instruments was standing to greet Ezekiel and show him through this "city" of the future.

In any case, they enter the eastern gate of the building complex after climbing some steps. The actual number of steps for the eastern gate is not given, but the northern and southern gates each have seven steps (40:22, 26). The eastern gate may have the same number, or there may be more, considering that the eastern side of the temple complex may sit above a steeper slope than the other sides. There is a valley, the Kidron Valley, running just below the east side of both the current Temple Mount and the City of David. So there could well be a need for additional steps.

Gateways of the Outer Court

Ezekiel 40 — Ground Level Floor Plan

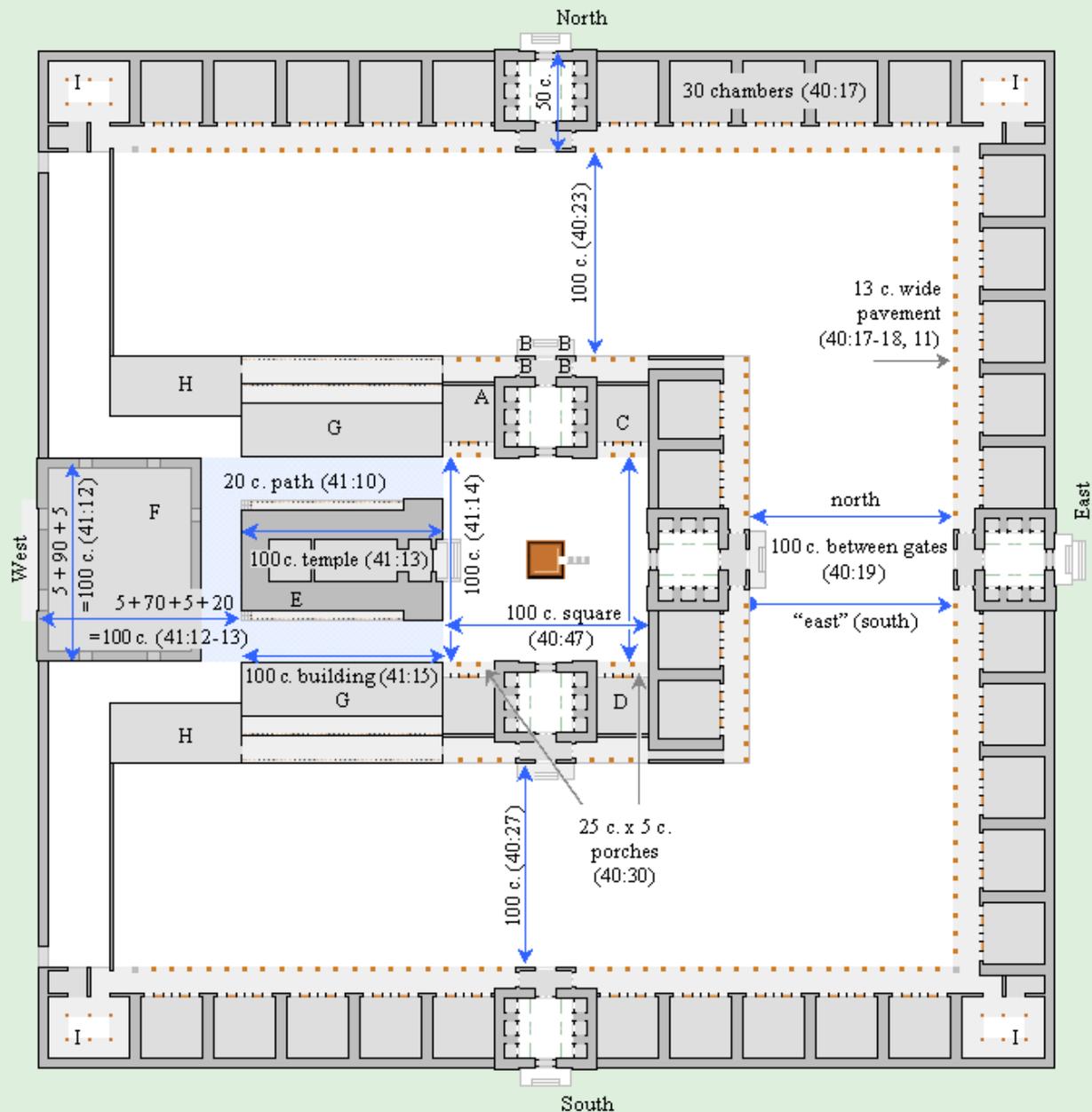


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Next we are given the dimensions of the gates. Each gateway comprises a narrow, 50-cubit-long (105-foot) passageway through a large building complex. In the middle of the gateway is a small open-air courtyard (25 cubits wide, verse 13, and at least as long) with three six-cubit (12.6-foot) square rooms on either side. These rooms may at times be used as dining rooms for leaders (as alluded to in Ezekiel 44:3). And they may also be used by the priests as counseling rooms for judging private disputes (see Deuteronomy 16:18; 17:8-9; Ezekiel 44:24).

The Millennial Temple Complex

As Shown to Ezekiel



- | | |
|--|---|
| A. washroom for burnt offerings (40:38; Leviticus 1:9, 13) | G. priests' holy chambers for dining (42:1-14) |
| B. slaughtering places (40:39-43; Leviticus 1:11) | H. priests' place for cooking trespass, sin and grain offerings (46:19-20) |
| C. singers' chamber (temple priests, 40:44-45) | I. cooking courtyards where temple servants cook the people's sacrifices (46:21-24) |
| D. singers' chamber (altar priests, 40:46) | |
| E. side chambers (41:5-11) | |
| F. storehouse (1 Chronicles 26:17; Nehemiah 10:38) | |

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The thresholds at the outer entrance of the gateway corridor are fairly narrow (only 12.6 feet wide), symbolically picturing the constricted nature of the gate into the Kingdom of God (Matthew 7:14). The entrance gates will be attended by gatekeepers (as in former days, 1 Chronicles 9:22-24; 2 Chronicles 23:19; Ezekiel 44:11), who will have the responsibility of restricting entrance into the main courtyards of the temple to those who fit the scriptural requirements of being clean, both spiritually and physically—circumcised in mind and body (see 44:9, 23).

Other details about these gates are given, but the exact application of each measurement is not always clear. The accompanying diagram provides the basic outline and one interpretation of Ezekiel's description. Controversy especially surrounds the height of these gates. Ezekiel 40:14 describes "gateposts" that are 60 cubits (126 feet) high—or about 12 stories tall. While some reject the idea that this is a vertical dimension, there is no reason to believe it is not. Most feel it applies at least to the "vestibule" or "porch" (KJV) located on the inner side of the gate (verses 8-9), but whether it is a narrow tower over just the entrance, or whether it stretches across the entire 50-cubit face of the gate is not clear. If it did, it would give the gate some design similarity to the temple itself. Another view applies this measurement to the entire gate complex (to all its vertical support members), in a design that Ezekiel would have recognized as being similar to most ancient city gates.

Many of the "walls" Ezekiel encounters are five or six cubits thick (10.5–12.6 feet), and quite capable of containing small rooms. Since it was common in ancient times for rooms or passageways to be built into and on the city walls (as was the house of Rahab in Jericho, Joshua 2:15), we must not assume that everything Ezekiel refers to as a "wall" was a completely solid structure throughout. While these walls could be primarily for insulation, one could also speculate on what functional use might be made of this space, including perhaps closets, restrooms, utility rooms, and, considering the height of some of these buildings, even elevators and stairwells.

Passing through the eastern gate, Ezekiel and his guide enter the outer court, move on to the northern gate, and then to the southern gate, which are said to all be of the same design. The outer court is 100 cubits wide (210 feet), between the outer and inner gates (Ezekiel 40:19, 23, 27). And, in the area adjacent to the outer gates are 30 chambers, perhaps five chambers on each side of the three gates, each of them located in the center of their respective 500-cubit span. In front of these chambers is a pavement, or walkway, to provide access to them (verses 17-18).



Ezekiel states that these 30 chambers "faced the pavement," which he defined as the "lower pavement." This may mean he was giving only the number of chambers on the ground floor. As we will see, certain other chamber-bearing structures have at least three stories, and there is reason to believe these outer court buildings are multilevel structures as well. For example, Ezekiel 42:6 describes a three-story building which did not need pillars "like the pillars of the courts" because it

was built with a terraced design so that upper floors could have front patios built on the rooftops of the lower floors. This implies that there were pillars in the courts being used as the structural means of supporting multilevel patios or walkway pavements.

The Inner Gates and Court (Ezekiel 40)

Feb. 13-14 Cont'd

From the outer south gate, Ezekiel is brought across the outer court to the inner south gate. These inner gates are basically mirror images of the outer gates, so that the “vestibules” or “archways” of the outer gates (verses 31, 34, 37, apparently the main entryways of each gate) face the corresponding “archways” of the inner gates. One difference is that there are eight steps leading up to the inner gates, instead of seven (verse 31). After going through, and measuring, the inner south gate, they move on to the east inner gate, and then the north inner gate, all mirror images of the outer gates, and directly across from them.

At the north gate, Ezekiel sees several items directly related to the offering of sacrifices, including tables and utensils, and the entrance to a room for washing the meat for the burnt offering (verses 38-43; Leviticus 1:9, 13). In Solomon’s time the burnt offerings were washed using elaborate open-air lavers (water tanks) situated in the inner courtyard around the temple. Ezekiel describes no such lavers in the millennial temple, nor any lavers for the priests to wash themselves in (as used at the tabernacle, Exodus 30:18-21), nor any cast bronze “sea” (the 21-foot diameter water tank, that Solomon had set up at the southeast corner of the temple for the priests’ washing, see 2 Chronicles 4:2-6, 10). Since Ezekiel describes an indoor facility northeast of the temple for the washing of the burnt offerings, we might expect to find additional space there (and especially in the parallel location southeast of the temple) with washrooms for the priests. And we might also expect that all of these rooms will be fully equipped with modern indoor plumbing.

After touring the north inner court gate, Ezekiel is shown rooms for the priests (now limited to the sons of Zadok, see Ezekiel 40:46; 44:15-31), apparently on the east side of the north and south gates, facing each other. They are described as “chambers for the singers” (40:44-46), so they are likely to be used as rehearsal rooms for priests who will undoubtedly once again be “employed in *that* work [making music in praise to God and doing other temple and altar work] day and night” in rotating shifts throughout the year (1 Chronicles 9:25-33). These gates and rooms surround a 100-cubit square courtyard located in front of the temple sanctuary. This inner courtyard is in the center of the entire temple complex, with the altar of burnt offering (Ezekiel 40:47) as the focal point in the very middle of everything.

With the last two verses (48-49), Ezekiel completes his counterclockwise tour of the inner court by arriving at the vestibule (porch) of the temple itself, on the west side of the courtyard. Two pillars are briefly mentioned in verse 49, probably identical to the ancient temple pillars described in some detail in 1 Kings 7:15-22 and 2 Chronicles 3:15-17. Comparing the design of the pillars of the temple of Solomon with extra-biblical records about similar pillars in the court of the second temple, we can surmise that they may have been used as enormous torches—oil lamps on a grand scale. (The Herodian temple had four such courtyard lamps.)

The Temple Sanctuary (Ezekiel 41)

February 15-16

The temple sanctuary building itself is not described in detail in Ezekiel. But it is described enough to recognize that the design is very much like that of both the tabernacle and the temple Solomon built. This makes sense when we realize that the designs of these earlier structures were given by God to reflect the pattern of the heavenly temple (see Exodus 25:8-9; 26:30; 1 Chronicles 28:11-12, 19; Hebrews 8:5). To get a full picture of Ezekiel’s temple, it is often necessary to refer to details given elsewhere about the first temple, and even the tabernacle.

For example, the height of the vestibule or “porch” (the entrance hall structure) of the future temple is not given in Ezekiel. It is described in 2 Chronicles 3:4 as being 120 cubits (252 feet) in height, making it as tall as a modern 25-story building. The lobby of this entrance hall is described by Ezekiel 40:49 as having inside dimensions of 11 x 20 cubits (23 x 42 feet).

Ezekiel now enters the Holy Place from the vestibule (verses 1-2). There are only two rooms in the temple sanctuary, each 20 cubits (42 feet) in width. The first, called elsewhere the Holy Place, is 20 x 40 cubits (42 x 84 feet). The height is given in 1 Kings 6:2 as 30 cubits (63 feet). In the tabernacle and first temple, it contained the table of showbread, the seven-branched lampstand or menorah and the altar of incense. Only the incense altar is mentioned here (Ezekiel 41:22), but that could be because it is specifically mentioned as

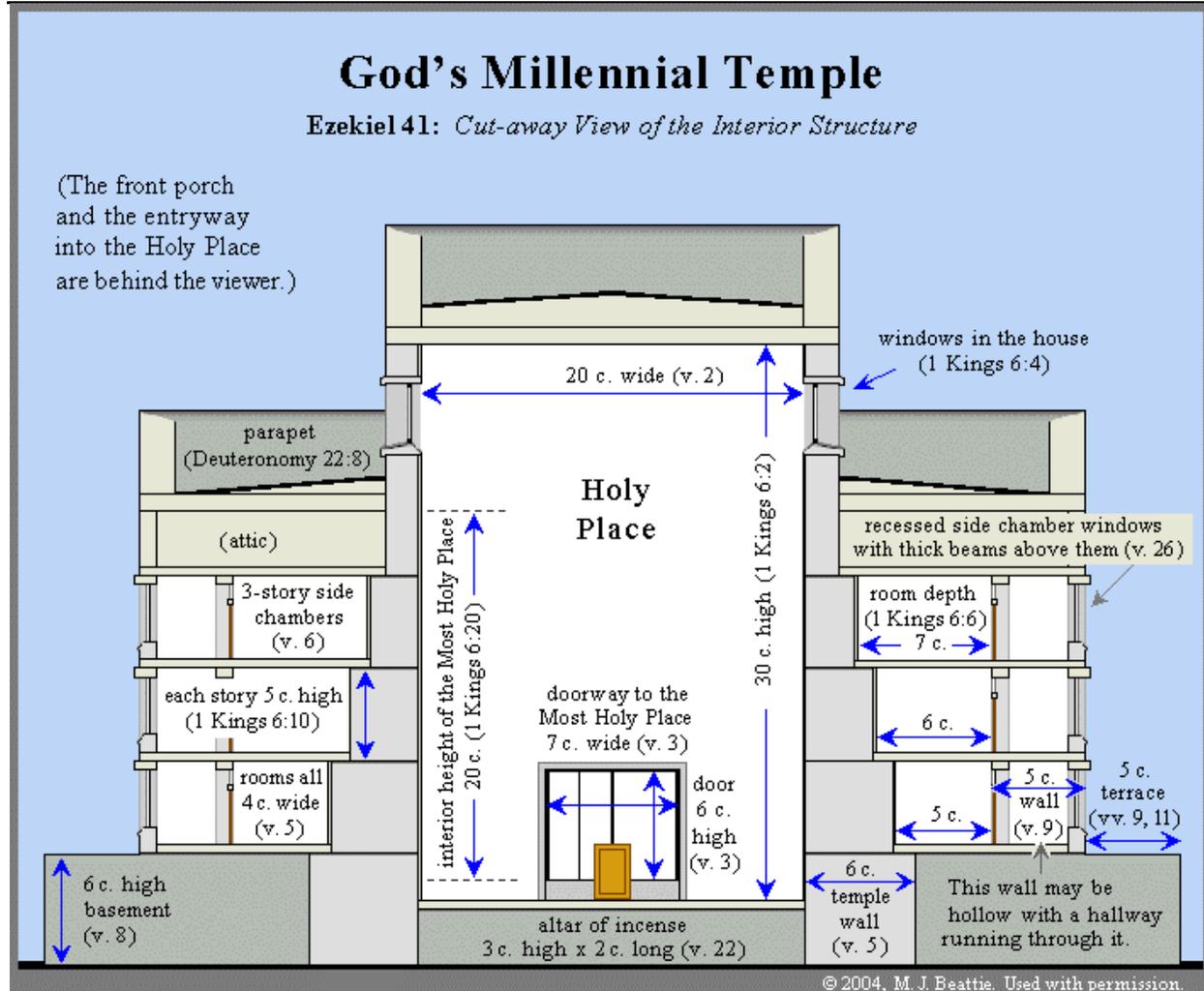
being larger. Perhaps the other furnishings, if present, were the same as Ezekiel already knew them to be from the first temple.

The inner room (verses 3-4), called the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies, is a square 20 x 20 cubits. According to 1 Kings 6:20 its height is also 20 cubits. In the tabernacle and first temple it contained the Ark of the Covenant. Ezekiel does not mention the ark. Jeremiah 3:16-17 says: "Then it shall come to pass...that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem." This could mean that there won't be an ark there at all. However, that seems somewhat odd given that there is a heavenly ark that would likely still be typified in the millennial temple (see Revelation 11:19). The point of Jeremiah's statement may simply be that the actual bodily presence of God in the person of the glorified Jesus Christ will so overshadow the ark that this representative object will not even be thought of. People will go to Jerusalem *not* to visit the mere resting place of the ark, but rather to see where the Almighty King sits enthroned in majesty. What is the ark itself compared to that awesome reality? (Interestingly, the statement that the ark will not be "made anymore" could even indicate that the original ark will be the one brought back and used—though the word rendered "made" can be variously translated, so the meaning is not entirely clear.)

Further details on the design and decor of the temple can be found in 1 Kings 6 (verses 2-4, 14-32). It can also be noted that most of the dimensions of the temple structure are twice that of the tabernacle (see Exodus 26:15-30). With this initial brief description of the temple sanctuary, Ezekiel moves beyond its 6-cubit-thick (12.6-foot) walls (Ezekiel 41:5), to the 90 side chambers that surround it. Combined with 1 Kings 6:5-6 and verse 10 we learn that each room is four cubits in width and five cubits tall, but five, six or seven cubits in length depending on which of the three stories the rooms were on, with the larger rooms on the top floor. (These chambers bolster the argument for a seven-palm cubit, which would make the smaller rooms 8.4 x 10.5 feet, with 10.5-foot stories. With a five-palm or 18-inch cubit, these rooms would only be 6 x 7.5 feet, with a rather short 7.5 feet between floors.) The step-like construction of these chambers is described, with the explanation that the configuration allows each floor to be supported on the temple side using one-cubit ledges, rather than requiring fasteners penetrating into the temple wall itself (Ezekiel 41:6-7; compare 1 Kings 6:6). No mention is given here as to the purpose for these chambers, but other verses (for example, 1 Chronicles 9:27) describe Levites lodging all around the house of God. These rooms do seem about the size of bedrooms, with the third floor chambers being large enough for double occupancy. (This would allow a total of 120 beds.)

We were earlier told that there were steps leading up to the temple (40:49). The number is not given. Ezekiel 41:8 describes a six-cubit elevation around the temple for the side chambers, but when all the various measurements are laid out, it appears that this foundation does not extend underneath the temple itself. There is also a five-cubit-wide terrace along the outside of the side chambers, undoubtedly with a restraining rail of some sort for the safety of those using it (verse 11; see Deuteronomy 22:8). The 20-cubit-wide walkway (verse 10) appears to be the one on the ground level between the temple and the inner court buildings.

In verse 12, Ezekiel is shown one of these buildings—the very large structure on the western side of the inner courtyard. It is 70 x 90 cubits inside (nearly 28,000 square feet). Not much is said about it here, but in 1 Chronicles 26:12-18 a storehouse is mentioned, adjacent to a highway, which could only have been on the western side of the temple complex where there were no outer courts. Several other scriptures mention such a storehouse (see 1 Kings 7:51; Nehemiah 10:38; 12:44; 13:12-13; Malachi 3:10) as a place for keeping tithes, offerings and firstfruits, as well as temple articles of gold and silver. Since most all of the other buildings are multiple stories, it is also quite likely that this building is similarly tall.



We are then given several measurements that are all 100 cubits (Ezekiel 41:13). First, the temple itself from east to west is 100 cubits. Second, from the west outer edge of the temple complex through the storehouse and walkway to the west edge of the temple itself is also 100 (5+70+5+20 cubits). We were previously told of the 100-cubit courtyard in the center, and the two 50-cubit east gates with a 100-cubit outer court between them, making the entire complex from west to east 500 cubits, as already mentioned. The north-south dimensions were already defined as two 50-cubit gates and a 100-cubit outer courtyard on each side of the 100-cubit inner courtyard at the center. We are now also told that the eastern face of the temple and two 20-cubit walkways are the exact width of the 100-cubit inner court, making the temple itself 60 cubits wide (verse 14). The western storehouse is also confirmed to be 100 cubits wide (90 plus the two five-cubit-wide walls, verse 15).

The remainder of the chapter contains details on the appearance of the temple. These include windows and wall decorations of palm trees and “cherubim,” creatures that in this case had two faces, as opposed to the four faces Ezekiel had seen many years earlier (see Ezekiel 1). There is also a description of the incense altar (41:22), which was a cubit higher and wider than that of the tabernacle (see Exodus 30:2). Finally, we are given descriptions of the bi-fold doors to each of the two rooms of the temple. Further details are given in 1 Kings 6 about windows and wall decorations, although in some cases differences can be noted.

The Inner Court Buildings and Holy Area (Ezekiel 42)

February 17-18

Ezekiel now leaves the immediate temple area and proceeds through the inner north gate to the outer courtyard, and over to a 100 x 50 cubit, three-story building on the west side of the gate (verses 1-3). This building, and the corresponding one next to the inner south gate, are said to be dining chambers where the priests eat the holy offerings (verse 13). They have an interesting terraced construction, where each floor is narrower than the one below it (verses 5-6). The rooms on the ground floor are said to have a 10-cubit-wide indoor corridor in front of them (verse 4). The upper floors are each set back, to allow for rooftop patios (outdoor corridors) in front of the second- and

third-floor rooms. The first- and second-floor rooms are the same size, but the third-floor rooms are smaller (verses 5-6).

At the end of this chapter, Ezekiel is taken through the outer east gate to measure the enclosed temple district. Notice these measurements are using the measuring rod of six cubits. So rather than being the 500 cubits per side of the temple complex, this is a 3,000-cubit-per-side “holy area” (verse 20). The word “cubits” in the NKJV is italicized in verse 20. The KJV translators correctly used “reeds,” as specifically stated in the previous verses. This is describing a walled area 1.2 miles square, probably of carefully landscaped parkland, with the temple complex in the middle of it. This gives a “buffer zone” of almost exactly one half mile between the outside walls of the temple complex and the walls around its grounds.

If this outer wall is also the one we saw in Ezekiel 40:5, then it is about 12 feet thick and 12 feet high. What purpose might this serve? The parkland surrounding the temple “city” could be more than just open space. It could serve as an area for tents or booths during the pilgrimage feasts, especially the Feast of Tabernacles. If so, this thick wall could house much needed bathroom facilities, or supply other indoor needs for the large numbers of visitors.

Christ’s Arrival at the Temple; Altar of Burnt Offering (Ezekiel 43) February 19-20

Returning to the east gate, Ezekiel is now given a glimpse of the awesome and thrilling arrival of Jesus Christ (identified by Ezekiel as the coming of the “glory of the LORD”) to this newly completed temple, a scene that reminded him of the visions he had recorded earlier in his book (verses 1-5; see Ezekiel 1; 10). Ezekiel 10:18-19 had specifically mentioned God leaving the temple, after which it was destroyed. Here we have God returning again.

Verses 6-12 contain one of several sets of warning and instruction from God about what He expects the Israelites’ behavior to be in this future temple, in contrast to their abominable behavior in the one upon which He had recently brought destruction.

The bronze altar of burnt offering in Solomon’s temple was 20 x 20 x 10 cubits (2 Chronicles 4:1), much bigger than the portable one for the tabernacle, which was 5 x 5 x 3 cubits (see Exodus 27:1-2). The altar Ezekiel sees is similar, but it is either more elaborate or simply related in greater detail. Four vertical parts are described: a one-cubit-deep gutter for catching the blood of the sacrifices, a two-cubit-high lower ledge, an upper ledge four cubits above that, and a four-cubit-high structure around the hearth (for a total above ground height of 10 cubits), with horns extending above that at the four corners. Each succeeding level seems to have a one-cubit setback associated with it, the upper-level hearth being 12 x 12 cubits, and increasing by two cubits each level to apparently 16 x 16 cubits at the ground level with a one-cubit-wide gutter below that. Steps for accessing the hearth are located on the east side (verse 17). The altar is massive. It is taller than a two-story building. The base of the hearth is more than 12 feet above the ground, and more than 600 square feet. With the sides of the hearth being eight feet tall, it is likely that doors are built into the sides of the altar for placing meat and tending to the fires and ashes, though none are specifically mentioned.

The chapter concludes with a description of the purification offerings for the altar (verses 18-27). As in the days of the tabernacle, the process will take seven days (see Exodus 29:35-37).

Ordinances of the Temple and Priesthood (Ezekiel 44) February 21-22

Ezekiel is taken back to the outer east gate and discovers that now it has been shut. Following Christ’s arrival, no man will be allowed to use it (verses 1-2). However, one identified as the “prince”— ruler or leader—will be permitted to enter the eastern gate complex through its porch for eating certain ceremonial meals (verse 3). This person cannot be Jesus Christ, for we later discover that he must make a sin offering for himself (45:22). Indeed, Ezekiel 46:16-17 says the prince has natural children. Some have argued that the prince is the resurrected King David, as he will be prince over Israel in the Millennium (34:23-24; 37:24). Yet that doesn’t fit either because David also would not need to offer a sin offering for himself. Nor would any of the glorified saints who will then no longer sin. So the prince here must be a human being who needs to repent of sin. From all that is written of the prince in chapters 45–46, it is evident that he is a civil leader, the highest human ruler of the day, probably of the house of David.

As the porch on an outer gate is on the inner side of a gate complex, the prince is entering the east gate from inside the temple area, from the outer courtyard. The outer door of the east gate remains shut, and even Ezekiel is no longer taken through the east gate door. We will later learn the rules governing the inner east gate, but for now, Ezekiel is caused to avoid the east gate, by being

taken into the inner court again via the north gate (44:4), where he receives more instruction about what is expected of the Israelites in this future temple.

Circumcision will still be in effect, or reinstated, for all who enter the holy sanctuary—the requirement being both physical and spiritual circumcision (verse 9). Sacrifices will also be reestablished, as noted earlier, which is clear throughout these chapters. The Levites will again serve in the temple as non-priestly ministers. Even the priestly descendants of Aaron, except for one branch, could only serve in this non-priestly capacity. The restrictions imposed on the Levites' assigned work will serve as a reminder of their family's failure to properly exercise their duties in the past (verses 10-14). However, God said the descendents of Zadok (probably the priest who served during the reigns of David and Solomon, see 1 Kings 2:35) remained faithful during those years of apostasy. And as a reward, they will become the priestly line (Ezekiel 44:15). (This will also fulfill promises given previously to descendents of Aaron and his grandson Phinehas, from whom Zadok descended—see Numbers 18; 25:11-13.)

We are then reminded of some of the regulations regarding the priests, most of which had already been given through Moses. They are to wear special linen garments when on duty within the inner court or inner court buildings (verses 17-19; see Exodus 28:39-43; Leviticus 16:4). Their hair is to be well trimmed (verse 20; see Leviticus 21:5). They are not to drink alcoholic beverages before performing their priestly duties (verse 21; see Leviticus 10:9). There are restrictions as to whom they can marry (verse 22; see Leviticus 21:7, 13-14). They have a responsibility to teach God's laws (verse 23; see Leviticus 10:10). They are to act as judges (verse 24; see Deuteronomy 17:8-13). They are not to defile themselves by exposure to those who have died (verse 25; see Leviticus 21:1-4). The priests were not to receive an inheritance in the land (verse 28; see Numbers 18:20). They were to eat the appointed offerings and tithes of the people (verses 29-30; see Numbers 18:8-19). But they were not allowed to eat any animal that had not been explicitly killed for eating (verse 31; see Leviticus 22:8).

While we see many parallels between the past and the future, no description of a human *high* priest among the Zadokite priests is given—presumably because Jesus Christ alone will fulfill that role in perpetuity. It is, of course, possible that there will be a leading human figure among the priests.

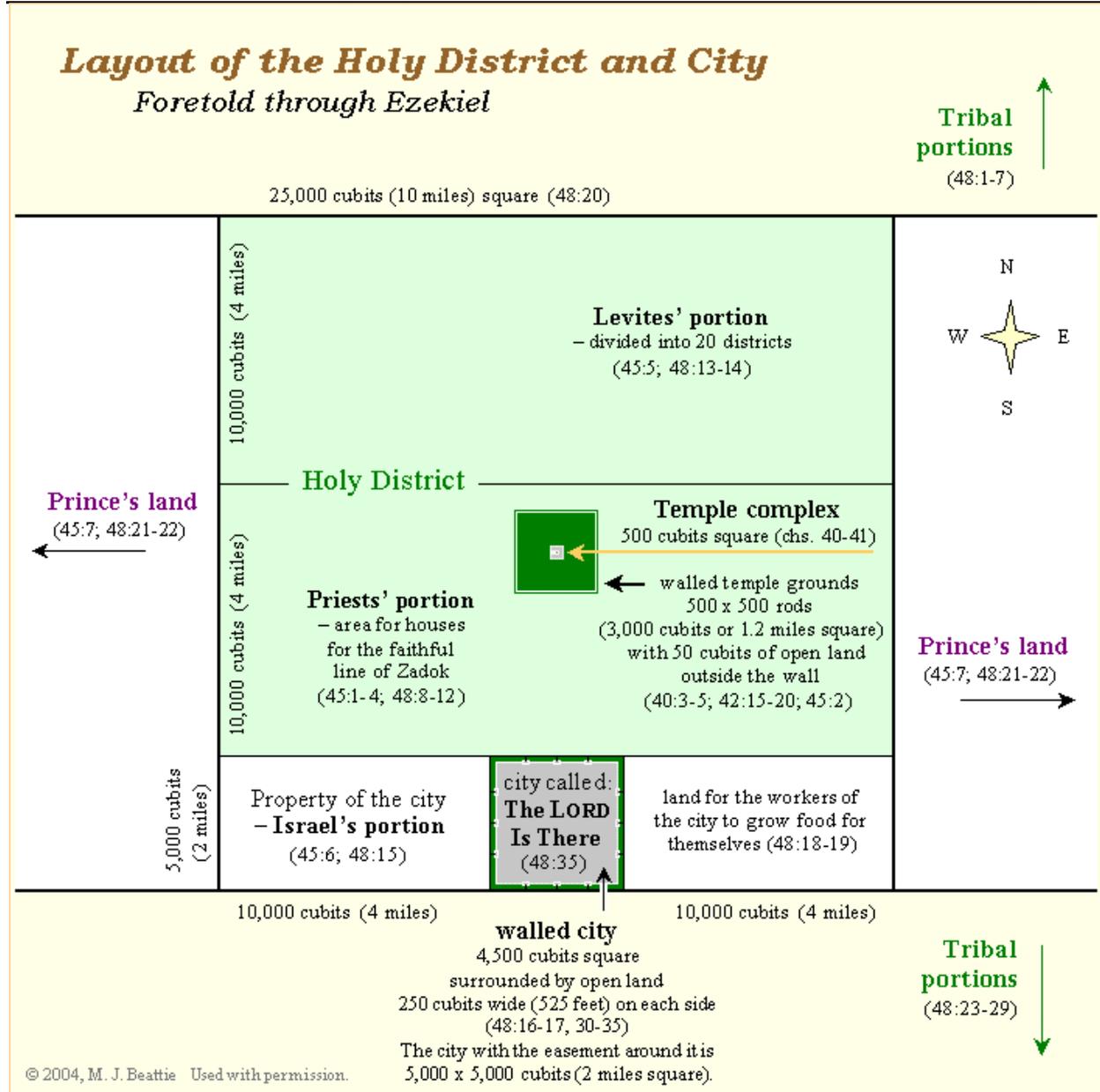
The Holy District and Feasts (Ezekiel 45)

February 23-24

In chapter 42, we saw a “holy area” surrounding the temple complex that was a little over one square mile. Ezekiel is now told of a district surrounding this area that is 25,000 x 25,000 cubits (almost exactly 10 x 10 miles). The KJV uses “reeds” here, but the unit of measure is not actually given in the Hebrew. The NKJV says “cubits,” which appears to be the correct rendering because the district would be unreasonably large if these measurements were using the full six-cubit measuring rod. There isn't that much land in the area, using the larger measure.

This area is also described in chapter 48, where more details are given, and between the two passages we discover that this “capital district” is divided into three main sections. One part is a 10,000-cubit- (4-mile-) wide strip that provides room for the priests' houses. The temple is contained in this portion (verses 1-4)—apparently with a 50-cubit easement outside the parkland wall to prevent anyone from building right up to it (see 45:2). Another section is also 10,000 cubits wide, and provides “twenty chambers” (probably referring to towns with their surrounding pasturelands, compare Numbers 35) for the Levites (Ezekiel 45:5). The final 5,000-cubit strip is for the city and the “whole house of Israel.”

Stretching east and west from this 100 square mile district is land given to the “prince.” In the same context God says that the Israelite leaders of that time would oppress His people no longer (verses 7-8). The people's land was not to be appropriated by the “government” (see also 46:18), which will have its own land and be responsible for providing certain representative offerings for the people out of the abundance owned by it (45:17). Included in this are the festival offerings in the first and seventh months. We see in this section that God's Sabbath and feasts will be observed during the Millennium.



Temple Offerings (Ezekiel 46)

February 25-26

As we saw earlier, the outer east gate will be permanently shut following Christ's arrival. The inner east gate is to be opened for certain religious observances, such as the Sabbaths and new moons. (During the workweek the inner east gate is closed, perhaps symbolic of the fact that mankind was shut out from God for six millennia as a result of sin.)

The prince is to bring the offerings he was instructed to provide for the people, and to go through the inner east gate to the edge of the inner court while these offerings are prepared. The gate is then to remain open for the remainder of the day, so that others may worship at the entrance of the gate (verses 1-3). If the prince brings an offering on a day when the east gate is normally shut, it will be opened for him, but closed again when he is finished with the offering (verse 12). And, as we saw earlier, if the prince was making a peace offering, he would proceed across the pavement of the outer courtyard to the outer east gate for eating his part of the sacrifice (44:3).

Ezekiel 46:9 describes an interesting traffic pattern for the annual feasts. When entering the temple courts for the feasts, the people will be required to pass through the outer courtyard, and not just go in and back out again the way they came. Some have suggested this as improving the traffic flow, but others see it perhaps as more symbolic of the people not returning to their former ways. The people will not likely just pass through, of course. Part of the reason for entering the temple is to partake of the peace offerings, which is the reason for the abundance of dining chambers, which

probably also double as meeting rooms as such facilities often do for us today. But neither will the people come in just to eat of the sacrifices. Rather, everyone will be required to go past the front of the east inner gate before proceeding on his way.

This area (between the inner and outer east gates) is 100 cubits wide, as we have seen (40:19), and provides a place where praise and thanksgiving can be offered to God on the weekly Sabbaths and on the New Moons (46:3). But during the annual feasts, there will be too many people in attendance for all to gather together there for worship. Instead people will visit this place of prayer and singing as they are going out or coming in. And as they do so, they will also be crossing over the river of life that proceeds from God's temple (which we will read about in chapter 47). Then, in order to get back to where they came from (if they didn't circle around on their way to the temple), people will have to go around the outer perimeter of the temple complex as well (perhaps along the east side where they may wade in the river of life and, as mentioned in chapter 47, partake of the fruitful trees alongside it—elsewhere shown to parallel the tree of life—and gather of their leaves for their healing).

Inheritance laws are mentioned in verses 16-18 of Ezekiel 46, where we discover that the law of jubilees will be in effect, where land is returned to the family that originally owned it in the 50th year, the year of liberty (see Leviticus 25).

For the remainder of Ezekiel 46, the prophet is shown various cooking places. The bulk of sacrifices, especially at feasts, are peace offerings. Only the blood and fat of such sacrifices are offered to God. The remainder is eaten by the offerer, with a token portion consumed by the priest as well. Also, most sin and trespass offerings are eaten by the priests, and the grain offerings need to be baked. In chapter 42, we were shown the dining chambers for the priests—three-story buildings west of the north and south inner gates. Apparently, the “kitchens” for these chambers are to the west of the dining rooms, in the previously unaccounted-for area at the northwest and southwest corners of the inner court building complex (verses 19-20).

It does not actually say whether the cooking places for the priests will be indoors or out. There are also cooking areas (in this case, outdoor patios with built-in, presumably wood-burning, stoves) for the temple servants (Levites, 44:11) to cook the peoples' portions of the sacrifices, located in the four corners of the outer court. We are told they are each 30 x 40 cubits (more than 5,000 square feet). Since the people also need places to eat this prepared food, this is most likely the purpose of the chambers that surround the outer court.

The River and the Promised Land (Ezekiel 47)

February 27-28

Ezekiel is now taken again to the door of the temple itself, and shown something that either he failed to notice or describe the first time he toured the inner court, or that was not there prior to Christ's arrival. The river of the water of life begins at the very throne of God in the Most Holy Place (43:7). This parallels the description of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:1), which will still be in heaven during the Millennium, to descend to earth afterward. In both cases, there is evidently a literal river—but the river symbolizes the living waters of God's Holy Spirit.

In the millennial temple, the river emerges from beneath the eastern threshold, proceeding past the south side of the altar (also defined as the “right” side, as one faces east).

Ezekiel is then taken out the northern gates and around to the outer eastern gate, outside of the temple complex, to again see the river as it emerges on the south (right) side of the eastern gate. They move along the river to measure the depth of the water by wading across at 1,000-cubit intervals. By the time they reach 4,000 cubits (1.6 miles) from the eastern gate, the river is too deep to wade across.

Ezekiel mentions fruit-bearing and medicinal trees along the river (47:7, 12), again similar to the description of the New Jerusalem, in which we see the tree of life bearing 12 different fruits and leaves with healing properties (Revelation 22:2). According to Zechariah 14:8, the river will split, part of it flowing west to the Mediterranean and the other part flowing east to the Dead Sea. Ezekiel goes on to describe the effect of this river on the Dead Sea, which will spring forth with life and become a wonderful place to go fishing.

Besides the literal application, there is a wonderfully symbolic picture in all this. Again, the river represents the outflowing of the Holy Spirit, bringing life to the lifeless. In the fruitful, medicinal trees we may see God's Spirit working in and through the lives of His righteous servants. For not only are the righteous to partake of the tree of life, they are in a sense to be trees of life themselves. Nourished by the stream of Holy Spirit, they are to produce godly fruit and be a life-giving blessing to others. A godly person who continually meditates on and lives according to God's law is “like a tree

planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper” (Psalm 1:3).

Finally, Ezekiel is given the borders of the land. They actually correspond very closely to the borders defined by Moses in Numbers 34:1-12.

Yet “this list of borders does not coincide with Israelite settlement in any period, but rather reflects the Egyptian province of Canaan, as defined in the Egyptian-Hittite treaty signed following the battle of Kedesh. These, then, were the borders of the Land of Canaan which the Israelite tribes found upon their arrival” (Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 1968, p. 41). “Ezekiel ‘modernized’ them by working into his description contemporary geographical names, including several of the Babylonian provinces of his day” (p. 106).

Apparently, God will give the Israelites all of the land He originally intended they should have. It differs from both the ancient and modern borders primarily by including the area of Lebanon and southwestern Syria. Also interesting to note in this passage is that the Promised Land will be for the Israelites “and for the strangers who dwell among you” (Ezekiel 47:22).

The Division of the Land (Ezekiel 48)

February 29

Although Ezekiel is given a list of the tribes who receive their inheritance, elsewhere he says they would receive it by lot (47:22), probably referring to the distribution of the land within each tribe. God says Joseph is to receive two portions (47:13), to keep the number of inheriting tribes at 12, even though Levi is not to receive a normal inheritance. As shown on the accompanying map, seven of the tribes are given land north of the temple while the remaining five tribes are south of it.

Between Judah on the north and Benjamin on the south is the 25,000-cubit- (10-mile-) wide strip of land we first saw in chapter 45, apparently stretching all the way from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River/Dead Sea border. The east and west portions of this strip are for the prince. But in the middle is the capital district, which is also 25,000 cubits long to form a square. All but a 5,000-cubit (2-mile) strip of this land is given to the priests and Levites, for their homes and towns and for the temple complex. But this chapter goes into a little more detail about the capital city itself, which will be located about three miles south of the temple complex, in this remaining 2 x 10-mile piece of land. That would put it about a mile northeast of Bethlehem.

The capital city occupies a 2 x 2-mile square in the center of the strip. The sides of the city proper are given as 4,500 cubits, surrounded by a 250-cubit easement (verses 16-17). This leaves two 2 x 4-mile stretches of land on either side of the city, described as the farmland for the workers of the city to grow their own food (verse 18-19). Inhabitants come from every tribe (verse 19). Three gates are on each of the four sides of the city, each one named for a different tribe (this time Joseph only receiving one gate). The New Jerusalem, beyond the Millennium, will have gates of pearl, precious foundation stones bearing the names of the 12 apostles and streets of gold (Revelation 12:12-21). Perhaps some of these features will be incorporated in the millennial Jerusalem as well.

Throughout these chapters, Ezekiel never actually mentions the name “Jerusalem.” Other passages seem to indicate the area will still be called by its ancient name (e.g., Zechariah 14), but Ezekiel says it will receive another name at this time: *YHWH Shammah* in Hebrew. This incredible name, meaning “The LORD Is There,” implies that God is watching over this city to protect and bless it (compare Ezekiel 35:10 with Isaiah 33:20-21; see also Jeremiah 3:17).

While this concludes Ezekiel’s grand vision of the future and provides a wonderful conclusion to his book, God gave him two last messages to record after this, as we will see in our next reading.



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