

## The Millennial Temple

If you're watching a football game on television and a really great play happens, they usually show it again from a different camera angle. Prophecy may not be football but I think we've shown that it's definitely a contact sport. And the Millennium is the Biblical equivalent of a 98-yard punt-return touchdown: from the field, it looked extremely unlikely when the ball was first kicked. It's clearly worthy of an instant replay.

More to the point, we haven't yet explored all the scriptures relating to the Millennium—not by a long way. In the previous chapter we looked at this amazing time from a geo-political perspective: the restoration of the earth, the emergence of Israel, and the peace and prosperity the world will enjoy. Now we need to concentrate on what Yahweh has planned for worship in the Millennium. We'll find He has a great deal to say about the millennial temple and its service, as well as the disposition of the tribes of Israel within the Land.

Yahweh is anything but ambivalent concerning Israel. He is enthusiastically working toward the goal of living there among His chosen people. **“Thus says Yahweh of hosts: ‘I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her.’ Thus says Yahweh: ‘I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of Yahweh of hosts, the Holy Mountain.”** (Zechariah 8:2-3) His intentions toward Jerusalem are crystal clear and repeated throughout scripture to the point of ennui. The prophecies aren't all generalized overviews like this one, either. God is very detailed and very specific in his revelation concerning this people and their Land.

After repeating Yahweh's declaration of undying zeal, Zechariah gets us started with a review of the world's attitude toward Israel, especially during the Tribulation: **“Thus says Yahweh of hosts: ‘I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal. I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease; For I was a little angry, and they helped—but with evil intent.’”** The Antichrist, you'll recall, made quite a show of being Israel's champion in the face of universal anti-Semitism, but his motives were self centered and satanically inspired. **“Therefore thus says Yahweh: ‘I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it,’ says Yahweh of hosts, ‘and a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.... My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; Yahweh will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem.’”** (Zechariah 1:16-17) As we shall soon see, God already has the plans drawn up—His temple, His city, the tribal disposition of Israel, the whole nine yards.

The anchor text for this whole area of exploration is the final nine chapters of the Book of Ezekiel. There Yahweh gave His prophet some startlingly detailed

information about what His final temple and its environs were going to look like, and how they were to function. I'll warn you right up front, there are some surprises here—areas where our preconceived ideas might get sacked and thrown for a twenty-yard loss.

As we begin, the prophet is languishing in Babylonian exile, no doubt muttering “I told you so” to anyone who would listen. And then this happened: **“On April 28, during the twenty-fifth year of our captivity—fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem [that would make it 572 B.C.]—Yahweh took hold of me. In a vision of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me down on a very high mountain. From there I could see what appeared to be a city across from me toward the south. As he brought me nearer, I saw a man whose face shone like bronze standing beside a gateway entrance. He was holding in his hand a measuring tape and a measuring rod. He said to me, ‘Son of man, watch and listen. Pay close attention to everything I show you. You have been brought here so I can show you many things. Then you will return to the people of Israel and tell them everything you have seen.’”** (Ezekiel 40:1-4 NLT) Israel’s captivity officially began when some of the inhabitants of Judah, Ezekiel and Daniel among them, were carted off to Babylon (in 597 B.C.). The city and temple were destroyed eleven years later because of the rebellious attitude of Judah’s Babylonian-approved leaders. Thus it is important to keep in mind that as Ezekiel wrote this prophecy, Solomon’s temple was gone, but by no means forgotten.

By the way, I have opted to use the New Living Translation for the whole nine-chapter Ezekiel section. The vision is full of dimensions, stated in the original Hebrew in cubits. The NLT, however, has translated all these dimensions into feet and inches so we Americans can more easily relate to the sizes specified in the prophecy. The “standard” Hebrew cubit was about 18 inches, but there was also a Hebrew “long cubit” of a “cubit plus a handbreadth.” This long cubit is specified in Ezekiel, and it’s calculated in the NLT as 21 inches. It’s worth noting that some scholars contend that the standard cubit equaled six handbreadths, and the long cubit added a seventh. That would introduce Yahweh’s six-plus-one lesson plan into every dimension given here. I can’t personally vouch for the accuracy of the cubit length used in this translation, but it’s certainly in the ballpark. If anything, the proper figure for the long cubit might be a little longer—up to 24 or 25 inches.

He begins by describing the wall and the east gateway of the temple compound. **“I could see a wall completely surrounding the Temple area. The man took a measuring rod that was 10½ feet long [i.e., six cubits, perhaps an indication that the areas being measured are for man’s use and benefit. This rod is an even 12 feet if your long cubit is 24 inches] and measured the wall, and the wall was 10½ feet thick and 10½ feet high.”** This is no mere fence, but a formidable barrier one story tall (in our parlance) and as thick as it is high. **“Then he went over to the gateway that goes**

through the eastern wall. He climbed the steps and measured the threshold of the gateway; it was 10½ feet deep. There were guard alcoves on each side built into the gateway passage. Each of these alcoves was 10½ feet square, with a distance between them of 8¾ feet along the passage wall. The gateway's inner threshold, which led to the foyer at the inner end of the gateway passage, was 10½ feet deep. He also measured the foyer of the gateway and found it to be 14 feet deep, with supporting columns 3½ feet thick. This foyer was at the inner end of the gateway structure, facing toward the Temple...."

Don't think of a "gate" as a little door in a white picket fence surrounding the tidy front yard of a New England cottage. In Biblical parlance, a gate (Hebrew *sha'ar*) is the entrance to a significant place, a walled city—or the temple. The English word "portal" comes closer to the idea. This "gate," protruding in toward the courtyard from the wall of the temple compound, was a significant building in its own right, 43 feet 9 inches wide by 87 feet 6 inches in length. It was centered in the eastern wall.

**"There were three guard alcoves on each side of the gateway passage. Each had the same measurements, and the dividing walls separating them were also identical. The man measured the gateway entrance, which was 17½ feet wide at the opening and 22¾ feet wide in the gateway passage. In front of each of the guard alcoves was a 21-inch curb. The alcoves themselves were 10½ feet square. Then he measured the entire width of the gateway, measuring the distance between the back walls of facing guard alcoves; this distance was 43¾ feet. He measured the dividing walls all along the inside of the gateway up to the gateway's foyer; this distance was 105 feet. The full length of the gateway passage was 87½ feet from one end to the other. There were recessed windows that narrowed inward through the walls of the guard alcoves and their dividing walls. There were also windows in the foyer structure. The surfaces of the dividing walls were decorated with carved palm trees." (Ezekiel 40:5-16 NLT)**

I realize that all these dimensions and descriptions are hard to follow and visualize. But studious folks have built models based on Ezekiel's description of the final temple; you can view several of them at [www.pauljab.net/temple](http://www.pauljab.net/temple). One model builder has pictured the gate structures and the temple proper about ten stories tall, which may or may not be accurate (since we aren't told the height dimensions), but the rest of it, as far as I can tell, looks pretty much like what Ezekiel saw—which is spectacular.

The temple itself is to be situated in a smaller courtyard within the larger compound. **"Then the man brought me through the gateway into the outer courtyard of the Temple. A stone pavement ran along the walls of the courtyard, and thirty rooms were built against the walls, opening onto the pavement. This pavement flanked the gates and extended out from the walls into the courtyard the same distance as the gateway entrance [i.e., 77 feet—the length of the gate minus the thickness of the wall]. This was the lower pavement. Then the man measured across the Temple's outer courtyard between the**

**outer and inner gateways; the distance was 175 feet.”** (Ezekiel 40:17-19 NLT) The inner courtyard was accessed via gates corresponding to and directly across from the gates in the perimeter wall. The portals protrude inward into the compound from the outer wall, and outward into the compound from the wall of the temple courtyard. These inner and outer gate structures were separated from each other by 175 feet of clear space, giving us an idea of the scale of the place—it’s even larger than St. Peter’s Square in Rome.

Ezekiel describes in the following verses (20-37) how there were a total of six gateways, all identical—three centered in the outer walls on the east, south, and north sides and three others directly across from them leading to the inner courtyard. (This smaller court backed up against the western wall, so there were no gates there.) Here we once again encounter Yahweh’s familiar six-and-one pattern—six gates, and the seventh structure is the temple itself. The temple compound is thus the very picture of God’s plan for mankind: the six “gates” represent six millennia through which we had to pass to approach our God, and the “temple” represents the last millennium, symbolizing Yahweh residing with man.

The layout is also symbolic of our salvation. In order to reach the temple, one first has to pass through the outer gates, symbolic of being born of water (physical birth). This puts him in the outer compound—mortal life. But to reach the temple, he must also be born of the Spirit, represented by the gates leading to the inner courtyard. Yahshua explained this to Nicodemus: **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’ [literally, ‘from above’].”** (John 3:5-7) As there is a passage to be made from non-living to living in the physical realm, so also is there a passage from non-living to living in the spiritual. But note the directions the gates point—all of them extend inward toward the large courtyard that represents physical, mortal life. The gates represent choice. No one may choose to be born physically, so there are no gates protruding outward from the outer wall. But once one has entered the courtyard of physical life, there are two destinations to choose between. One can either choose to enter the inner courtyard where the temple is, or he can return to the realm of the non-living. Or, of course, he can just wander aimlessly through the outer court, oblivious of the choices set before him. The question is: can he do this indefinitely? I’m afraid I’m going to have to defer the whole discussion of eternal destinies for a later chapter. Right now, we’re merely exploring the architectural metaphors God has laid before us. But you’ve got to admit, they’re intriguing.

This, then, is the basic layout of the Millennial temple complex. On elevated ground somewhere north of the main city of Jerusalem, a large outer court

surrounds a small inner court in which the temple itself stands. Six gates, or portals, lead inward or outward from the outer court. Guard alcoves are built into the gate structures, and thirty rooms line the inner perimeter of the outer wall.

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So far, so good. But here's where most Christians' assumptions concerning God's intentions toward the "Law of Moses" begin to fall apart: **"A door led from the foyer of the inner gateway on the north side into a side room where the meat for sacrifices was washed before being taken to the altar. On each side of this foyer were two tables, where the sacrificial animals were slaughtered for the burnt offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings. Outside the foyer, on each side of the stairs going up to the north entrance, there were two more tables. So there were eight tables in all, four inside and four outside, where the sacrifices were cut up and prepared. There were also four tables of hewn stone for preparation of the burnt offerings, each 31½ inches square and 21 inches high. On these tables were placed the butchering knives and other implements and the sacrificial animals. There were hooks, each three inches long, fastened to the foyer walls and set on the tables where the sacrificial meat was to be laid."** (Ezekiel 40:39-43 NLT) *What? Animal sacrifices? I thought Christ's sacrifice did away with all that. Sure, the Jews in the Old Testament had to make sacrifices according to the rules laid down in the Law to atone for their sins, but Jesus was the Lamb of God. So when the Jews reinstated animal sacrifices for a short time during the Tribulation, they were merely demonstrating—again—that they'd rejected Christ's sacrifice. Right?*

Not right. They were merely being obedient for a change. The Torah said these things were to go on "throughout their generations." But why would Yahweh still be interested in animal sacrifices *after* the reality they represent—the sacrifice of the Messiah—became a historical fact? We need to keep an eye on the big picture. Ask yourself: how were people reconciled to Yahweh between Adam's day and Moses' giving of the Law? What were gentiles who never heard of Moses supposed to do to find their way back to God? Why would Yahweh allow the Babylonians to destroy the temple if the Jews' atonement for sin *depended* on the ritual of Yom Kippur to have their sins forgiven? Did Yahweh simply forget about whole generations of people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, leaving them high and dry? Would a loving God simply cut off the vast majority of humanity without providing a way to get back to Him?

No. It's not in His nature. Our relationship with Him is the whole point of creation. In and of itself, the Levitical shedding of the blood of bulls and goats was *never* efficacious in atoning for sins—it was merely a picture, a metaphor, for

the coming sacrifice of Yahshua. It is the *reality* that saves—not the shadow cast by that reality. The bottom line? No one was ever reconciled to God except through the blood sacrifice of Yahshua, whether looking forward to the event in faith, or back on it—again, in faith.

We don't have to comprehend all the details. It probably isn't even essential that we know His name. As a matter of fact, most people (even Christians) *don't* know His name, not really. "Jesus" is a transliteration of a transliteration of the Greek *Iesous*, and even that name was not spelled out in any of the pre-Constantinian manuscripts, but instead indicated with Greek capital initials with a line scribed above them. "Jesus" is a derivation of a name that has lost one hundred percent of the significance of the Hebrew name God gave Him: Yahshua (= "The Self-Existent One Saves"). I suppose if you called me "Harvey" a couple of thousand times, I'd eventually pick up on the idea that you were talking to me and not some invisible six-foot-tall rabbit standing next to me. But my name isn't Harvey, and it never will be. The point is that our faith in—and acceptance of—God's plan for our reconciliation is what He's interested in, whether we know all the specifics or not (though it seems a crime if we can't even get His name right). The picture He gave us is a valuable teaching aid (cf. Hebrews, chapters 7-10), but it's still only a picture.

Which brings us back to animal sacrifices in the Millennial temple. What's the point of doing them, if they don't save anyone? The Levitical sacrifices in the Old Testament didn't save anyone either, so the point will be the same as it was back then: they're a picture of God's plan. Remember, there will be billions of mortal men and women walking the earth in the centuries following the Tribulation, and if left to their own devices, they will be just as clueless as to the loving intentions of Yahweh as the Jews were in Moses' day—especially since during the Millennium overt sin will be confronted and dealt with immediately. They will need instruction, guidance—*pictures* explaining how fallen man can and must be reconciled to God. When their children ask the Millennial patriarchs, "Why do they kill all those animals at the temple, daddy?" the door will be open to explaining what Yahshua, the King, did for them the first time He came.

Okay, back to Ezekiel's temple tour. **"Inside the inner courtyard there were two one-room buildings for the singers, one beside the north gateway, facing south, and the other beside the south gateway, facing north. And the man said to me, 'The building beside the north inner gate is for the priests who supervise the Temple maintenance. The building beside the south inner gate is for the priests in charge of the altar—the descendants of Zadok—for they alone of all the Levites may approach Yahweh to minister to him....'"** Here we begin to see similarities and differences between T4 and T1. As in Solomon's temple, there will be a division of labor of between groups of priests and Levites—there are special rooms for the singers and the priests assigned to temple

upkeep, for instance. But the hierarchy of the Aaronic priesthood has been redefined: now only the descendants of Zadok will directly minister before Yahweh. Remember that name. We'll come back to him later.

Now we approach the temple itself. **"Then the man measured the inner courtyard and found it to be 175 feet square. The altar stood there in the courtyard in front of the Temple. Then he brought me to the foyer of the Temple. He measured its supporting columns and found them to be  $8\frac{3}{4}$  feet square. The entrance was  $24\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide with walls  $5\frac{1}{4}$  feet thick. The depth of the foyer was 35 feet and the width was  $19\frac{1}{4}$  feet. There were ten steps leading up to it, with a column on each side."** (Ezekiel 40: 44-49 NLT) Even the dimensions tell us something. The outer court, as we saw, is quite large—presumably because it must accommodate many worshippers at one time. But although the entrance to the temple proper is spacious, there is nothing intimidating about it. Its scale is quite human-friendly, which tells us something about the God who designed it: He is far more concerned about relating to us than He is about impressing us. **"After that, the man brought me into the Holy Place, the large main room of the Temple, and he measured the columns that framed its doorway. They were  $10\frac{1}{2}$  feet square. The entrance was  $17\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide, and the walls on each side were  $8\frac{3}{4}$  feet wide. The Holy Place itself was 70 feet long and 35 feet wide...."** The Holy Place, then, is accessed through a  $17\frac{1}{2}$ -foot-wide opening at the back of (and almost the entire  $19\frac{1}{4}$ -foot width of) a 35-foot-long foyer.

**"Then he went into the inner room at the end of the Holy Place. He measured the columns at the entrance and found them to be  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick. The entrance was  $10\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide, and the walls on each side of the entrance extended  $12\frac{1}{4}$  feet to the corners of the inner room. The inner room was 35 feet square. 'This,' he told me, 'is the Most Holy Place....'"** The floor plan is generally like Solomon's temple and the Tabernacle that preceded it, but with the addition of the foyer. T4 may be slightly larger in scale than T1 (35 feet in width as opposed to 30 feet) due solely to the implied difference in the length of the cubit—the standard 18 inch cubit of Solomon versus the "cubit and a handbreadth" or Hebrew long cubit specified in Ezekiel. Actually though, both records call for a width of 20 cubits, and there's a raging controversy among scholars about the precise length of the cubit Solomon used, so we don't really know. The *first* version of all this, the wilderness Tabernacle, was 10 cubits wide and high—it was basically a half-scale prototype for the "permanent" temple.

**"Then he measured the wall of the Temple and found that it was  $10\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick. There was a row of rooms along the outside wall; each room was 7 feet wide. These rooms were built in three levels, one above the other, with thirty rooms on each level. The supports for these rooms rested on ledges in the Temple wall, but the supports did not extend into the wall. Each level was wider than the one below it, corresponding to the narrowing of the Temple wall as it rose higher. A stairway led up from the bottom level through the middle**

**level to the top level....**” This seems to be saying that the alcoves in the walls were to be deeper as the levels ascended, making the inner, supporting wall thinner at each level. This is our first hint as to the height of the temple—three stories—again, not terribly impressive as “religious” buildings go, but rather one designed on a human scale, a reflection of Yahweh’s desire for intimacy with us.

**“I noticed that the Temple was built on a terrace, which provided a foundation for the side rooms. This terrace was 10½ feet high. The outer wall of the Temple’s side rooms was 8¾ feet thick. This left an open area between these side rooms and the row of rooms along the outer wall of the inner courtyard. This open area measured 35 feet in width, and it went all the way around the Temple. Two doors opened from the side rooms into the terrace yard, which was 8¾ feet wide. One door faced north and the other south....”** From the viewpoint of the courtyard, then, the temple would appear at least four stories high. It could, of course, be taller.

**“A large building stood on the west, facing the Temple courtyard. It was 122½ feet wide and 157½ feet long, and its walls were 8¾ feet thick. Then the man measured the Temple, and he found it to be 175 feet long. The courtyard around the building, including its walls, was an additional 175 feet in length. The inner courtyard to the east of the Temple was also 175 feet wide. The building to the west, including its two walls, was also 175 feet wide....”** As we shall see in Ezekiel chapter 42, the temple was flanked on the north and south sides with three-story outbuildings located outside the inner courtyard. But *this* large building was situated “out back,” i.e., to the west. (The only door to the temple proper faced the east.)

**“The Holy Place, the Most Holy Place, and the foyer of the Temple were all paneled with wood, as were the frames of the recessed windows. The inner walls of the Temple were paneled with wood above and below the windows. The space above the door leading into the Most Holy Place was also paneled. All the walls were decorated with carvings of cherubim, each with two faces, and there was a palm tree carving between each of the cherubim. One face—that of a man—looked toward the palm tree on one side. The other face—that of a young lion—looked toward the palm tree on the other side. The figures were carved all along the inside of the Temple, from the floor to the top of the walls, including the outer wall of the Holy Place....”** The “interior decoration” of the temple is fraught with significance. Wood is used extensively in the interior—a precious commodity in itself by this time, since a third of the trees on earth were burned up during World War III. More to the point, wood, unlike stone or glass, is a living thing—its use is a reminder of the life Yahweh has provided. The windows mentioned earlier admit light to the interior, for Yahweh is the God of truth and light. And the carved decorations, dual-faced cherubim, speak of the two natures of Yahshua the King: his humanity and his sovereign deity.

**“There were square columns at the entrance to the Holy Place, and the ones at the entrance of the Most Holy Place were similar. There was an altar made of wood, 3½ feet**

square and 5¼ feet high. Its corners, base, and sides were all made of wood. ‘This,’ the man told me, ‘is the table that stands in Yahweh’s presence....’” This is a scaled-up version of the altar of incense that was placed in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle (cf. Exodus 30:1-10). **“Both the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place had double doorways, each with two swinging doors. The doors leading into the Holy Place were decorated with carved cherubim and palm trees just as on the walls. And there was a wooden canopy over the front of the Temple’s foyer. On both sides of the foyer there were recessed windows decorated with carved palm trees.”** (Ezekiel 41 NLT) As doors go, these are huge. If you’ll recall, the entrance to the Holy Place was 17 feet 6 inches across, and that of the Most Holy Place, 10 feet 6 inches. I think we can safely assume that doors that wide will be somewhat taller than your standard American 6 feet 8 inches—they could be several stories high. We’re getting some insight into why the walls need to be as thick as they’re described.

**“Then the man led me out of the Temple courtyard by way of the north gateway. We entered the outer courtyard and came to a group of rooms against the north wall of the inner courtyard. This group of structures, whose entrance opened toward the north, was 175 feet long and 87½ feet wide. One block of rooms overlooked the 35-foot width of the inner courtyard. Another block of rooms looked out onto the pavement of the outer courtyard. The two blocks were built three levels high and stood across from each other. Between the two blocks of rooms ran a walkway 17½ feet wide. It extended the entire 175 feet of the complex, and all the doors faced toward the north [i.e., away from the temple itself]. Each of the two upper levels of rooms was narrower than the one beneath it because the upper levels had to allow space for walkways in front of them. Since there were three levels and they did not have supporting columns as in the courtyards, each of the upper levels was set back from the level beneath it. There was an outer wall that separated the rooms from the outer courtyard; it was 87½ feet long. This wall added length to the outer block of rooms, which extended for only 87½ feet, while the inner block—the rooms toward the Temple—extended for 175 feet. There was an entrance from the outer courtyard to these rooms from the east.”** (Ezekiel 42:1-9 NLT) This terraced three-story building on the north side of the temple was mirrored by one on the south (verses 10-12). In fact, the whole temple complex is perfectly symmetrical, its centerline running through the east-west axis of the temple.

**“Then the man told me, ‘These rooms that overlook the Temple from the north and south are holy. It is there that the priests who offer sacrifices to Yahweh will eat the most holy offerings. And they will use these rooms to store the grain offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings because these rooms are holy....’** Now you know what happens to the meat roasted in the sacrificial offerings, as well as the grain and other offerings that are brought: they are for the use and sustenance of the priests on duty. It is one of God’s ways of allowing His people to participate in His provision. **“When the priests leave the Holy Place, they must not go directly to the outer courtyard. They must**

first take off the clothes they wore while ministering because these clothes are holy. They must put on other clothes before entering the parts of the building complex open to the public....” The whole temple service is designed to symbolize the holiness of Yahweh—His separateness from His creation. The garments the priests wear are symbolic of imputed righteousness, without which they may not (and cannot) minister before God. But the priests cannot pass this righteousness to others—each worshipper must receive God’s gift for himself.

“When the man had finished taking these measurements, he led me out through the east gateway to measure the entire Temple area. He measured the east side; it was 875 feet long. He also measured the north side and got the same measurement. The south side was the same length, and so was the west side. So the area was 875 feet on each side with a wall all around it to separate the holy places from the common.” (Ezekiel 42:13-20 NLT) In case you’ve lost track, the 875 foot width breaks down as follows: 87 feet 6 inches for the length of the northern gate, plus 175 feet clear area, plus 87 feet 6 inches for the inner gate, plus 87 feet 6 inches to the centerline of the temple (175 feet for the whole inner courtyard); then repeat all of that to get to the outside of the southern gate. And if you’re wondering, yes, all of this *will* fit on the temple mount—barely (its shortest dimension, the southern edge, measures 910 feet). But as we shall soon learn, this magnificent, perfectly square edifice won’t end up being squeezed onto the herky-jerky quasi-trapezoid that is the temple mount—and not just because of all of the anything-but-holy cultural and religious baggage that’s associated with it. The Millennial Jerusalem will be barely recognizable, a far, far cry from the present city, right down to a radically altered topography.

In fact, there seems to be a translation glitch that the NLT scholars have taken upon themselves to “correct”—without so much as margin note. The actual Hebrew they’ve translated “875 feet” (i.e., 500 cubits), is *chamesh mey’ah qaneh* (five hundred *reeds*) in verses 17, 18, 19, and 20—a dimension that, if we’re using the definition of “reed” or “rod” from Ezekiel 40:5, comes out to almost a mile! But in verse 16, the first time the number is used, the text reads *chamesh ’ammah qaneh*. Is *’ammah* another word for “hundred?” No. It literally means “mother of measure,” and it’s the usual word translated “cubit” (i.e., the length of the forearm). But as *Strong’s* notes, the word when substituted for *mey’ah* means 100 cubits. Therefore it would appear that in these verses a “reed” does not take the technical definition of “six cubits,” but merely means a unit of measure, hence the NLT translators are perfectly justified in their conclusion: the measurements listed in verses 16 to 18 mean “500 (long) cubits,” or about 875 feet.

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We interrupt this architectural treatise to bring you an important announcement. *A very important announcement.* **“After this, the man brought me back around to the east gateway. Suddenly, the glory of the God of Israel appeared from the east. The sound of his coming was like the roar of rushing waters, and the whole landscape shone with his glory. This vision was just like the others I had seen, first by the Kebar River and then when he came to destroy Jerusalem. And I fell down before him with my face in the dust. And the glory of Yahweh came into the Temple through the east gateway.”** (Ezekiel 43:1-4 NLT) No man alive would have been better equipped to appreciate the significance of this vision than Ezekiel. This very man had witnessed God’s glory depart in a similar vision some years before.

Some highlights from his account: **“The cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of Yahweh went up from the cherub, and paused over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of Yahweh’s glory....”** This is part of the familiar “wheel within a wheel” vision. Though it’s a fascinating study, I’m not going to explore all the rich imagery here, but merely cut to the chase: **“Then the glory of Yahweh departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of Yahweh’s house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.”** (Ezekiel 10:3-4, 18-19) The Glory of Yahweh departed from the temple in stages—leaving via the eastern gate. Then, after another of scripture’s ubiquitous prophecies about the future restoration of Israel, Ezekiel reports: **“So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them. And the glory of Yahweh went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain which is on the east side of the city.”** (Ezekiel 11:22-23) Which mountain is that? It’s the Mount of Olives, just across the Kidron Valley from the temple mount—the very spot from which the risen Yahshua (who is the “glory of Yahweh” in human form) ascended to heaven after instructing His disciples—the very spot to which He will return on the Day of Atonement.

Ezekiel in his earlier vision had seen the Shekinah—the Glory of God—depart from the temple. Now he sees it returning—as before, via the eastern gate. **“Then the Spirit took me up and brought me into the inner courtyard, and the glory of Yahweh filled the Temple. And I heard someone speaking to me from within the Temple. (The man who had been measuring was still standing beside me.)”** God Himself now addresses the prophet: **“And Yahweh said to me, ‘Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place where I will rest my feet.’** Not to be picky, but the Shekinah doesn’t *have* feet. Yahweh is referring to His manifestation as the Son of Man—King Yahshua will enter the temple courtyard through the eastern gate, and it will be closed behind him. **“I will remain here forever, living among the people of Israel. They and their kings will not defile my holy name any longer by their adulterous worship of other gods or by raising monuments in honor of their dead kings. They put their idol altars right next to mine with**

**only a wall between them and me. They defiled my holy name by such wickedness, so I consumed them in my anger. Now let them put away their idols and the sacred pillars erected to honor their kings, and I will live among them forever....”**

Yahweh is “putting His money where His mouth is,” so to speak. He’s declaring that when He comes in His glory to the temple Ezekiel has been describing in such great detail, He will never again depart, *ever* (that is, as long as mortal man walks the earth), for Israel will have repented by then—permanently and completely. The Chief Priests who had Yahshua crucified in 33 A.D. had been given an important clue—one they ignored: Yahshua *could not* have come to reign on the earth at that time because the temple He entered didn’t match Ezekiel’s excruciatingly detailed vision. Yet Daniel’s prophecy (9:25-26) had pinpointed that very moment as the time Messiah would come. The only possible conclusion was that there would be two advents fulfilling two bodies of seemingly contradictory prophecy.

This passage also punches big holes into the notion that the present polluted temple mount will be the location of the final temple. The eastern gate to the temple mount, the one that the Muslim warlord Saladin walled up in 1187 to prevent the Jewish Messiah from returning, couldn’t be the eastern gate Ezekiel was referring to. There are to be *two* eastern gates, one facing the other across the outer court, and the way they’re described in Ezekiel 40—as massive buildings over 87 feet long—doesn’t remotely equate to the small bricked-in passageway on the eastern wall of the temple mount.

By the way, note that Yahweh roundly denounces “hero worship” as idolatry. He specifically named “other gods” and “dead kings,” making me shudder when I contemplate American edifices like the Washington Monument. And I think we can safely extrapolate the principle for our times: do not raise political figures, sports heroes, or entertainment stars to the level of demigods in your imagination. Your favorite presidential candidate can’t accomplish anything outside of the framework of God’s sovereignty. Heaven and earth do not turn upon the platform of any political movement, no matter how right or beneficial you think it may be. Worship Yahweh alone.

Yahweh now tells Ezekiel, **“Son of man, describe to the people of Israel the Temple I have shown you. Tell them its appearance and its plan so they will be ashamed of all their sins. And if they are ashamed of what they have done, describe to them all the specifications of its construction—including its entrances and doors—and everything else about it. Write down all these specifications and directions as they watch so they will be sure to remember them. And this is the basic law of the Temple: absolute holiness! The entire top of the hill where the Temple is built is holy. Yes, this is the primary law of the Temple.”** (Ezekiel 43:5-12 NLT) Here we are being told by God Himself that the design and specifications of the temple reflect and demonstrate the very holiness

of Yahweh. Everything within the temple compound is said to be metaphorical of the nature of Yahweh or some aspect of His plan of redemption. It's very magnificence should shame the guilty heart into repentance.

We are given another clue here as to the precise location of the temple: as it says in the NKJV, **"The whole area surrounding the mountaintop shall be most holy."** (Verse 12) If you'll recall, the site of the present temple mount doesn't cover the highest peak of Mount Moriah—the mountain *top*—but only the part that was enclosed within Jerusalem's ancient city walls. The far more significant portion of Moriah is northwest of the temple mount, the summit outside the city wall (also known as Bezetha or Bizita—a.k.a. Golgotha), the place where Yahshua's blood was spilled, where His broken body rested in a tomb, and where He rose triumphantly under His own power. As I pointed out back in chapter 13, I believe the Ark of the Covenant was secreted away in a cave beneath this part of the mountain by the prophet Jeremiah during the Babylonian invasion. And through a divinely orchestrated series of events, the blood of Yahshua was literally, physically sprinkled upon the mercy seat, atoning for the sins of all mankind once and for all, if only we would accept His sacrifice. It's no wonder Yahweh told Ezekiel that the *mountaintop* would be holy. I would guess (SF2) that the Millennial Temple's Most Holy Place will be positioned at Golgotha, directly above the resting place of the Ark, 1,500 feet or so northwest from where it was in Solomon's temple.

And what about the Ark itself? Will that be hauled up and placed in the new Holy of Holies? No. Yahweh has kept His promise; it has served its purpose. There will be no more blood sprinkled upon the mercy seat. Yahshua is an impossible act to follow, especially if you're a bull or a goat. The very man who apparently secreted the Ark out of the Holy of Holies and hid it beneath Mount Moriah wrote: **"It shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,' says Yahweh, 'that they will say no more, "The ark of the covenant of Yahweh." 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 Yahweh, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of Yahweh, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers."** (Jeremiah 3:14-18) The Ark will be neither essential temple ritual furniture, nor museum attraction, nor the object of legendary quests. Jeremiah specifically says that no one will even make a replica of it during the Millennium. In the light of Yahshua's presence, it will simply be forgotten.

Since Yahweh almost never gives revelation on a particular subject to only one prophet, we shouldn't be too surprised to see a confirmation of Ezekiel's

prophecy about the temple site being on a holy mountaintop in Isaiah's writings: **"It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of Yahweh's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem."** (Isaiah 2:1-3) Golgotha, the place of Yahshua's execution, is located at the base of a low cliff, the top of which is the summit of Mount Moriah. I don't think there can be much doubt that this area is the "mountain of Yahweh's house" spoken of by the prophet. The passage also implies that the geologic upheaval of the Day of Atonement will cause Moriah's peak to be uplifted above its present elevation, and indeed above all the other peaks in the vicinity.

That's not the only geologic upheaval that will take place. Zechariah too speaks of a radically altered topography: **"All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem."** Geba is about five miles north-east of Jerusalem, and Rimmon is some thirty-five miles south-west. That whole forty-mile stretch is hilly terrain today—but it will be a flat plain during the Millennium. **"Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananeel to the king's winepresses. The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited."** (Zechariah 14:10-11) In context, Zechariah has just finished describing the two rivers (verses 8-9) flowing from Jerusalem that we read about in our preceding chapter. Ezekiel 47 further informs us that they will originate from beneath the temple. That requires that the temple be on high ground, the "continental divide," as it were, between the Mediterranean and the Jordan Valley.

There is a notable lack of consensus concerning the precise layout of Jerusalem during the second temple period (of course, it's the only city in the world where it matters), so there's a certain amount of guesswork involved here: Benjamin's gate was apparently on the north end of the temple mount. The Tower of Hananeel (or Hananel) was probably in that vicinity as well, slightly further west (though some—notably Josephus—identify it with the Tower of Hippicus, which was near the midpoint jog in the city's western wall). The "Corner Gate" was in the southwest corner of the upper city. If the "king's winepresses" were where you'd expect them to be, near the king's gardens at the extreme southern end of the City of David, Zack's description of what is to be "raised up" would seem to include all of the old city.

Note as well that Zechariah says (three times) that this area will be "inhabited." To my ears, this is confirmation of the theory that the new temple will be built at Golgotha—uphill and a quarter mile northwest of Solomon's

temple. Nobody “lives” on the temple grounds, but later we’ll see that the Millennial priests’ homes will be in a designated area  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long and  $3\frac{1}{3}$  miles wide, with the 875-foot-square temple compound in the middle of it. So if Zack’s “raised up” area is to be “inhabited,” the temple site is going to have to be somewhere other than on the traditional temple mount.

Jeremiah concurs, and clarifies the area’s description: **“Behold, the days are coming, says Yahweh, that the city shall be built for Yahweh from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. The surveyor’s line shall again extend straight forward over the hill Gareb; then it shall turn toward Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields as far as the Brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be holy to Yahweh. It shall not be plucked up or thrown down anymore forever.”** (Jeremiah 31:38-40) Remember what I said a couple dozen chapters ago about the cultural baggage of the scriptures getting lost in transit? These are more than just place names. They tell us something wonderful about Yahweh’s Millennial plans. We’ve already located the Tower of Hananel and the Corner Gate—the entire north-south length of the upper city. The “city built for Yahweh” will extend that far. But Garab and Goath were north of this, outside the old city walls. In fact, these were both unclean places in ancient times: Gibeat Gareb was called Leper’s Hill, and Goath, to the west of Gareb, was known as the Hill of Death (or roaring, or groaning). There were many tombs in the area. You know it by another name: Golgotha. Though outside the “city,” these areas are now said to be “holy to Yahweh,” along with another formerly unclean area: the “valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes” can be none other than the dreaded Valley of Hinnom, Gehenna, the Jews’ metaphor for hell itself, which runs south of the old city and joins the Brook of Kidron on the east. Thus the total area described is almost a mile square. These place names demonstrate that what was formerly unclean, polluted, and impure (whether places or people) can and will be made holy—set apart for Yahweh’s purposes.

It’s little wonder the Psalmist gushed, **“Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”** (Psalm 48:1-2) The reason “Zion” is so often used synonymously with Jerusalem is that the old upper city was built on Mount Zion—it is directly west of Moriah, with the Tyropoeon Valley separating them. So what is on the north side of Zion? Golgotha. Surprise, surprise.

We read in the description of the great Day of Atonement earthquake (Revelation 11:13) that “a tenth of the city (i.e., Jerusalem) fell.” When we see such language, we usually think in terms of buildings falling, and that is indeed one of the possible meanings of the Greek word for “fell,” *pipto*. But it’s primary meaning is: “to descend from a higher place to a lower.” (Strong’s) In light of our

recent discoveries, I believe we've stumbled onto a statistical assessment of the topographical rearrangement of Jerusalem. While the old city—specifically the area around Golgotha—is to be elevated, one tenth of the city will actually sink in elevation, making the “Mountain of God” stand out as the highest peak in the area.

Isaiah eloquently compares the future rearrangement of the topography of Zion's hills to the rock-solid permanence of Yahweh's love for Israel. **“For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,”** says Yahweh, who has mercy on you. **‘O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones.’**” For two millennia, Jews have been desperately trying to equate the “suffering Messiah” passages with Israel itself. Though Israel's affliction saves no one, the fact remains: she is suffering. Here Yahweh promises relief and prosperity. **“All your children shall be taught by Yahweh, and great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness you shall be established. You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you.”** (Isaiah 54:10-14) If the Jews today think living under the threat of Islamic terror is bad, they're in for a shock—it will be far worse under the Antichrist during the second half of the Tribulation. But life under Yahshua will bring absolute freedom from fear.

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The images Ezekiel's visionary temple presents are pictures of Yahweh's plan for mankind. We have already seen the re-emergence of His six-plus-one pattern and the outer and inner walls that signify that man must be born both physically and spiritually to enter the presence of Yahweh. The gates are the exclusive means Yahweh has provided to reach the throne of God (there's no climbing over the wall). The single door to the temple indicates that there is only one path to God. And you can't enter the temple without first going to the altar, for its massive form guards the only entrance.

Once you're past the altar, however, and have entered the Holy Place (a picture of the state of being saved through the sacrifice of the blood of the perfect Lamb of God), then access to the very throne of God is provided—via the altar of incense. This incense is representative of the prayers of the saints, which are as sweet and pleasant to Yahweh as the happy sounds of our children's greetings are to us. Of course, just as the incense in the Tabernacle had to be made to a specific formula and used exclusively in the worship of Yahweh (cf. Exodus 30:34-38),

only prayers in accordance with the will of Yahweh—and offered to Him—have a prayer of being answered in the affirmative. The bottom line: all these walls, gates, and altars are symbolic not of barriers to God’s presence but rather of the path He in His loving wisdom has provided for us. He wants us to approach Him, but He insists that we do so His way—in holiness.

We’ll discover more of Yahweh’s plan as we proceed through Ezekiel’s detailed description of the temple and its service. For now, let’s pick up the narrative as he depicts the sacrificial altar standing immediately outside the entrance to the Holy Place. **“These are the measurements of the altar: There is a gutter all around the altar 21 inches wide and 21 inches deep, with a curb 9 inches wide around its edge. And this is the height of the altar: From the gutter the altar rises 3½ feet to a ledge that surrounds the altar; this lower ledge is 21 inches wide. From the lower ledge the altar rises 7 feet to the upper ledge; this upper ledge is also 21 inches wide. The top of the altar, the hearth, rises still 7 feet higher, with a horn rising up from each of the four corners. The top of the altar is square, measuring 21 feet by 21 feet. The upper ledge also forms a square, measuring 24½ feet on each side, with a 21-inch gutter and a 10½-inch curb all around the edge. There are steps going up the east side of the altar.”** (Ezekiel 43:13-17 NLT) That’s one big barbecue. The altar looms large both figuratively and literally in the doorway of the temple of God. Note that because the steps up to the altar are on the east side, one must face the temple—look Yahweh in the eye, so to speak—when approaching the altar.

At this point, Ezekiel is given instructions for the inauguration of the temple: **“Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, this is what the Sovereign Yahweh says: These will be the regulations for the burning of offerings and the sprinkling of blood when the altar is built. At that time, the Levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who minister before me, are to be given a young bull for a sin offering, says the Sovereign Yahweh. You will take some of its blood and smear it on the four horns of the altar, the four corners of the upper ledge, and the curb that runs around that ledge. This will cleanse and make atonement for the altar. Then take the young bull for the sin offering and burn it at the appointed place outside the Temple area....’”** That’s on the first day. Notice that the priests don’t provide the offering—the people do. The temple is for their benefit and the benefit of their children. The priests merely provide a service by presenting the offerings before Yahshua. They are the antithesis of an empowered and politicized clergy.

**“On the second day, sacrifice as a sin offering a young male goat that has no physical defects. Then cleanse and make atonement for the altar again, just as you did with the young bull. When you have finished the cleansing ceremony, offer another young bull that has no defects and a perfect ram from the flock. You are to present them to Yahweh, and the priests are to sprinkle salt on them and offer them as a burnt offering to Yahweh....”** The use of salt in sacrificial offerings goes back to the Law of Moses. Because salt is a preservative, it bears the symbolic meaning of permanence, suggesting an

unbreakable covenant. It stands in contrast to leaven, or yeast, which speaks of change—and was never allowed on the altar.

**“Every day for seven days a male goat, a young bull, and a ram from the flock will be sacrificed as a sin offering. None of these animals may have physical defects of any kind. Do this each day for seven days to cleanse and make atonement for the altar, thus setting it apart for holy use. On the eighth day, and on each day afterward, the priests will sacrifice on the altar the burnt offerings and peace offerings of the people. Then I will accept you, says the Sovereign Yahweh.”** (Ezekiel 43:18-27 NLT) For seven days (signifying completion) the ritual of dedication will continue, at which point the altar dedication will be complete. One way or another, all of these sacrifices point back to the finished work of Yahshua on the cross. The sin offering, for example, does not in itself atone for sin, but rather demonstrates the acknowledgment of the sinner that he *needs* forgiveness—and that this forgiveness is to be found in the sacrifice of Christ. Bear in mind that the earth is (as usual) populated with mortal men at this time, presumably not too far into the Millennium. They have a sin nature, so just like you and me, they still sin—and then they either repent or they don’t. This whole new sacrifice ritual is thus very much like the Levitical worship in the Old Testament—a multifaceted picture of the sacrifice of Yahshua that’s designed to teach man in unmistakable terms about his need for redemption.

But there is one important difference. Whereas the Levitical rituals were the exclusive province of the Jews (in the sense that the gentile nations were not active participants), in the Millennium the whole world will be involved in the worship of Yahweh. The Jews will be the gatekeepers, so to speak. Zechariah explains: **“Thus says Yahweh of hosts: ‘Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, “Let us continue to go and pray before Yahweh, and seek Yahweh of hosts. I myself will go also.” Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Yahweh of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before Yahweh.’ Thus says Yahweh of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”’”** (Zechariah 9:20-22) Needless to say, that’s not what happens in our world. Today the nations are repelled by the twisted caricature of godliness that Judaism presents. It’s painfully obvious that God is *not* with them—yet—for they have not yet turned to Him.

This new relationship is referred to in another of Zechariah’s prophecies as well. **“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,”** says Yahweh. **‘Many nations shall be joined to Yahweh in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent Me to you. And Yahweh will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem.’”** (Zechariah 2:10-12) In this remarkable passage, Yahweh as “Father” (i.e., the Shekinah) and Yahweh as

“Son” (i.e. Yahshua) are both seen side by side in the same context. The Messiah is depicted as a Man whom Yahweh has “sent” to Israel, but a Man who acts with the very power and authority of God, because He *is* God. Look closely: Yahweh speaks in *Yahshua’s* voice when He says “Yahweh has sent Me.” It should come as no surprise that such a Man/King/God would attract “many nations” to Himself, and that they should earnestly desire to be His people.

So we see that although the Priests and Levites will always have their assigned roles, devout gentiles will be welcomed participants in the worship of Yahweh. **“Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to Yahweh, to serve Him, and to love the name of Yahweh, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant—Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.’** Yahweh Almighty, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, **‘Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him.’** (Isaiah 56:6-8) The “others,” of course, are the gentile nations. They will be on an equal footing with the Jews as far as being “joyful in Yahweh’s house of prayer” is concerned. And lest you jump to the hasty conclusion that the Mosaic Law will be pressed into service as a basis for salvation, let me point out that “keeping from defiling the Sabbath” is no more or less than what was listed in the previous breath: to join oneself to Yahweh, to serve Him, and to love His name (Hebrew *shem*, His position, honor, authority, and character—His whole identity). Why? Because in this context the Sabbath *is* the Millennium—the whole one-thousand years. That is not to say that the myth of Sunday worship replacing Sabbath observance will be perpetuated any longer. Yahweh never abrogated the Torah. He never said *Remember the first day of the week to keep it holy*. Sunday was man’s idea.

We have seen how the gentile nations will keep the Feast of Tabernacles during this time. Zechariah goes on to explain how Jerusalem will open her doors to them. **“On that day even the harness bells of the horses will be inscribed with these words: SET APART AS HOLY TO YAHWEH. And the cooking pots in the Temple of Yahweh will be as sacred as the basins used beside the altar. In fact, every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be set apart as holy to Yahweh Almighty. All who come to worship will be free to use any of these pots to boil their sacrifices. And on that day there will no longer be traders [literally, Canaanites] in the Temple of Yahweh Almighty.”** (Zechariah 14:20-21 NLT) Those who make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem will be totally dedicated to the true worship of Yahweh. Even the most mundane appurtenances of daily life will be considered sacred, set apart for Yahweh’s honor. The result? The whole town will become one huge party, especially during the Feast of Tabernacles.

The psalmist put it succinctly: **“Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed. O You who hear prayer, to You all flesh will come.”** (Psalm 65:1-2)

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We now return to our anchor text from Ezekiel. **“Then the man brought me back to the east gateway in the outer wall, but it was closed. And Yahweh said to me, ‘This gate must remain closed; it will never again be opened. No man will ever pass through it, for Yahweh, the God of Israel, entered here. Thus, it must always remain shut. Only the prince himself may sit inside this gateway to feast in Yahweh’s presence. But he may come and go only through the gateway’s foyer....’”** (Ezekiel 44:1-3 NLT) *What? Who? What prince? Saladin? No—there was no temple there when he blocked the golden gate. But it’s not Yahshua, either. Get ready for another epiphany.*

Remember all those hundreds of passages predicting that David will always be represented on the throne of Israel? We (okay, *I*) generally respond like Pavlov’s dog with these, automatically reacting, “Yes, that’s a Messianic prophecy: it’s talking about Yahshua.” In many cases, that’s precisely accurate. But there are other passages that more clearly point to an actual role for David and his physical descendants in the Millennial kingdom—that’s *descendants*, plural, as in somebody other than Yahshua.

As we plow through our late-Ezekiel chapters, it will become more and more obvious that the civil government of Israel will be placed under the care of mortal descendants of King David—and probably even David himself, now an immortal being, resurrected with the rest of the saints at the rapture. Some of the following passages have been explored in their larger contexts elsewhere in this volume, but we need to take a fresh look at them in the light of this new development. **“David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.”** (Ezekiel 37:24-25) At first glance, this sounds Messianic. But on closer examination, “David My servant” seems to be counted among the sheep: they *all* have one shepherd (as in, **“Yahweh is my shepherd; I shall not want.”**—Psalm 23:1).

The same distinction between David and Yahshua is hinted at here: **“They shall serve Yahweh their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.”** (Jeremiah 30:9) Since Yahshua *is* Yahweh, it seems (SF4) that “David” here is the

resurrected king, not a metaphor for Christ. The same idea is seen in Hosea: **“Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king. They shall fear Yahweh and His goodness in the latter days.”** (Hosea 3:5)

That’s all pretty thin, you say. Okay, how about this? **“As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.”** (Jeremiah 33:22) Or perhaps, **“He is the tower of salvation to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore.”** (II Samuel 22:51) Just as Yahweh knows precisely who are Jews, and who among *them* are Levites, He knows who David’s descendants are—and apparently there are a lot of them. Even though they won’t know about their royal lineage during the Tribulation, God does. Describing the Day of Atonement (five days before the end) Zechariah describes David’s family’s leading role in Israel’s national repentance and the subsequent recognition of their returning Messiah: **“I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced.”** (Zechariah 12:10) A few verses later we are given confirmation that the “house of David” are mortals—i.e., that this is not speaking of the Messiah: **“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.”** (Zechariah 13:1) It’s clear, then, that the literal, physical descendants of David will have an important part to play in Israel’s future as the Millennium begins.

Jeremiah connects the restoration of David’s rule (through the Messiah or otherwise) with Yahweh’s preservation of the priests and Levites: **“Behold, the days are coming,’ says Yahweh, ‘that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.”** So far, this is speaking of the Messiah, Yahshua. **“In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: YAHWEH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.’** For thus says Yahweh: **‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually....’** Here, He might be referring to Yahshua, but He could just as easily be talking about the mortal descendants of David who will comprise the Israeli royal family during the Millennium—after all, the priests and Levites about whom He’s speaking are definitely mortals. Why not the royal family as well?

Then, as if He hadn’t made Himself clear, Yahweh said it all again: **“And the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, saying, thus says Yahweh: ‘If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. As the**

host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.” (Jeremiah 33:14-22)

The subject of where the priests and Levites will come from pops up again in one of the ubiquitous passages predicting the return of Israel to the Land. **“It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory. I will set a sign among them....”** Yes, and the sign says “Going out of business.” He’s referring to the battles of the Tribulation, in which God’s miraculous deliverance of the Jews will be the primary reason so many Gentiles see the light and refuse to follow the Antichrist. **“And those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles....”** The survivors of World War III will evangelize the world, and those who survive to the end will honor the God who saved them by bringing Israel back to the Land (cf. Isaiah 18:7): **“Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to Yahweh out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,’ says Yahweh, ‘as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of Yahweh. And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites,’ says Yahweh.”** (Isaiah 66:18-21)

In English, this sounds suspiciously like Yahweh will arbitrarily draft Jews from any old tribe to serve in Levitical roles, but I don’t think that’s the case. Ezekiel specified the literal family of Zadok as the only qualified priests, and Malachi, in a passage utilized by George Frederick Handel in his famous oratorio, *the Messiah*, says that the Levites must be purified like a precious metal before they can be of service to Yahweh “as in the days of old.” **“He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to Yahweh an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to Yahweh, as in the days of old, as in former years.”** (Malachi 3:3-4) Since literal Levites served “in former years,” we have no choice but to conclude that the same will be true during the Millennium.

I don’t really want to complicate this, but one point must be clarified. The priests and Levites we’ve been referring to are mortal men, Jews who will serve in the Millennial temple. Their role is symbolic, a living metaphor for the holiness of Yahweh. But there will be an entirely different order of priests in the world at this time as well: **“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”** (Revelation 20:6) Perhaps it would be appropriate at this point to define the word “priest” in Biblical terms. The Greek used here is *hierous*, derived from a word that means “holy.” It means one who offers sacrifices; thus the implication is that the priest stands as an intermediary between

God and man. In the case of the Levitical priests, this is a job description, but for those in the verse at hand it means something far more personal. Those who have had a part in the “first resurrection,” believers of every age who have died or been raptured prior to the beginning of the Millennium, will, in their immortal, resurrected bodies, have unprecedented access to the throne of Yahshua. It should therefore come as no surprise that we will function as “priests of God and of Christ” during the Millennium—more mentors than intermediaries I should think, helping mortals understand the mind of God. It’s an awesome responsibility, but Yahshua will have equipped us for the task. This is what it means to “reign with Him.” We will be personally invested in the lives of the Millennial millions, teaching, guiding, and admonishing them in the love of Yahshua our King.

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Where were we? Oh, yes. Back in Ezekiel, touring the visionary temple. We had just been informed that once the Shekinah, the Glory of Yahshua, returns to the temple through the eastern outer gate, that gate will be shut forever. It was presumably this prophecy the Muslims were trying to torpedo when Saladin sealed the eastern or “golden” gate of the temple mount in the twelfth century. Sorry, guys: wrong temple, wrong god. The return of Yahweh’s glory to Israel will apparently take place during the Millennial temple dedication ceremonies, described above, though we aren’t specifically told. The gateway building will then be available only for the prince—the now-immortal David—and not for entrance or egress but exclusively for “feasting” before Yahshua. The north and south gates are still available for everyone to enter and leave the temple courtyard.

**“Then the man brought me through the north gateway to the front of the Temple. I looked and saw that the glory of Yahweh filled the Temple of Yahweh, and I fell to the ground with my face in the dust.”** A perfectly rational reaction. **“And Yahweh said to me, ‘Son of man, take careful notice; use your eyes and ears. Listen to everything I tell you about the regulations concerning Yahweh’s Temple. Take careful note of who may be admitted to the Temple and who is to be excluded from it.’** The holiness theme continues. **“And give these rebels, the people of Israel, this message from the Sovereign Yahweh: O people of Israel, enough of your disgusting sins! You have brought uncircumcised foreigners into my sanctuary—people who have no heart for God. In this way, you profaned my Temple even as you offered me my food, the fat and blood of sacrifices. Thus, in addition to all your other disgusting sins, you have broken my covenant. You have not kept the laws I gave you concerning these sacred rituals, for you have hired foreigners to take charge of my sanctuary....”** This is a pointed rebuke to Ezekiel’s immediate audience: by indulging in their idolatries, they had “hired” the Babylonians to come in and trash the temple. The lesson should ring loud and true

for us today. With our national idolatries we are in effect “hiring” the new Babylonians—the house of Islam—to “take charge.” 9/11 was only the first salvo. Wake up and repent, America.

**“So this is what the Sovereign Yahweh says: No foreigners, including those who live among the people of Israel, will enter my sanctuary if they have not been circumcised and do not love Yahweh....”** But conversely, foreigners—gentiles—who meet these conditions are welcome, in stark contrast to the strict limits imposed on temple access in times past (cf. Acts 21:28). In other words, both inward and outward holiness is required if the Millennial mortals wish to approach the throne of Yahshua. Holiness is mandatory for Jews and gentiles alike.

Remember what we discussed a few chapters back about believers losing their potential rewards and positions of responsibility by being unwilling to use their “talents” in service to God? The plight of these “wicked and lazy” servants is echoed in the millennial division of labor in the temple: **“And the men of the tribe of Levi who abandoned me when Israel strayed away from me to worship idols must bear the consequences of their unfaithfulness. They may still be Temple guards and gatemen, and they may still slaughter the animals brought for burnt offerings and be present to help the people. But they encouraged my people to worship other gods, causing Israel to fall into deep sin. So I have raised my hand and taken an oath that they must bear the consequences for their sins, says the Sovereign Yahweh. They may not approach me to minister as priests. They may not touch any of my holy things or the holy offerings, for they must bear the shame of all the sins they have committed. They are to serve as the Temple caretakers and are relegated to doing maintenance work and helping the people in a general way....”** Before the time of King Hezekiah (715-686 B.C), the spiritual state of Israel had sunk to a new low. But a revival under his reign had necessitated pressing Levites into service until priests (by law, a specific family from within that same tribe) in sufficient numbers could “sanctify themselves.” (cf. II Chronicles 29:34) Now, because of their subsequent idolatry, the Levite clans (most of them) are being informed that they will no longer be considered eligible for such significant service—but they *will* get to be the janitors and doormen in the Millennial temple.

On the flip side of this coin is the one family who proved themselves consistently faithful. **“However, the Levitical priests of the family of Zadok continued to minister faithfully in the Temple when Israel abandoned me for idols. These men will serve as my ministers. They will stand in my presence and offer the fat and blood of the sacrifices, says the Sovereign Yahweh. They are the ones who will enter my sanctuary and approach my table to serve me. They are the ones who will fulfill all my requirements.”** (Ezekiel 44:4-16 NLT) Zadok was a priest in David’s time, a descendant of Eleazar (the third son and spiritual heir of Aaron, the original high priest). Zadok supported David’s (and Yahweh’s) choice of Solomon as heir, and his

descendants served as Israel's chief priests both before and after the Babylonian captivity—until they were forcibly removed from office in 171 B.C. by none other than Antiochus IV Epiphanes. (He, if you'll recall, was the Seleucid King who slaughtered a sow on the altar of the second temple—making himself a prophetic prototype for the Antichrist.) The Zadokites, then, were the good guys. Of all the priestly sub-families, they alone never strayed from the true worship of Yahweh. Here we see them being rewarded.

Once again, we see that God never forgets (presumably because all time is present to Him). The line of Zadok—without being named as such—was in view when Yahweh told Moses what would happen to Israel's priesthood: **“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’”** (Numbers 25:11-13)

Back in Ezekiel's prophecy, we are given more information about the priests' duties. **“When they enter the gateway to the inner courtyard, they must wear only linen clothing [symbolic, as usual, of imputed righteousness]. They must wear no wool while on duty in the inner courtyard or in the Temple itself. They must wear linen turbans and linen undergarments. They must not wear anything that would cause them to perspire.”** I believe the idea is that our best works (symbolized by perspiration) are insufficient to gain us favor with God. Only Yahweh can bring us to Yahweh. **“When they return to the outer courtyard where the people are, they must take off the clothes they wear while ministering to me. They must leave them in the sacred rooms and put on other clothes so they do not harm the people by transmitting holiness to them through this clothing....”** This may seem odd, but the underlying truth (I think) is that we can't be holy for other people, and they can't be holy for us. Our own sin condemns us, and our own choice to follow Yahshua enables Him to rescue us. Sitting in a pew at church won't make you alive any more than walking through a graveyard will make you dead.

**“They must neither let their hair grow too long nor shave it off completely. Instead, they must trim it regularly. The priests must never drink wine before entering the inner courtyard. They may choose their wives only from among the virgins of Israel or the widows of the priests. They may not marry other widows or divorced women. They will teach my people the difference between what is holy and what is common, what is ceremonially clean and unclean....”** Here we see some examples of practical manifestations of personal holiness, things we brush off at our own peril. The priests are to avoid extremes of grooming—they are to make an effort to look “normal” within their society. The point is that they are not to draw attention to themselves, but only to God.

Yahweh is not telling them to be teetotalers (wine is a common scriptural metaphor for the enjoyment of God's blessings), but don't even *think* about coming to work tipsy. We are to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and nothing else. And they (like we) are to choose like-minded mates, godly spouses (or is that "spice?") who will support us in our desire to be consecrated to Yahweh.

**"They will serve as judges to resolve any disagreements among my people. Their decisions must be based on my regulations. And the priests themselves must obey my instructions and laws at all the sacred festivals, and they will see to it that the Sabbath is set apart as a holy day...."** It may come as a shock to many Christians, but Yahweh never shifted his "holy day" from the Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday. That was a man-made tradition, whatever the rationale. To our shame, Sunday worship was codified into "Christian" practice at the Council of Laodicea in 336 (some date it in 364) *not* to honor Christ's resurrection, but as an anti-Semitic offensive—or worse, a thinly veiled attempt to blend Mithraic sun worship with Christian practice. The Council's Canon 29 stated, "Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, honoring rather the Lord's Day by resting, if possible, as Christians. However, if any shall be found Judaizing, let them be shut out from Christ." Once again, we find our precious traditions diametrically opposed to the revealed word of Yahweh. God forgive us.

Ezekiel continues: **"A priest must never defile himself by being in the presence of a dead person unless it is his father, mother, child, brother, or unmarried sister. In such cases it is permitted. But such a priest can only return to his Temple duties after being ritually cleansed and then waiting for seven days. The first day he returns to work and enters the inner courtyard and the sanctuary, he must offer a sin offering for himself," says the Sovereign Yahweh...."** This ends the debate as to whether people will die during the Millennium. They will, though the normal lifespan is greatly increased. This whole discussion builds upon what is already written in the Torah (in this case, Numbers 19). Yahshua never said He was doing away with the Law of Moses, only fulfilling it. The Zadokite priests will use the Torah as their guidebook for living, not because it saves them from their sins, but because it's the way Yahweh wants it. These "rules" are for *our* good—they don't do a thing for Yahweh. In the case of priests, they are to offer a consistent picture of the holiness of Yahweh; the whole world is watching them.

**"As to property, the priests will not have any, for I alone am their inheritance. Their food will come from the gifts and sacrifices brought to the Temple by the people—the grain offerings, the sin offerings, and the guilt offerings. Whatever anyone sets apart for Yahweh will belong to the priests. The first of the ripe fruits and all the gifts brought to Yahweh will go to the priests. The first samples of each grain harvest and the first of your flour must also be given to the priests so Yahweh will bless your homes. The priests may never eat meat**

from any bird or animal that dies a natural death or that dies after being attacked by another animal.” (Ezekiel 44:17-31 NLT) Then as now (as always), Yahweh sees our gifts supporting people who are working on His behalf as gifts to Him—personally. He doesn’t *need* anything from us, but look at it this way: if Rembrandt’s preschooler drew a picture for him, he’d proudly stick it up on the fridge. It’s not what we do for God, it’s why we do it.

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There’s more to the Promised Land than the temple, of course. Isaiah predicts that Israel’s Millennial borders will encompass more land than they did previously: **“You have increased the nation, O Yahweh; You have increased the nation. You are glorified; You have expanded all the borders of the land.”** (Isaiah 26:15) This begs the question, “expanded the borders from *what?*” The safe answer is, “from what they were immediately before He expanded them,” i.e., whatever the Antichrist’s vaunted peace treaty whittled them down to—my guess is the painfully thin U.N. Resolution #242 borders, or perhaps the even more anorexic Resolution #181 lines. The more provocative answer is, “the Israel of Isaiah’s day.” Prior to the Assyrian invasion of the north, this still stretched “from Dan to Beersheba,” the lite version of the Numbers 34 description (which is in turn a low-calorie variation on the borders Yahweh originally described to Abraham. Yahweh is reiterating here that Israel will indeed own the whole Land of promise, though as we shall see, not all of it will be distributed among the twelve tribes.

Thus we move into the “urban planning” phase of Ezekiel’s prophecy. **“When you divide the land among the tribes of Israel, you must set aside a section of it for Yahweh as his holy portion. This piece of land will be  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long [almost  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles long if you’re using a 24-inch cubit] and  $6\frac{2}{3}$  miles wide. The entire area will be holy ground. A section of this land, measuring 875 feet by 875 feet, will be set aside for the Temple....”** The temple compound is within a much larger district—over 55 square miles dedicated to Yahweh. The KJV’s description of the temple area supplies the word “reeds” here, but the word is missing in the Hebrew text. “Reeds” would make the space six times as large, but we’ve already verified this dimension in earlier passages. And the context (verse 2) verifies that cubits (Hebrew: *’ammah*) are the unit of measure in view. **“An additional strip of land  $87\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide is to be left empty all around it....”** If nothing else, this extra 50-cubit perimeter proves that the new temple won’t be placed up on the old temple mount. There’s not enough room for it up there.

Yahweh, of course, has no need or desire for real estate—He owns the whole universe, after all. So it should come as no surprise that His intention is to divide up the area He's set aside for Himself into neighborhoods for the priests and Levites, whom you'll recall have no inheritance in Israel other than Yahweh Himself. **"Within the larger sacred area, measure out a portion of land  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long and  $3\frac{1}{3}$  miles wide. Within it the sanctuary of the Most Holy Place will be located. This area will be a holy land, set aside for the priests who minister to Yahweh in the sanctuary. They will use it for their homes, and my Temple will be located within it. The strip of sacred land next to it, also  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long and  $3\frac{1}{3}$  miles wide, will be a living area for the Levites who work at the Temple. It will be their possession and a place for their towns...."** Yahweh's land will be cut into two strips, length-wise. The temple compound will be within the priests' half, and Leviteville will be right next door.

**"Adjacent to the larger sacred area will be a section of land  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long and  $1\frac{2}{3}$  miles wide. This will be set aside to be a city where anyone in Israel can come and live."** (Ezekiel: 45:1-6 NLT) If you're keeping score, you will have calculated that the entire area being discussed is a perfect square,  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles on each side. The priests' quarter will occupy the center section (with the temple compound in the center of the entire square). The strip open to everyone will be next to it, as will be the Levites' territory, though which strip is north of it and which is south is not clear. This 70 square mile area, in case you missed it, is the Millennial Jerusalem, of which only  $2\frac{1}{4}$  square miles is set aside for the living areas of non-Levites. Something tells me this little patch will quickly become the most expensive real estate on earth—the domain of high-rises and embassies.

In the interests of maintaining focus on the subject at hand, let's skip down to the middle of the 47<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ezekiel, where the discussion of the geography of Israel continues. **"This is what the Sovereign Yahweh says: 'Follow these instructions for dividing the land for the twelve tribes of Israel: The tribe of Joseph will be given two shares of land. Otherwise each tribe will receive an equal share. I swore that I would give this land to your ancestors, and it will now come to you as your inheritance...."** God does not forget those who serve Him. This is a reference to Genesis 48, where the faithful Joseph's two sons were "adopted" by his father Israel—effectively giving Joseph two tribes. In the conquest of Canaan, Levi—the tribe of Moses and Aaron—was given no territorial inheritance (they received Yahweh Himself, and a scattered collection of towns). So the land was still split up twelve ways, with Ephraim and Manasseh receiving Joseph's double portion. This arrangement still holds true in the Millennium.

The area being divided between these twelve tribes is now described: **"The northern border will run from the Mediterranean toward Hethlon, then on through Lebohamath [or "Entrance to Hamath," not to be confused with Hamath itself, which is some fifty miles north] to Zedad; then it will run to Berothah and Sibram, which are on**

the border between Damascus and Hamath, and finally to Hazer-hatticon, on the border of Hauran. So the northern border will run from the Mediterranean to Hazar-enan, on the border between Hamath to the north and Damascus to the south.” Hamath and Damascus were not only city names, but also lent their names to entire districts—the border between them was located at approximately 34 degrees north latitude. **“The eastern border starts at a point between Hauran and Damascus and runs southward along the Jordan River between Israel and Gilead, past the Dead Sea and as far south as Tamar. This will be the eastern border. The southern border will go west from Tamar to the waters of Meribah at Kadesh and then follow the course of the brook of Egypt to the Mediterranean. This will be the southern border. On the west side the Mediterranean itself will be your border from the southern border to the point where the northern border begins, opposite Lebo-hamath.”** (Ezekiel 47:13-21 NLT)

Although some of the place names are different, this area is virtually identical to that described in Numbers 34 (which we discussed at length in chapter 6). It includes all of present-day Israel, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip (but minus the southern triangle of desert extending from the Negev to the Gulf of Aqaba), plus almost all of Lebanon with a few miles of Syrian territory to the west thrown in. This, I’d say, is good news and bad news. It’s good news in that even 3,000-plus years of Jewish rebellion couldn’t persuade Yahweh to renege on His territorial promises to Israel. The bad news is that the tribal lands are divided up over a much smaller area than that promised to the patriarchs. God had said to Abram: **“To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt [the Wadi el-Arish] to the great river, the River Euphrates,”** (Genesis 15:18) and to Moses, **“I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River.”** (Exodus 23:31) As we have seen, Israel has controlled all of this territory at one time or another—mostly under David and Solomon. In fact, my guess (SF3) is that they will control every square inch of it again during the Millennium. But the southernmost and northernmost portions will not be specifically distributed among the twelve tribes. The lesson is: there is a difference between influence and ownership. In this case, that difference was quantified by the unbelief of Israel during the Exodus.

Ready for another epiphany? During the Millennium, being a physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be no more effective in identifying you as “an Israeli” than merely showing your devotion to the Land: **“Divide the land within these boundaries among the tribes of Israel. Distribute the land as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners who have joined you and are raising their families among you. They will be just like native-born Israelites to you, and they will receive an inheritance among the tribes. All these immigrants are to be given land within the territory of the tribe with whom they now live. I, the Sovereign Yahweh, have spoken!”** (Ezekiel 47:21-23 NLT) There is a precedent for this in the person of Caleb—technically from gentile Kenizzite (Edomite) stock but joined to the tribe of Judah

(cf. Joshua 14:6) The point seems to be, If you love Yahweh, you'll naturally love what He loves.

The division of territory between the twelve tribes looks only vaguely like it did when Joshua led the Israelite armies into the Land for the first time. Ezekiel saw it this way: **“Here is the list of the tribes of Israel and the territory each is to receive. The territory of Dan is in the extreme north. Its boundary line follows the Hethlon road to Lebo-hamath and then runs on to Hazar-enan on the border of Damascus, with Hamath to the north. Dan’s territory extends all the way across the land of Israel from east to west....”** Dan, if you'll recall, thought its assigned location under Joshua (on the northern edge of Philistine territory) was too tough, so they abandoned their allocated plot and moved to where things looked easier, way up north. There they promptly forgot all about God's promises to fight for them and took up idol worship in a big way. What did it cost them? As we've seen, Dan will be the only tribe not represented among the 144,000 Jewish witnesses during the tribulation. But there's more. Yes, Dan is given a slice of the new Israel—but in the boonies. What did they give up for it? Only downtown Tel Aviv—destined to become a hunk of the Millennium's most coveted real estate. I guess it doesn't pay to doubt Yahweh.

The next few tribes follow roughly the same pattern of distribution they had under Joshua—the tribes that were farther north are still there. **“Asher’s territory lies south of Dan’s and also extends from east to west. Naphtali’s land lies south of Asher’s, also extending from east to west. Then comes Manasseh south of Naphtali, and its territory also extends from east to west. South of Manasseh is Ephraim, and then Reuben, and then Judah, all of whose boundaries extend from east to west....”** Each tribe gets a horizontal slice running all the way across the country. Considering the fact that north of the Sea of Galilee, the border swerves east to encompass many miles of today's Syria, the tribes in the north (Dan, Asher, and Naphtali) come out fine in the square miles department. (I'm assuming, with the majority of commentators, that the distance will be divided evenly from north to south, though we aren't specifically told.) The “waist,” the thinnest portion of the land, extends from the Sea of Galilee south to Jerusalem's latitude near the northern tip of the Dead Sea.

Since we've seen over and over again how Yahweh doesn't ever forget anything, I was curious as to the disposition of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh. Those two and a half tribes, if you'll recall, turned up their noses at an inheritance within the Land, opting to settle in lands east of the Jordan River Valley. Manasseh didn't get hit too badly, falling just north of the Sea of Galilee, taking minimal advantage of the “Syrian bulge.” (Ephraim just to their south, is gifted with Galilee, the jewel of the Levant.) Ungrateful Reuben is next, falling heir to the skinniest portion there is. And Gad, the last of the transjordanian

ingrates? They inherit the caboose, the far southern boondocks—the hottest, driest, most inhospitable section of the twelve (although under the Millennial reign of Yahshua, even this will bloom like the rose). I think it’s becoming clear: questioning Yahweh’s plan for our lives can cost us.

Judah is nearly as thin as Reuben, but they’ll inherit Tel Aviv—a prize well worth the trade-off. Judah under Joshua was farther south, taking up much of the Land south of Jerusalem. They’ve traded quantity for quality in the Millennium. Since Judah is the tribe of the King, it makes sense that their portion is contiguous with the land set aside for the Prince, the priests and Levites, Jerusalem, and the temple. Benjamin, as we shall see, shares this honor on the south. This, if you’ll recall, was the only tribe that formally stuck with Judah when the nation split apart after Solomon’s reign.

**“South of Judah is the land set aside for a special purpose. It will be  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles wide and will extend as far east and west as the tribal territories, with the Temple at the center. The area set aside for Yahweh’s Temple will be  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long and  $6\frac{2}{3}$  miles wide. For the priests there will be a strip of land measuring  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long by  $3\frac{1}{3}$  miles wide, with Yahweh’s Temple at the center. This area is set aside for the ordained priests, the descendants of Zadok who obeyed me and did not go astray when the people of Israel and the rest of the Levites did. It will be their special portion when the land is distributed, the most sacred land of all. Next to the priests’ territory will lie the land where the other Levites will live. The land allotted to the Levites will be the same size and shape as that belonging to the priests— $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long and  $3\frac{1}{3}$  miles wide. Together these portions of land will measure  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long by  $6\frac{2}{3}$  miles wide. None of this special land will ever be sold or traded or used by others, for it belongs to Yahweh; it is set apart as holy....”** The bulk of the land will be under Jubilee rules, that is, it may be “sold,” (in reality leased) to others, with the understanding that everything reverts back to its original ownership every fifty years. But the holy zone, this block  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles square, may never be sold, leased, or used for any purpose other than that which Yahweh specified. These uses are discussed next:

**“An additional strip of land  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles long by  $1\frac{2}{3}$  miles wide, south of the sacred Temple area, will be allotted for public use—homes, pasturelands, and common lands, with a city at the center. The city will measure  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles on each side. Open lands will surround the city for 150 yards in every direction. Outside the city there will be a farming area that stretches  $3\frac{1}{3}$  miles to the east and  $3\frac{1}{3}$  miles to the west along the border of the sacred area. This farmland will produce food for the people working in the city. Those who come from the various tribes to work in the city may farm it. This entire area—including the sacred lands and the city—is a square that measures  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles on each side.”** (Ezekiel 48:1-20 NLT) Though it is destined to become the most significant  $2\frac{1}{4}$  square mile city on earth, Yahweh has nevertheless ensured that the “business district” will maintain a rural feel, flanked on two sides by open farmland and surrounded by a broad

greenbelt. It is worth noting that today the hills of Judea are a poor candidate for such a vegetable garden. They're rocky, mountainous, and bone dry. But none of these things are an obstacle to the Messiah, whose remake of this place from the ground up will turn it once again into the land of milk and honey.

It may seem odd to us, but downtown NeoJerusalem will be a walled city, not for protection but for symbolism. **“These will be the exits to the city: On the north wall, which is 1½ miles long, there will be three gates, each one named after a tribe of Israel. The first will be named for Reuben, the second for Judah, and the third for Levi. On the east wall, also 1½ miles long, the gates will be named for Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan. The south wall, also 1½ miles long, will have gates named for Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun. And on the west wall, also 1½ miles long, the gates will be named for Gad, Asher, and Naphtali. The distance around the entire city will be six miles. And from that day the name of the city will be ‘Yahweh Is There.’”** (Ezekiel 48:30-35 NLT) This time, each of the twelve actual tribes is represented (no missing Levi or doubled Joseph). The heritage of Israel is pictured as the doorway to Yahshua's city. If nothing else, this is a scathing rebuke of Christians who harbor anti-Semitic sentiments (Martin Luther comes to mind as a prominent example). If Yahweh is willing to honor Israel in this way, so should we.

Zechariah saw a vision reminiscent of Ezekiel's—with an angelic surveyor measuring the future Jerusalem—that seems at first to contradict it. **“I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said, ‘Where are you going?’ And he said to me, ‘To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.’ And there was the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, who said to him, ‘Run, speak to this young man, saying: ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. ‘For I,’ says Yahweh, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’”** (Zechariah 2:1-5) Ezekiel just got through telling us that Jerusalem's “downtown” will have precise dimensions—about a mile and a half square—and will have a wall around it. But this young man in Zack's vision is being told that the “city” will be too big to wall in or even to measure—don't even bother trying. Nor will there be any need for a defensive wall, for Yahweh is there to protect her. I think Zechariah is telling us that greater Jerusalem will consist not only of the “downtown” area, and will not even be restricted to the 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-mile-square holy zone, but will actually spill out into suburbs in Judah's territory to the north and Benjamin's to the south—a sprawling, glorious megalopolis, the most significant city on earth.

Back to Ezekiel. Having located the northern tribes and the holy zone, we can now locate the southern tribes. **“These are the territories allotted to the rest of the tribes. Benjamin's territory lies just south of the prince's lands [in the same latitude as the holy zone, something we skipped over but to which we'll return shortly], and it**

extends across the entire land of Israel from east to west. South of Benjamin's territory lies that of Simeon, also extending across the land from east to west. Next is the territory of Issachar with the same eastern and western boundaries. Then comes the territory of Zebulun, which also extends across the land from east to west. The territory of Gad is just south of Zebulun with the same borders to the east and west. The southern border of Gad runs from Tamar to the waters of Meribah at Kadesh and then follows the brook of Egypt to the Mediterranean. These are the allotments that will be set aside for each tribe's inheritance, says the Sovereign Yahweh." (Ezekiel 48:23-29 NLT) Simeon, like Benjamin, is roughly where they were under Joshua. Zebulun and Issachar, however, have moved many miles south, from the hills west of the Sea of Galilee to the Negev—the arid land southwest of the Dead Sea. I can only presume that this territory will be somewhat less barren than it is now. A compensating factor is that the Land widens out at this point, making Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun winners in the square miles department. Gad, as we have seen, is the last with the least, being one of the two and a half tribes that passed on an inheritance within Canaan under Joshua. It bears repeating: God doesn't forget.

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Earlier, we were introduced to the concept of a civil administrator ruling over Israel—not the Messiah, but someone who governs under Him. This “prince” was even identified: **“My servant David shall be their prince forever.”** (Ezekiel 37:25) The fact that David has been dead for three thousand years shouldn't be viewed as an obstacle. Did not Yahshua promise His disciples that they would rule over the twelve tribes of Israel? Did not John reveal that those who have a part in the first resurrection will **“reign with Him a thousand years”**? (Revelation 20:6) Amazingly, it is *us* to whom the prophet referred when he said, **“I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says Yahweh.** (Jeremiah 23:4) Our physical deaths are not a problem for God. Everyone listed above will be given an immortal body, and in that body they (we!) will assist King Yahshua in the administration of earth. The very thought makes me blush, but David, having been a King already, is presumably better prepared for this than I am.

The prince, then, is the resurrected David—a man after God's own heart. I have a feeling he will function less like an elected president or prime minister than as the patriarch of a royal family. As we shall see, his physical descendants will also play a role in the Millennial administration of Israel. But first, Ezekiel describes the estates of the Israeli royal family: **“Two special sections of land will be set apart for the prince. One section will share a border with the east side of the sacred**

lands and city [the  $8\frac{1}{3}$  mile square], and the second section will share a border on the west side. Then the far eastern and western borders of the prince's lands will line up with the eastern and western boundaries of the tribal areas. These sections of land will be the prince's allotment." (Ezekiel 45:7-8 NLT) The prophet clarifies the description a few chapters later: "The areas that remain, to the east and to the west of the sacred lands and the city, will belong to the prince. Each of these areas will be  $8\frac{1}{3}$  miles wide, extending in opposite directions to the eastern and western borders of Israel. So the prince's land will include everything between the territories allotted to Judah and Benjamin, except for the areas set aside for the sacred lands and the city. (Ezekiel 48:21-22 NLT). In the previous chapter, we saw how there will be two rivers flowing from the temple, one toward the east and one toward the west (cf. Zechariah 14:8-9, Ezekiel 47:1-12). Both the eastward and westward-flowing rivers would traverse the prince's lands on their way to the sea. That fact alone will make this area prime property indeed.

Ezekiel used the prophesied integrity of the Millennial princes (plural this time—the mortal descendants of David) as a scourge to chastise the princes of his day for their less than exemplary behavior. "My princes will no longer oppress and rob my people [*like you do*, is the implication]; they will assign the rest of the land to the people, giving an allotment to each tribe. For this is what the Sovereign Yahweh says: Enough, you princes of Israel! Stop all your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Quit robbing and cheating my people out of their land! Stop expelling them from their homes! You must use only honest weights and scales." (Ezekiel 45:8-10 NLT) He then goes on to describe the units of measure and the standards of exchange that will be in use. Note that these Millennial princes will be in charge of distributing the Land among the Jewish tribes—and presumably to individuals and families within those tribes as well, since the basic tribal land grants have already been worked out. Honesty, needless to say, will be considered the chief of virtues in this endeavor.

Skipping ahead a bit, we find the thought continued: "This is what the Sovereign Yahweh says: If the prince [i.e., David] gives a gift of land to one of his sons [mortal descendants], it will belong to him and his descendants forever. But if he gives a gift of land to one of his servants, the servant may keep it only until the Year of Jubilee, which comes every fiftieth year. At that time the servant will be set free, and the land will return to the prince. Only the gifts given to the prince's sons will be permanent. And the prince may never take anyone's property by force. If he gives property to his sons, it must be from his own land, for I do not want any of my people unjustly evicted from their property." (Ezekiel 46:16-18 NLT) The reason the prince—the resurrected David—is given so much land is that he will be dividing it among his mortal descendants, the royal family of Israel. Notice that the prince's lands border the territory of his tribe, Judah, on the north. There will be twenty Jubilees during the Millennium—one every fifty years—in which lands that have been "leased" to others will revert to their

original God-appointed “owners” (though the real owner is Yahweh Himself). Thus the tribal zones will remain intact throughout the Millennium.

The interaction between mortals and immortals we see here is perhaps a clue as to the type of relationship these two groups, or “races,” will share. I envision the immortals being viewed as mentors, elder statesmen, honored patriarchs and matriarchs, and respected priestly judges, by the rapidly expanding mortal populations of the Millennium. The two groups will mix freely, working together to rebuild the world. But in our resurrected bodies, the immortals will have abilities and characteristics far beyond those of our mortal brothers—a preview of what awaits them in eternity if only they’ll follow Yahweh as we did.

Will Prince David collect taxes? Yes, but they’re not your usual Middle Eastern potentate sort of thing; they won’t be spent on lavish palaces or the upkeep of his harem. Rather, they’re so he might provide offerings in the temple on behalf of the people. **“This is the tax you must give to the prince: one bushel of wheat or barley for every sixty you harvest, one percent of your olive oil, and one sheep for every two hundred in your flocks in Israel. These will be the grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings that will make atonement for the people who bring them, says the Sovereign Yahweh. All the people of Israel must join the prince in bringing their offerings. The prince will be required to provide offerings that are given at the religious festivals, the new moon celebrations [apparently, we’re ditching the Gregorian calendar and going back to the lunar system—months starting at the new moon, making them about 29.5 days long, with an intercalary month added seven years out of every nineteen to keep the seasons straight], the Sabbath days, and all other similar occasions. He will provide the sin offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings, and peace offerings to make reconciliation for the people of Israel....”** The examples given are keyed to an agrarian society, of course, but I have no reason to doubt there will be an industrial equivalent when the time comes. As taxes go, these could hardly be called oppressive. They average about one percent of the increase, and they’re tied directly to *past* blessings on the part of Yahweh. In marked contrast to our taxation system in America and elsewhere, this is not a graduated income tax designed to redistribute wealth, taking from those who are productive and giving it to those who are less so. It is, rather, a systematic reminder of God’s grace and sacrifice for us—a way to say thank You. Apparently the prince administers the offerings for the nation as a whole, while individuals still bring offerings for their own personal sins or thanksgiving.

The feasts of Yahweh, so significant in the unfolding of God’s plan for the redemption of mankind, will be celebrated with new understanding—and, I dare say, gratitude—in the Millennial temple. **“This is what the Sovereign Yahweh says: In early spring, on the first day of each new year, sacrifice a young bull with no physical defects to purify the Temple. The priest will take some of the blood of this sin offering and**

put it on the doorposts of the Temple, the four corners of the upper ledge on the altar, and the gateposts at the entrance to the inner courtyard. Do this also on the seventh day of the new year for anyone who has sinned through error or ignorance. In that way, you will make atonement for the Temple.” (Ezekiel 45:13-20 NLT) This, if I’m not mistaken, is the only Biblical mention of a celebration of “New Year’s Day,” the *real* Rosh Hashanah, a significant day, though not one of the seven prophetic miqrym, or “Feasts of Yahweh.” (The first actual holy convocation is Passover, about two weeks after this.) On the first day of Nisan each year, the blood will be applied to the portals that lead to Yahweh’s inner chamber. The lesson is obvious: one cannot gain access to God without the shedding of blood, the sacrificial atonement for sin. The blood of the bull, however, atones for nothing in itself, but points back to the historical reality of Yahshua’s sacrifice.

This rite on the first day of Nisan was not a part of the Levitical law. It’s significant, however, that Yahweh instructed that **“you will make atonement for the Temple.”** Why? It’s a very special place, to be sure, but just a building nevertheless. Remember though, we were specifically told that everything about the temple environs demonstrated the holiness of Yahweh. This is no exception. The temple needs atonement because it’s a metaphor for our mortal bodies. As Paul’s rhetorical questions explained: **“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?... Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”** (I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19) The Holy Spirit of God lives within us—and will live within the believing mortals of the Millennium as well. Thus the annual atonement of the temple is indicative of our constant need to dedicate our bodies as a living sacrifice to Yahweh—that is, someone set apart for His purposes.

**“On the fourteenth day of the new year, you must celebrate the Passover. This festival will last for seven days.”** All three spring feasts are in view here, for the seven-day festival of Unleavened Bread, including both Passover and Firstfruits, was often simply referred to as “Passover.” **“Only bread without yeast may be eaten during that time.”** Yeast or “leaven,” you remember, is a picture of sin. **“On the day of Passover the prince will provide a young bull as a sin offering for himself and the people of Israel. On each of the seven days of the feast he will prepare a burnt offering to Yahweh. This daily offering will consist of seven young bulls and seven rams without any defects. A male goat will also be given each day for a sin offering. The prince will provide a half bushel of flour as a grain offering and a gallon of olive oil with each young bull and ram....”** The original Mosaic instructions for the daily Passover sacrifices had specified one ram and seven lambs—changed here to seven bulls and seven rams. The emphasis, in the light of Christ’s historical accomplishment, is upon completion, perfection: “It is finished.” More specifically, the singular ram of Moses’ time was predictive of the Messiah’s unique sacrifice. Since this is now a *fait accompli*, seven rams now commemorate it.

Bulls were the sacred sacrificial animal of choice for virtually every ancient culture; thus I perceive that they are a symbol in God's economy of falsehood and apostasy, of institutionalized evil on a national, as well as a personal, level. Case in point: Aaron's golden calf debacle. Cattle symbolized several things: in agrarian societies, cattle represented temporal wealth; the more cattle you owned, the wealthier you were. Indeed, a "fattened calf" was the symbol for luxurious living—killing a fattened calf in order to entertain a guest was considered a mark of great honor. But cattle or oxen were also beasts of burden—a metaphor for doing work. There is a fine line between service and servitude, between working in grateful response to Yahshua's grace and working in order to obtain it. Every religion in the world focuses on work as a means to achieve "heaven," whatever they conceive that to be. But our works are as pointless in establishing a relationship with Yahweh as they would be in any family. A child can't earn his way into the family—he must be invited into it, either by physical birth or by adoption—accepting the invitation. Thus the bull represents the wrong way to approach God—you can't buy or work your way to Him. It's an insult to Him to even try. The sacrifice of seven bulls is thus an indication that this false portal to Yahweh has been completely removed from Israel.

**"During the seven days of the Festival of Shelters, which occurs every year in early autumn, the prince will provide these same sacrifices for the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the grain offering, along with the required olive oil." (Ezekiel 45:21-25 NLT)** Neither the Feast of Weeks nor the other two fall festivals, the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, are specifically mentioned. Perhaps this is because at this point in time these three miqras have no future fulfillment—they are strictly memorial. But Passover and Tabernacles—symbolizing God's grace and His abiding with men—are both still vitally relevant to the Millennial mortals. Here again we see different offerings than those required under the Mosaic Law—they're the same as for the new spring feast. All these little differences demonstrate conclusively that Ezekiel's temple vision was not meant to simply restate Levitical ritual for the benefit of the apostate Jews of his day, but is designed to reflect the finished work of Yahshua for a generation yet to come. And just because the miqras of Weeks, Trumpets, and Atonement haven't been singled out in Ezekiel, we can't automatically conclude that they will be dropped. The Mosaic Law specifically states concerning the Feast of Weeks, for instance, that **"it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations."** (Leviticus 23:21) Perhaps it isn't mentioned because nothing at all was changed.

Is it just me, or is the incredible detail of Yahweh's revealed plan, the way this big jigsaw puzzle is all coming together, giving you goose bumps too? Everything fits. Even if the picture is crystal clear in some spots and slightly out of focus in others, it's because He wants us to concentrate on one visual plane. It's like what artists call aerial perspective: the background—the parts of the picture that aren't

the main subject—are not as sharp, not as brightly colored. They’re important supporting information, but they aren’t the point. Yahweh’s “subject” is His love, His sacrifice, and His provision for us. Everything else is “purple mountains’ majesty.”

All this minutiae is here for a reason. It’s not to satisfy our curiosity about the future, but to teach us how much Yahweh loves us. So Ezekiel continues dishing out the details: **“This is what the Sovereign Yahweh says: The east gateway of the inner wall will be closed during the six workdays each week, but it will be open on Sabbath days and the days of new moon celebrations....”** The six plus one pattern of Yahweh’s plan for us is reiterated (again). Here we see that the gateway directly across the courtyard from the one Yahshua used to enter the temple grounds will be restricted in its use. The inner east gate is reserved for the special periodic celebrations that speak so eloquently of the provision of God for His people. **“The prince will enter the foyer of the gateway from the outside. Then he will stand by the gatepost while the priest offers his burnt offering and peace offering. He will worship inside the gateway passage and then go back out the way he came....”** Since King Yahshua used this inner gate, no one else may pass through it, not all the way. This is metaphorical (I think) of the Son of Man’s approach to Yahweh—of His sinless perfection, something no other man has ever achieved. Prince David, though his heart is right before God, is not sinless except through the blood of Christ; he therefore cannot approach the throne of Yahweh through the same door the Messiah did—none of us can. Significantly, however, the door of opportunity to live a sinless life is left open all day long during the Sabbath—itself a picture of the Millennium—but no one who is not actually sinless may pass through it, and thus no one does, not even the prince. **“The gateway will not be closed until evening. The common people will worship Yahweh in front of this gateway on Sabbath days and the days of new moon celebrations....”**

The prince, as representative for his people, enters the gate structure to worship while the general populace does so from the courtyard outside. But this is not so much a position of power as it is of service: **“Each Sabbath day the prince will present to Yahweh a burnt offering of six lambs and one ram, all with no physical defects. He will present a grain offering of a half bushel of flour to go with the ram and whatever amount of flour he chooses to go with each lamb. He is to offer one gallon of olive oil for each half bushel of flour. At the new moon celebrations, he will bring one young bull, six lambs, and one ram, all with no physical defects. With the young bull he must bring a half bushel of flour for a grain offering. With the ram he must bring another half bushel of flour. And with each lamb he is to bring whatever amount of flour that he decides to give. With each half bushel of flour he must offer one gallon of olive oil....”** Again we see the six-plus-one pattern—**“six lambs and one ram”**—reminding us that Yahweh has planned for our redemption from the very beginning of creation.

**“The prince must enter the gateway through the foyer, and he must leave the same way he came. But when the people come in through the north gateway to worship Yahweh during the religious festivals, they must leave by the south gateway. And those who entered through the south gateway must leave by the north gateway. They must never leave by the same gateway they came in; they must always use the opposite gateway. The prince will enter and leave with the people on these occasions....”** These instructions may seem mysterious at first, but upon looking at the layout of the temple courtyard, God’s motive becomes clear (at least to me). Think of the courtyard as life. The outer courtyard is our mortal humanity, and the inner our life as believers—the inner gate represents the New Birth. Yahweh never intended that we pop our heads in the door, take a look around, and leave without participating. He has something far richer and more meaningful in mind for us, and it involves developing a relationship with Him. When we walk to the middle of the inner courtyard from either side, we find two things going on: people are worshipping Yahweh—communing with Him—at the eastern gate; and the altar stands as a constant reminder of *why* we worship Him. We are not to go through life without acknowledging Yahshua’s sacrifice and praising Him for what it did for us.

**“So at the special feasts and sacred festivals, the grain offering will be a half bushel of flour with each young bull, another half bushel of flour with each ram, and as much flour as the prince chooses to give with each lamb. One gallon of oil is to be given with each half bushel of flour. Whenever the prince offers a voluntary burnt offering or peace offering to Yahweh, the east gateway to the inner courtyard will be opened for him to enter, and he will offer his sacrifices just as he does on Sabbath days. Then he will turn and leave the way he entered, and the gateway will be shut behind him. Each morning a year-old lamb with no physical defects must be sacrificed as a burnt offering to Yahweh. With the lamb, a grain offering must also be given to Yahweh—about two and a half quarts of flour with a third of a gallon of olive oil to moisten the flour. This will be a permanent law for you....”** The offerings have three components, the sacrificial animals, the grain, and the oil. At the risk of over-simplifying things, I’d like to suggest that all of the blood sacrifices, whether bulls, rams, goats, or lambs, point one way or another to the crucifixion of Yahshua, without which there is no possibility of our reconciliation with Yahweh. The grain offerings represent our subsequent thanksgiving for God’s provision—not only for what sustains our physical lives, but for our spiritual sustenance as well. And the olive oil reminds us that the Spirit of Yahweh must accompany and permeate our offerings. “Religiously” going through the motions is pointless. **“The lamb, the grain offering, and the olive oil must be given as a daily sacrifice every morning without fail.”** (Ezekiel 46:1-15 NLT)

Remember what I said about the outer courtyard representing physical life, as the inner courtyard symbolizes spiritual life? We now see this metaphor being played out another way. **“Then the man brought me through the entrance beside the gateway and led me to the sacred rooms assigned to the priests, which faced toward the**

north. He showed me a place at the extreme west end of these rooms. He explained, 'This is where the priests will cook the meat from the guilt offerings and sin offerings and bake the flour from the grain offerings into bread. They will do it here to avoid carrying the sacrifices through the outer courtyard and harming the people by transmitting holiness to them [or as the NKJV puts it, **to sanctify the people**]....' The point is that the sin and guilt offerings are a reflection of the sacrifice of Christ, and are therefore holy—i.e., separation is required. Only the priests could prepare them. People who have not availed themselves of the atoning power of the Messiah's death cannot be saved by association with a replica of that sacrifice. Having a "form of godliness" is not enough. They must first enter the inner court—experience the New Birth—for the atonement sacrifices to have any real meaning.

That being said, there are also cooking facilities in the outer court, not for sin offerings, but for peace offerings. **"Then he brought me back to the outer courtyard and led me to each of its four corners. In each corner I saw an enclosure. Each of these enclosures was 70 feet long and 52½ feet wide, surrounded by walls. Along the inside of these walls was a ledge of stone with fireplaces under the ledge all the way around. The man said to me, 'These are the kitchens to be used by the Temple assistants to boil the sacrifices offered by the people.'**" (Ezekiel 46:19-24 NLT) These offerings are prepared not by the priests, but by their Levite assistants, and the people share in the feast. Peace offerings are fundamentally different from sin or guilt offerings. They are strictly voluntary. The animals sacrificed may be either male or female, and though they must still be spotless, deformed animals may be offered. If I understand this correctly, the picture is not so much of Christ's sacrifice as of our response to it. As Paul said, **"As many of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death.... Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."** (Romans 6:3, 6) The peace offering is not offered by one seeking peace but by one who has found it. Our word "peace" has a basically negative connotation, the absence of war or conflict. The familiar Hebrew word *shalom* doesn't stop there, however, but encompasses positive aspects as well—joy, wholeness, well-being.

Peace offerings are of three types: the thank offering (gratitude for specific past blessings), the vow offering (basically just good manners when petitioning Yahshua with a specific request), and the freewill offering (a bit like the thank offering, but with no particular blessing in mind—a general outpouring of thankfulness coupled with a desire for the continuance of God's blessings). I imagine there will be a lot of freewill-type sacrifices being offered during the Millennium. There certainly should be.