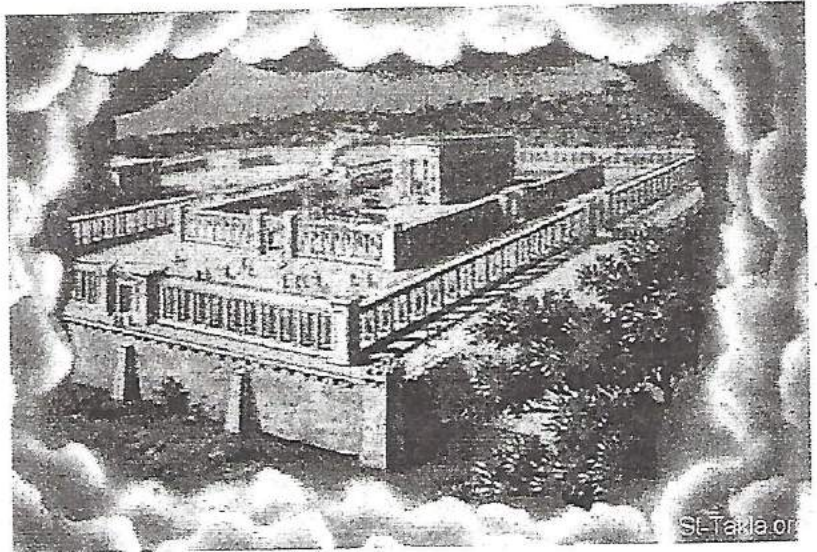
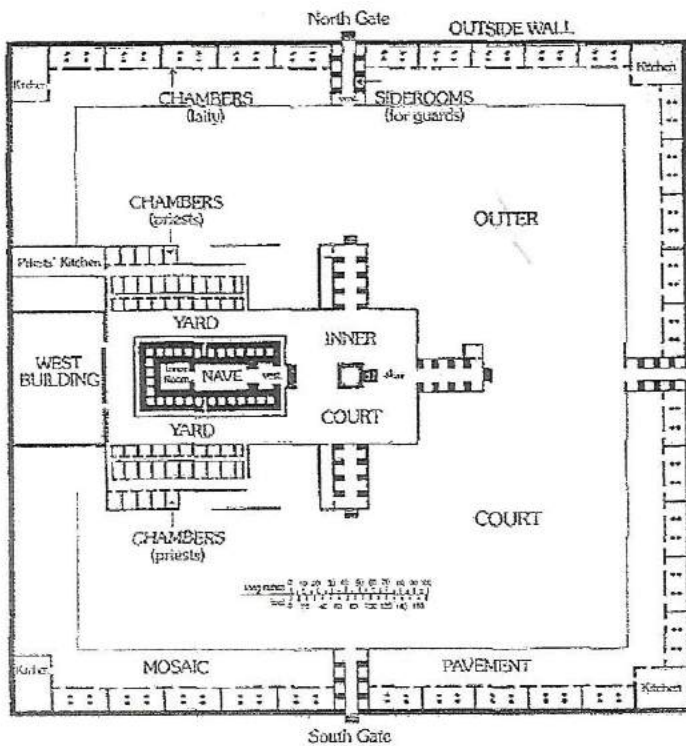


# The Millennial Sacrifices and Temple, Ez. 40-46



EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE, COURTS, WALLS, AND GATES



Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

## A Splendid Overview of the Passage

# UNGER'S BIBLE HANDBOOK

*An Essential Guide  
to Understanding the Bible*

BY MERRILL F. UNGER, TH.D., PH.D.

MOODY PRESS • CHICAGO

### CHAPTER 40. DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE

Chapters 40—48 constitute Ezekiel's remarkable vision of restored Israel in the land during the Kingdom Age. Envisioned are the millennial temple, ch. 40—42; the millennial worship, ch. 43—46; and the millennial land, ch. 47—49.

**The Introduction, 1-4.** The date, 1, was April 28, 573 B.C., on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the prophet's exile. Ezekiel was supernaturally transported in vision to Israel, 2, and prophesied from a future idealistic standpoint "upon a very high [temple] mountain" (Mic 4:1; Isa 2:2-3).

**The Vision of the Temple, 5-49.** What was this temple? Various views are: (1) a somewhat idealized replica of Solomon's temple destroyed in 586 B.C. and which should have been built upon the return from Babylon; (2) a description of the kingdom of God in its final form; (3) the Christian church in its earthly glory and blessing. However, the view which seems to fit the context in Ezekiel, and the testimony of other Scripture, is that *Ezekiel's temple is a literal future sanctuary to be constructed in Palestine during the coming Kingdom Age.*

The measuring reed, 5, was about 10 feet 4 inches (the small cubit about 17.5 inches, the large cubit about 20.68 inches). The East or Processional Gate, 6, may be compared to Solomonic gateways (excavated at Gezer, Hazor and Megiddo). The outer court is described, 17-27; then the inner court, 28-37; and the tables for the offerings and chambers for the inner court, 38-47. The porch is also described, 48-49 (cf. 1 Kgs 7:15-22).

### CHAPTER 41. THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE TEMPLE

**The House Itself, 1-14,** will be the dwelling place of the visible presence of the Lord in the kingdom. The holy place, 1-2, and the most holy place, 3-4, are described. There is no allusion to the ark, mercy seat, high priest, or tables of the law. All these will be superseded by the manifested divine glory. The chambers around the house, 5-11, are probably for the temple personnel. Specified is the separate place, 12-14.

**Interior Details, 15-26.** Wainscoted with wood, it is embellished with two-faced cherubim (cf. 1:6-12) and palms, symbols of victory. The face of a lion (kingly majesty) and that of a man looking on a palm tree describe the kingly role of the glorified Son of Man, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, ruling in regal splendor on David's throne.



## EZEKIEL

The doors of the sanctuary are also decorated with the palm-cherubim motif.

### CHAPTERS 42—43. THE PURPOSE OF EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE

**To Demonstrate God's Holiness, 42:1-20.** This is the pervading theme of the entire book (see introduction) and especially so in the purpose and details of the kingdom temple (cf. 43:10). The holiness of the Lord is further emphasized by the principle of *separation*. At the very outset the wall separating the courts and temple from all that is defiling is introduced (40:5). The cell buildings, 42:1-14, are called holy and have a similar function of separation. The established separation of the whole enclosure is set forth, 15-20.

**To Provide a Dwelling Place for the Divine Glory, 43:1-17.** Ezekiel sees the return of the glory to take up residence in the temple's holy of holies during the Kingdom Age, as he had seen its departure before the fall of the city in 586 B.C. (cf. 9:3; 10:4; 11:23-24). "This is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever," 7.

**To Provide a Center for the Divine Government, 43:7.** "This is the place of my throne" (cf. Isa 2:2-3; Mic 4:2). The theocratic administration throughout the vision is stressed.

**To Perpetuate the Memorial of Sacrifice, 43:18-27.** This sacrifice, of course, is not rendered with a view of obtaining salvation, but it is commemorative of an accomplished redemption maintained in the presence of the revealed glory of God.

### CHAPTERS 44—46. WORSHIP IN THE KINGDOM AGE

**Concerning the Priests and the Prince, 44:1-31.** The outward Eastern Gate for the Prince is described, 1-3, and the charge concerning aliens and rebellious tribes is set forth, 4-14. Matters concerning the priesthood (Zadokites) are given, 15-27, with a statement of the priests' inheritance, 28-31.

**Portions of Other Groups, 45:1-25.** The portions of the priests, Levites, the whole house of Israel, and the Prince are specified, 1-8. The Prince is discussed, 9-17, as well as the feasts (Passover and Tabernacles), 18-25.

**The Worship of the Prince, 46:1-18.** His personal worship, 1-8, and other instructions for worship are given, 9-15. The Prince's sons and servants are noted, 16-18.

**A Final Description of Places in the Temple, 46:19-24.**

### CHAPTERS 47—48. THE MILLENNIAL LAND

**The River of the Sanctuary, 47:1-12** (cf. Zech 14:8-9; Rev 22:1). The reality of this river is of one piece with the vision of the temple, the land and the people of Israel. It must be a literal river, as well as the blessed healing it accomplishes. It constitutes part of the topographical changes in Palestine when the covenants and promises made to Israel are fulfilled and the curse is lifted.

**The Boundaries of the Land, 47:13-23.** The north boundary is traced from "the great sea" (Mediterranean), the way of Hethlon (Heitala) E of Tripolis in Lebanon, 15, and Hamath (present day Nahr el-Asi) on the Orontes in Syria N of Damascus. The general borders are to be compared to the promise to Abraham in Gen 15:18-21 and instructions to Joshua in Josh 13:1—19:51.

**The Apportionment of the Land, 48:1-29.** The term "entrance to Hamath" (cf. Num 34:8) describes the ideal limits of the Promised Land. Solomon's kingdom extended from the brook of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish) to the "entrance of Hamath" (1 Kgs 8:65; cf. 2 Kgs 14:25; Amos 6:14). The term "Labo-hamath" is likely the name of a town (modern Lebweh) on the Orontes below Riblah. The general assignment by tribes, 1-9, is followed by the allotment for the priests and Levites, 10-20, and for the Prince, 21-29.

**Jerusalem in the Kingdom Age, 48:30-35** (cf. Rev 21:10-27). Ezekiel sees the city as it will exist in the coming age, while the apostle John in Revelation has in view the eternal state, which will follow the coming last ordered age in time. Since the kingdom will be eternal, the temporal kingdom merges into the eternal. Jerusalem's kingdom name is *Yhwh-shammah*, "The Lord is there," 35.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE ON EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE AND THE MILLENNIAL SACRIFICES IN EZEKIEL 40-46

Our covenant theologian friends strongly object to the idea that there may be a future temple and are totally dismayed at the idea that the Lord would require animal sacrifices in the future. We who take the Bible literally have no reason to apologize for our interpretation, since it squarely rests on biblical revelation.

The Reformed position practices a dual hermeneutic. Covenant theologians understand fulfilled prophecy to have been fulfilled literally but unfulfilled prophecy must be spiritualized. It is unthinkable for them that there would be a future millennium, a thousand year reign of Christ on earth. The denial of a literal millennium goes back to St. Augustine in the fourth and fifth century, who denied a literal millennium mainly because of the cults in his day who pictured the millennium as a time of carnal delight.

Ever since St. Augustine allegorized unfulfilled prophecy, the Catholic and the Protestant church followed this influential church father. Unfortunately they never divorced themselves from St. Augustine's spiritualizing of prophecies relating to a future kingdom.

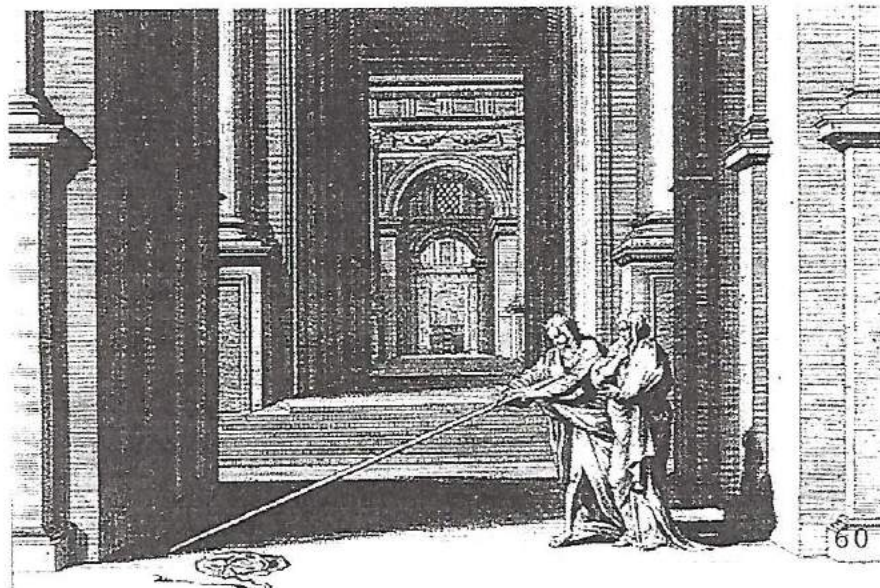
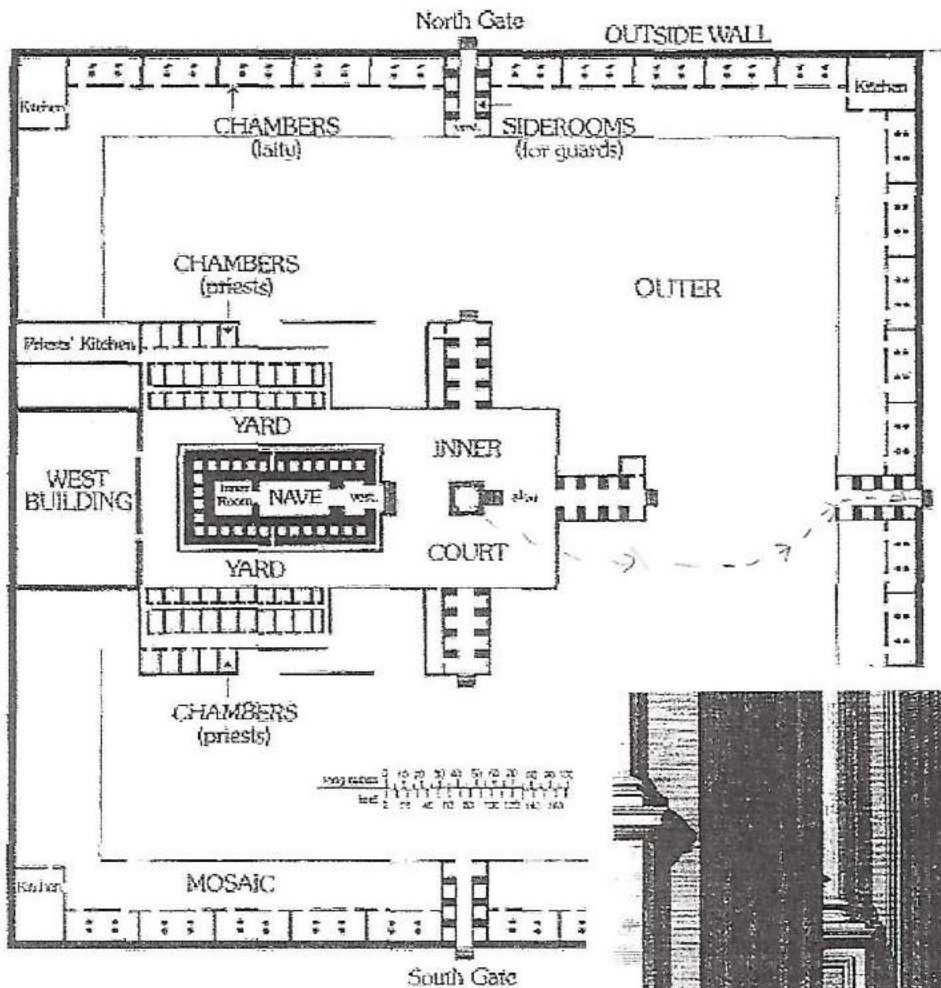
There are many helpful articles and books on the subject.

- (1) Dr. Walvoord's book *The Millennial Kingdom* is a classic.
- (2) In more recent years, Dr. Ryrie called an article to my attention which he had written for the *Emmaus Journal* back in the winter of 2002. We will walk our way through this article because it, probably better than any of the other commentaries on Ezekiel 40-46, deals with the three important reasons for the future sacrificial system in a millennial temple.
- (3) Also of immense help is the article by Dr. John C. Whitcomb, "The Millennial Temple of Ezekiel 40-48." This superlative Old Testament scholar has many thoughtful and cogent suggestions as to why we should take the temple and the sacrifices literally. The article is reproduced below.
- (4) The interested Bible student will also find a very helpful treatment of the issue of the millennial temple and sacrifices in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. The commentary on Ezekiel is written by Ralph H. Alexander. His introduction to the temple vision is well worth perusing (see pages 942-957 of the commentary).
- (5) Dr. Merrill F. Unger seems to have anticipated the blatant denial of a literal millennial temple. He devotes much space to the future temple and animal sacrifices in his superb volume, *Great Neglected Bible Prophecies*. Other topics in this volume, itself greatly neglected, include the vision of the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezekiel 37, the judgment seat of Christ and Israel and the Olive Tree.

- (6) Thomas Ice has an excellent monograph, "Why Literal Sacrifices in the Millennium?" It is included in our materials. You will find several articles by him and others on the subject of millennial worship on the website of the Pretrib Study Group. The address is [pretrib.org](http://pretrib.org). Simply click on the word **articles** and you have immediate access to hundreds of prophetic monographs.

I trust that our discussion of the topic will generate more light than heat and the Lord will give us an intense anticipation of our future with Him on a millennial earth as He in all His glory returns to the earth to become the King of Righteousness for the whole world. We know that once a year unglorified mankind from around the world will come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16). We as redeemed church age believers will be there to introduce these pilgrims to our Savior.

### EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE, COURTS, WALLS, AND GATES





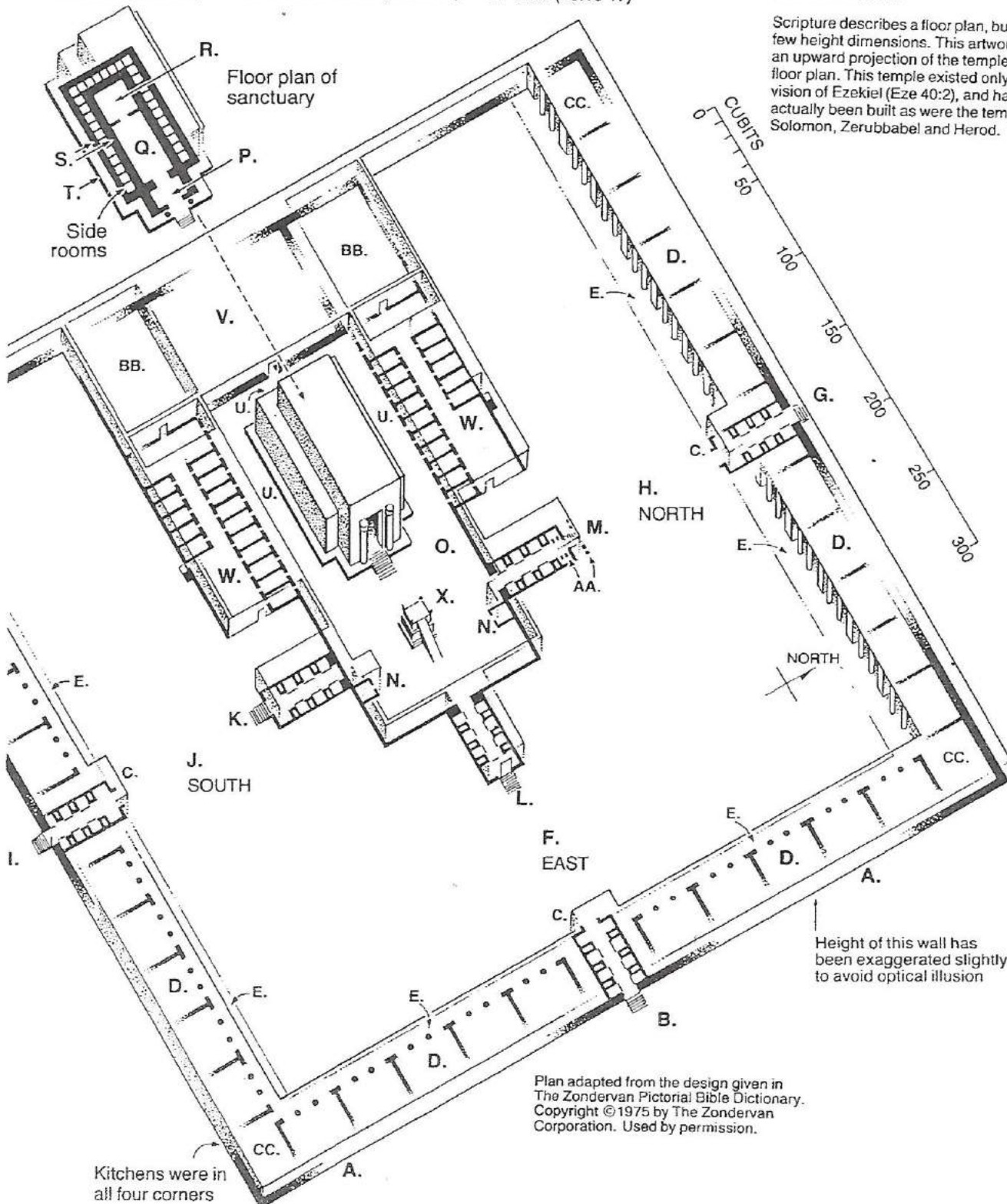
# Ezekiel's Temple

- A. Wall (40:5,16-20)
- B. East gate (40:6-14,16)
- C. Portico (40:8)
- D. Outer court (40:17)
- E. Pavement (40:17)
- F. Inner court (40:19)
- G. North gate (40:20-22)
- H. Inner court (40:23)
- I. South gate (40:24-26)
- J. South inner court (40:27)
- K. Gateway (40:32-34)
- L. Gateway (40:32-34)
- M. Gateway (40:35-38)
- N. Priests' rooms (40:44-45)
- O. Court (40:47)
- P. Temple portico (40:48-49)
- Q. Outer sanctuary (41:1-2)
- R. Most Holy Place (41:3-4)
- S. Temple walls (41:5-7, 9, 11)
- T. Base (41:8)
- U. Open area (41:10)
- V. West building (41:12)
- W. Priests' rooms (42:1-10)
- X. Altar (43:13-17)

- AA. Rooms for preparing sacrifices (40:39-43)
- BB. Ovens (46:19-20)
- CC. Kitchens (46:21-24)

Ezekiel uses a long or "royal" cubit, 20.4 inches or 51.81 cm ("cubit and a handbreadth," Eze 40:5) as opposed to the standard Hebrew cubit of 17.6 inches or 44.7 cm.

Scripture describes a floor plan, but provides few height dimensions. This artwork shows an upward projection of the temple over the floor plan. This temple existed only in a vision of Ezekiel (Eze 40:2), and has never actually been built as were the temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod.



Plan adapted from the design given in  
The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary.  
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THE CHURCH  
REIGNING WITH CHRIST

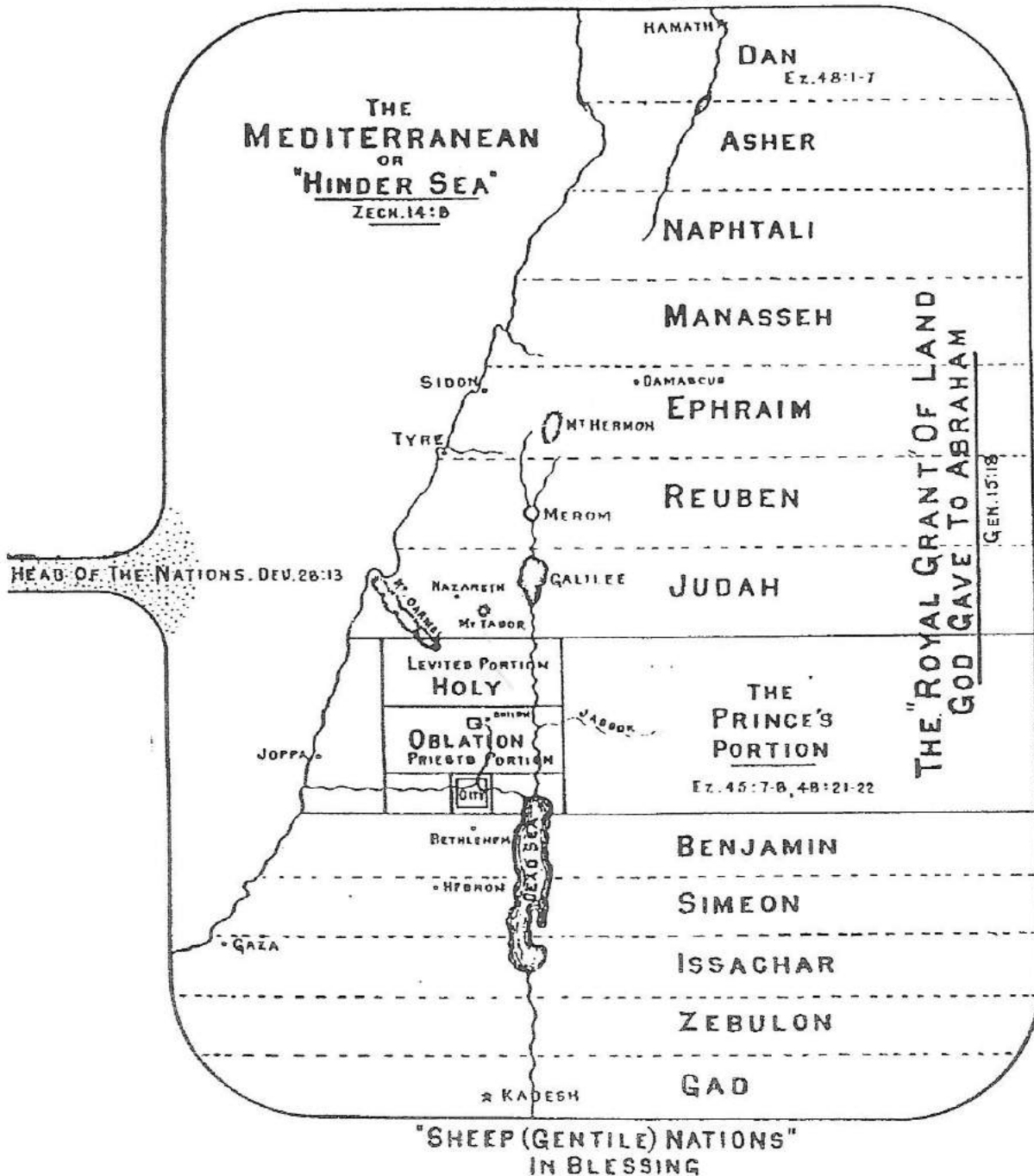
'THE DAY OF THE LORD'

MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

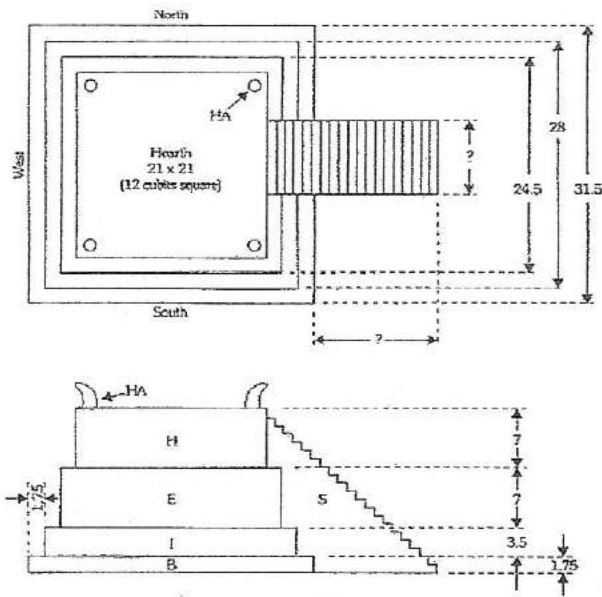
CROWN RESTORED



"THE THRONE OF DAVID"



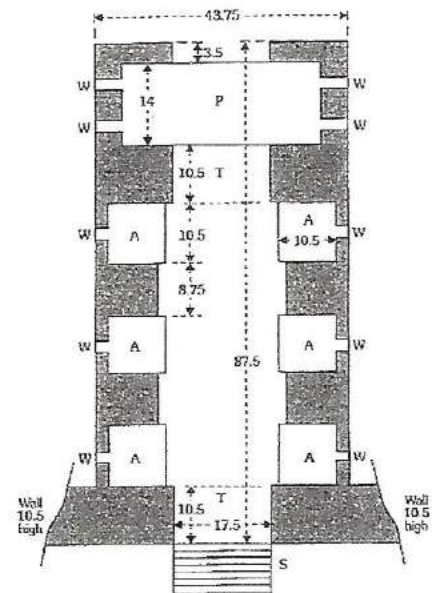
## ALTAR OF SACRIFICE



Dimensions are in feet. 1.75 feet = 1 long cubit.

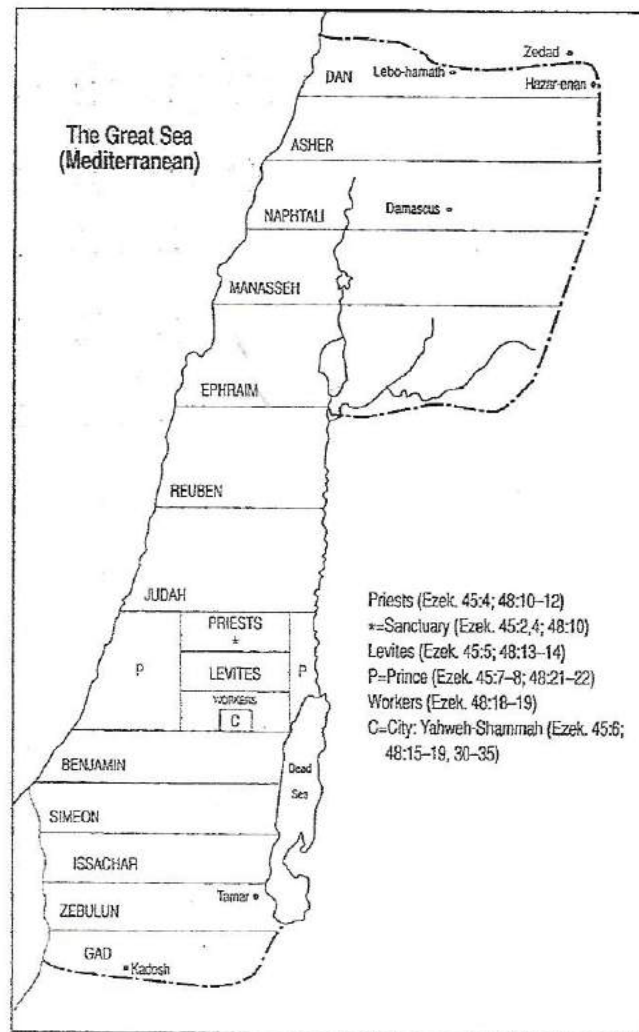
- H = Altar hearth (43:15-16)  
 E = Enclosure, supporting higher ledge (43:14, 17)  
 I = Interior, supporting lower ledge (43:14)  
 B = Base (43:13)  
 HA = Horns of the altar (43:15, 20)  
 S = Steps (43:17; cf. 40:47b)

## PLAN OF THE TEMPLE GATES



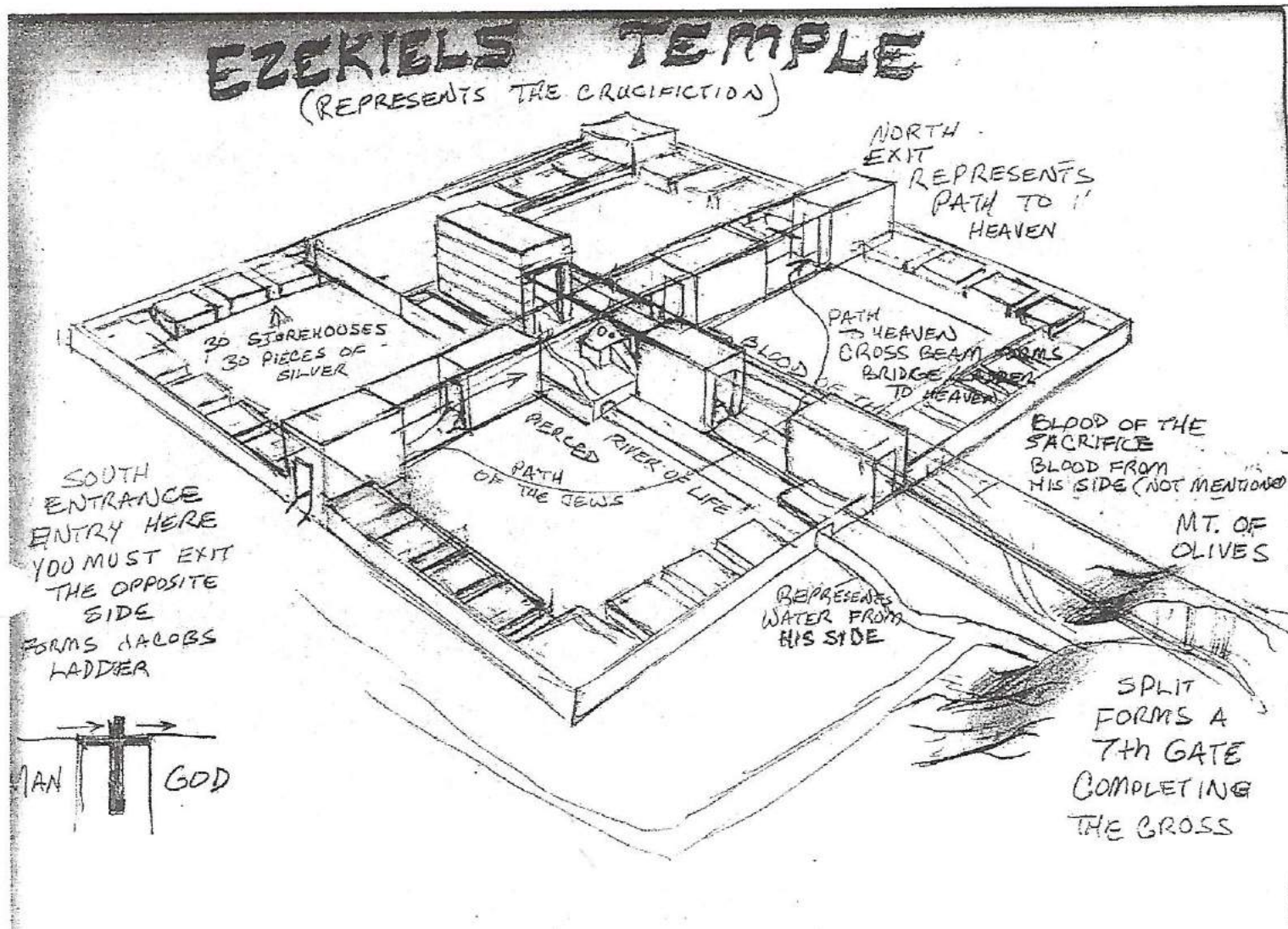
Dimensions are in feet. 1.75 feet = 1 long cubit.

- A = Alcoves, recesses for the guards (40:7a, 10, 12)  
 P = Portico, vestibule (40:8-9)  
 S = Steps (40:6a)  
 T = Thresholds (40:6b, 7a)  
 W = Windows (40:16)  
 Wall = Wall around temple area (40:5)



- Priests (Ezek. 45:4; 48:10-12)  
 \* = Sanctuary (Ezek. 45:2, 4; 48:10)  
 Levites (Ezek. 45:5; 48:13-14)  
 P = Prince (Ezek. 45:7-8; 48:21-22)  
 Workers (Ezek. 48:18-19)  
 C = City: Yahweh-Shammah (Ezek. 45:6; 48:15-19, 30-35)

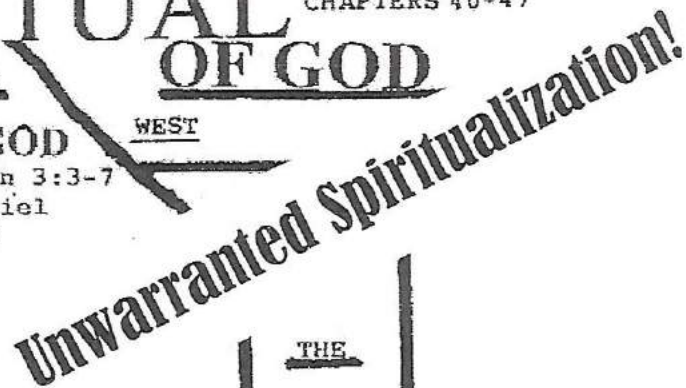




## Typical Allegorizing of Ezekiel's Prophecy!



EZEKIEL  
CHAPTERS 40-47



The Temple of Ezekiel has not be drawn to scale  
Only that which is relevant for this teaching

## THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF EZEKIEL 40-46

1. Consistent \_\_\_\_\_ demands it.

The normal, plain historical-grammatical or \_\_\_\_\_ is to be preferred above spiritualizing the passage.

2. The amazing \_\_\_\_\_ demand it.

Hundreds of specific details of measurements, of places, customs, objects etc., argue for literalism.

3. Scriptural \_\_\_\_\_ (clarity or lucidity) demands it.

The Bible was written for man's benefit and \_\_\_\_\_ understandable language.

4. The voluminous \_\_\_\_\_ demands it.

The information of Ezekiel 40-46 is almost seven \_\_\_\_\_ as extensive as the creation account in Genesis.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ parsimony ("extreme frugality") demands it.

The Scriptures do not contain extraneous material (Ps. 12:6), making it unthinkable that seven chapters would be devoted to a beautiful but ambiguous Christian allegory.

6. Cross \_\_\_\_\_ in the other prophetic books demand it. There are numerous references to a future temple (Joel 3:18; Isa. 2:1, etc.) and to millennial sacrifices (Isa. 56:6-7; Jer. 33:18, etc.) in other prophetic books.

7. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Ezekiel's prophetic disclosure of his visions demands it.

Ezekiel generally discloses whether a vision is literal or symbolic. With a symbolic vision Ezekiel gives the interpretive key. Thus the vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (37:1-10) is explained (37:11, 19ff)



## THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF EZEKIEL 40-46

1. Consistent interpretation demands it.

The normal, plain historical-grammatical or literal interpretation is to be preferred above spiritualizing the passage.

2. The amazing details demand it.

Hundreds of specific details of measurements, of places, customs, objects etc., argue for literalism.

3. Scriptural perspicuity demands it.

The Bible was written for man's benefit and presupposes understandable language.

4. The voluminous content demands it.

The information of Ezekiel 40-46 is almost seven times as extensive as the creation account in Genesis.

5. Revelatory parsimony ("extreme frugality") demands it.

The Scriptures do not contain extraneous material (Ps. 12:6), making it unthinkable that seven chapters would be devoted to a beautiful but ambiguous Christian allegory.

6. Cross references in the other prophetic books demand it.

There are numerous references to a future temple (Joel 3:18; Isa. 2:1, etc.) and to millennial sacrifices (Isa. 56:6-7; Jer. 33:18, etc.) in other prophetic books.

7. The stylistic pattern of Ezekiel's prophetic visions demands it.

Ezekiel generally discloses whether a vision is literal or symbolic. With a symbolic vision Ezekiel gives the interpretive key. Thus the vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (37:1-10) is explained (37:11, 19ff)